SERMONS OF C E STUART

by C.E. Stuart

Stuart's sermon collection focusing on the believer's relationship with God as a central theme, addressing the foundational connection between the Christian and their Creator.

113 Chapters

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Chapter 2

01.00. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. by C E Stuart

01.01. INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

EVERY child of Adam is of necessity placed in the relation of a creature to the Creator. All owe their being to Him (Acts 17:25-28). In this sense He is the Father of all (Ephesians 3:14-15; Ephesians 4:6), and so Adam is called God’s son (Luke 3:38). As creatures, dependent on God daily and hourly, confidence in Him as the Creator should always have characterised each one of us. For as Creator He takes thought, and has a personal care even for animals, even for all to whom He has given life (Jonah 4:11 ; Matthew 6:26 ; Luke 12:6); and how much more does He care for those who must have an everlasting existence. Worship, then, and service should unhesitatingly have been rendered to Him by all the human race (Romans 1:25). But in this, as Daniel boldly told the heathen monarch, Belshazzar, he had grievously failed: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Daniel 5:23). So that king, convicted by the prophet of his impiety, and of his failure as a creature, as he sat enthroned amid all the splendour of oriental sovereignty, passed away that night from earth to await, as far as we know, his doom, when he shall be summoned before the great white throne.

Responsibility as a creature he could not shake off, though his failure in reference to it was enhanced by the opportunity God had offered him of profiting by the well-known history and example of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. As creatures, all of us have failed, all have sinned ; so to nothing but misery and everlasting perdition could we have justly looked forward, had not God acted, in the sovereignty of His grace, to quicken some, and to bring them into new relations to Himself as saints, as servants, and as of His household, etc. Of what grace does this speak? Grace naturally foreign to the heart of man, and which has its origin only in the heart of God. For who of men would naturally entrust their interests on earth, and the carrying out of their purposes, to those who had sinned against them, and had evinced a life-long disregard of their wishes, if not a bitter enmity to their person ? But it is out of such that God sets some apart as vessels devoted by Him to a holy use. 1:e., saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:2), chosen by Him " to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). His servants, too, such are (1 Peter 2:16 ; Romans 6:22), and He has none others on earth ; all His work in this world, which is done by creature instrumentality for the advancement of His kingdom and the glory of His Son, being carried out through them. Of His household, likewise, they are reckoned (Ephes. 2: 19), for He would not keep them at a distance, though they only deserved everlasting banishment from His presence. In these relations to Him we, who believe on His Son, shall be found for ever. The character and sphere of service may, and assuredly will change. We shall not be always on earth, and in a scene where God’s authority is disowned. For on high, when for ever freed from all toil and trouble, enjoying the Sabbath rest which awaits us, His name, with that of the Lamb, will be on our foreheads, the token to all to Whom we belong ; and the privilege will still be ours of being engaged in His service: for "His servants shall serve Him" (Revelation 22:3). And in a special relation to God will Christians then be displayed, peculiar to those who are now His habitation on earth by the Spirit, for they will be His holy temple, in which He will dwell for

ever (Ephes. 2: 21). What delight must He take in those of His creatures who are redeemed by the blood of Christ!

Saints, servants, of His household, His people, His dwelling-place, His temple, His elect, and His called-ones, what relations are these to God, we may well say, of which we can make our boast. Now all these are connected with the revelation of Himself as God. Favours, privileges, they surely are, in which none of us, and, we add, no creature, would ever have thought we should be called to have a part; yet they do not exhaust the list of our privileges, for in another character God has been pleased to reveal Himself. He is our God, for we are His redeemed ones. He is our Father, too, as born of Him, which is relationship to God in the closest and best sense. We are His children by birth, born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). We are also His sons by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26).

Chapter 4

01.02. GOD A FATHER, AS REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

GOD A FATHER, AS REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

PARENTAL relationship, whether natural or spiritual, is of God, who has been pleased to originate the former before introducing the latter, so that when such a spiritual relationship should be revealed and formed, His people might the better understand the privileges and blessings connected with it. For as we see the unfolding in the Word, step by step, of God's thought and provision for the welfare of His creatures upon earth, we come to discern what surely must have been in His mind, and the joy for His heart to which He looked forward. Who can now doubt, that when Adam was put by the Lord God in the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it, and all the animals were brought to him to be named, that Jehovah was looking forward to the day when the Son of Man shall appear in glory, and all creation be subjected to His sway? Again, reading, as we are privileged to do, of what passed in God's mind as He looked on His creature Adam, then alone in the garden (Genesis 2:18), it is not too much for us to declare that He had already in His thoughts the accomplishment of that purpose (which is still future), to make a marriage for the King's Son. So when instituting the relationships of parent and child, it can be no presumption on our part to assume that He had before His mind the day when He should be able to announce that such a relationship could exist between Himself and some of the children of men. For by Him, as was fitting, it was first made known. In both Testaments we read of it. In the Old, it is in connection with the people of Israel: in the New, it is in connection with those who are really His saints on earth; and therein we learn that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of those who believe on Him. This distinction, just noticed, it is important to bear in mind. In Old Testament times, in keeping with the dispensational teaching of the day; when God took up the nation of Israel to be His people, and He to be their God, the redemption enjoyed and the relationship known were national, not individual. Israel was God's son. With us it is different. Each saint now is God's child, and He is his Father ; and every one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins is to know, by the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed on him, what it is to cry, " Abba, Father." Further, it is helpful to remember that, in the Old Testament, it is God who is the Father of Israel: in the New Testament, the first person of the Trinity is the One whom we address by that name ; He is God the Father. Let us trace this out a little more in detail. To Exodus 4:22-23 we must first turn, in which we read God's message by Moses to Pharaoh, King of Egypt - "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, even My first-born ; and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." It was significant and instructive that God sent this announcement to the proud Egyptian monarch, and not to Israel. To him was it to be made known ; he was to hear that the nation of slaves, over whom he had ridden roughshod, was the son, the first-born of Jehovah of Hosts. It was significant, because it showed that God was not acting in accordance with the thoughts of man in such a matter. For who could have supposed that He would have passed by the dominant, highly-civilised, and cultivated race of the day, to espouse the cause of, and to form so close a tie between Himself and a nation of slaves? It was instructive, likewise; for, considering the condition

of that people, the announcement of such a relationship to God in heaven was a manifestation on His part of pure, sovereign grace. What had they done to deserve it? Nothing. In what condition were they when that revelation was announced? In that of hopeless and abject misery (Exodus 1:13-14; Exodus 2:23) and announced it was, not to them to nerve them for the conflict, but to their taskmasters, the Egyptians, to make them set the people free. The people's condition, then, was no barrier to the existence and assertion by God of such a relationship to Himself. The Egyptians looked down on them, and abhorred them (i.12); but Jehovah was not ashamed to be the Father of such a people, and He would make the proud and haughty monarch know it, and subsequently have proof of it. Pharaoh might disavow all knowledge of Jehovah (v. 2), and refuse compliance with His commands ; but the night of the I5th of Abib would come, in which he should bewail the death of his first-born, and learn in that bitter way what a wonderful privilege it is to be in such a relationship with the One, true, and living God. This tie once formed, God never broke nor disowned. The failure of the people could not dissolve it, nor will God ever forget it. Hosea (xi. i) reminded them of it in the past; Jeremiah (xxxi. 8-9) predicted that which will give them joy from it in the future : - "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them : I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble ; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." Of this relationship Moses had reminded the people, ere they crossed the Jordan (Deuteronomy 32:6) ; and Jeremiah in his day sought to impress it on them (iii. 19), but all to no purpose, so captivity had to be their lot, and centuries of sorrow have that people now known. Indissoluble, however, is that tie. Of this Isaiah, too, bears witness in the language put by the Spirit of prophecy in the mouths of the godly remnant of the future:- "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; Thy name is from everlasting" (Ixiii. 16); and again, "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father: we are the clay, and Thou our potter ; and we all are the work of Thy hand " (Ixiv. 8). Of everlasting grace this speaks ; of the unchangeableness, too, of God's purpose it is a proof. Israel did not deserve such a favour, that is clear. If they could ever have deserved it, they have certainly forfeited all claim to it. But it was not, it is not, a question of deserts. The question is one of God's sovereignty ; He formed the tie of His own will. He will never break it, nor will He cease to avow it. What comfort is all this for us, who now know God the Father as our Father as well as our God. A Father! What are the thoughts connected with the enjoyment of such a blessing? On this we are not left in doubt. Each of us who have known our natural father may form some idea of what is involved in that parental tie. Some, however, there are who from circumstances have never known an earthly father's care or love, though they bear in life their parent's name. Such a state of things should not be the experience of God's children in these days. He desires that they should know the Father; so the Holy Ghost is given to us, whereby we cry, " Abba, Father." And what each of His children may find Him to be, He desires them to understand directly from Himself; so He graciously teaches us about it.

"A Father of the fatherless, ... is God in His holy habitation" (Ps. Ixviii. 5). He cares for and protects those who have no natural protector. On this His people can count. Pity, too, for His children He feels, and as is needed will give proof of it, for "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame ; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalms

103:13-14). What consideration on His part thus to speak, calling attention to that earthly tie, which is of Himself, and to the feelings towards the offspring which are implanted in the breast of an earthly parent. What should we think of that parent who had no pity for his children? An unnatural father, all would call him. Alas, amongst men such a character is not unknown ; yet it is but natural and right for an earthly father to feel compassion for his children. The relationship in which he is towards them should call it forth spontaneously, as circumstances require it. Now. all that such an one should feel for his own, that God our Father really feels for His children, only, of course, with an intensity and depth beyond the capability of the creature to exhaust, or even to fathom. " He knoweth our frame ; He.remembereth that we are dust." Precious, surely, should that word " remembereth " be. An earthly parent may forget it or ignore it; God never will. His compassion can be always counted on by those who fear Him. But other characteristics there are proper to a parent. He trains his child as is needed, chastening him, too, betimes, as wisdom, combined with love, may direct. Such, too, are the dealings of our Father with His children. " If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." How the Spirit of God would encourage the saint, when passing through trials and sorrows here for the truth’s sake. Would any cry out in bitterness, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" The answer comes - "We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:8-10). Many an earthly parent acts capriciously ; our Father does not. Many a trainer of the young deals with them without telling them why ; but if God puts His children to school, as He surely does, He graciously intimates the object He has in view - viz., that we should be partakers of His holiness - and He gives a word of encouragement, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him : for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (ver. 5,6).

Again, not only has He tender pity for His own, and takes such pains with their training, but, like an earthly father, He delights to enrich them by tokens of His parental love. Of this we are taught in the Gospels:- "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:7 -n). These, be it remembered, are the words of the Only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father when He uttered them. They are part, too*, of the revelation of the Father by the Son, given to us in the New Testament, and so would carry us into another branch of the subject, teaching not only what is implied in the thought of a father, but what is unfolded to us of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father, too, of all who believe on His Son.

Chapter 5

01.03. GOD THE FATHER REVEALED BY THE SON IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

GOD THE FATHER REVEALED BY THE SON IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

"No man (rather, no one) knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man (or, any one) the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). An announcement, this is, of very great importance. For -

1st. It acquaints us with the blessed fact that there are intelligent creatures who can know the Father when revealed to them by the Son. Of His competence to reveal Him we are elsewhere fully assured. For He knows the Father (John 8:55); He had seen Him (vi. 46); and He ever was and is in the Father's bosom (i. 18). Moreover, in seeing Him men saw the Father (xiv. 9) ; and those who knew Him knew the Father (viii. 19). Yet, though He only of all that ever walked on earth had seen Him, on three distinct occasions the Father's voice was heard by others ; viz., - at His baptism by John (Matthew 3:17) ; at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:5); and in response to His request, "Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:28). On the first occasion, John the Baptist heard it; on the second, Peter, James, and John were privileged to listen to it; on the third, the crowd heard a sound, but evidently did not understand what was said.

2nd. The Lord's words in Matthew speak of the Father as distinct from the Son, thus telling us of plurality of Persons in the Godhead, a truth indicated in the Old Testament (Genesis 19:24 ; Isaiah 48:16), and fully revealed in the New, wherein we are taught of their number and relative position to each other; viz., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). The Son is, and must as Son be, distinct from the Father, as the Lord told the Jews (John 8:16; John 8:18), and subsequently stated to His disciples - "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (xvi. 28). His departure to the Father ought to have been a cause of rejoicing to them, for "My Father," He said, "is greater than I" (xiv. 28). Yet it is also true that He and the Father are one (x. 30).

3rd. Those words reveal to us the Son acting according to His sovereign will, who is both God and man - the eternal Son, as well as the Son of God born in time. Hopeless, then, must it ever be for any to know the Father who refuse to hear Him. Hopeless, too, for any to be able to know the Father, unless the Son is pleased to reveal Him. All, therefore, are dependent on His sovereign will in grace, if ever they are to know the Father. But who thus spake, and when? The answer to the first question is, It was the only-begotten Son of God (John 3:16; John 3:18 ; 1 John 4:9), who was the First-born of all creation as well (Colossians 1:15).*

* The former of these titles reminds us of what is called His eternal generation, " begotten of His Father before all worlds," or, as has been elsewhere expressed, "begotten from everlasting of the Father." The latter title reminds us of His relation to and pre-eminence over all creatures, as one born into this world. The answer to the second question is, that He declared this after His rejection by the Jews had been openly manifested. What they must lose who refuse Him He thus plainly

intimates, as what He would reveal to those who received Him He distinctly sets forth. To the gospels, then, must we turn to learn from His lips about the Father : not to get a description of His appearance, for no man hath seen the Father, save He who is of God ; but to apprehend what He is as there told out - His desires, His ways, His acts - set forth for our instruction, who, born of God, are capable of knowing Him who is our

Father, and of enjoying the relationship of children. In all the gospels have we teaching about this. Matthew and John are full of it; Luke more sparingly introduces it; Mark very seldom refers to it. This is to be accounted for by the different aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ which the four Evangelists were directed to set forth.

Matthew and John are full of it, yet there are marked differences between them in this. The latter speaks of Him as the Father, what He is and does who is the Father. Matthew very commonly speaks of Him as the Father of those who are truly disciples of Christ. Hence the Lord therein frequently refers to Him as "your Father;" whereas, not till the resurrection is an accomplished fact, does the Lord in the gospel of John call Him aught else but The Father, or His Father.

Let us turn first to the latter gospel, so full in its teaching on this truth, yet not more full, surely, than was His heart, who as the only-begotten Son delighted to reveal Him, and on each occasion in a manner suited to His audience. His audience, we say. Not that He waited for a crowd, or a company even, to be assembled ere He would reveal anything of it. For in the dark hours of night, or at the well-side, ere the shades of evening had begun to lengthen over the landscape, He was willing to reveal truth about His Father to a solitary listener, and in characters, too, none would have surmised. Who else, indeed, but the Son was competent to dwell on such a theme? And who save the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Son, could reveal God the Father? And to whom should such a revelation be made ? By whom could it be really entered into, and enjoyed, but by those who should come to know what it is to be God’s children, and God’s sons? Such want to know the Father. Nicodemus went to Jesus by night, as a Teacher, he owned, who had come from God. But that interview did not end till he had heard of God giving His only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world ; but that the world through Him might be saved." Here was a revelation of God the Father as One who desired the salvation of guilty creatures, and who provided the needful sacrifice in the person of His only begotten Son ; or, as this truth was afterwards expressed by the Evangelist in his first epistle, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). The necessity of the new birth the Lord had dwelt upon at the outset of His interview with Nicodemus - a truth, and a blessing to which that teacher was personally a stranger. But He would not let that interview terminate without telling him of the mission on the part of God of His only begotten Son. The introduction here of the only begotten Son implied, of course, the truth and revelation of the Father, not as a new relationship into which He was pleased at the incarnation to enter, but of that in which He had always been to Him, whom Nicodemus only viewed as a Teacher sent from God. A little later, on the Lord’s journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, we read of Him at Jacob’s well, there conversing with the woman of Sychar, with whose past and present history He shewed her He was fully acquainted. To her also He speaks of the Father. He had left Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, and the city in which was His Father’s house, and communicates to her, a Samaritan woman, and hitherto a staunch upholder of the Samaritan schism, thoughts about true worship, and of Him whom He set before her as the

object of worship. "Woman believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (iv. 21-23). The woman had spoken of the place for worship, but not of the Person to be worshipped. The Lord spake to her of the Father as the object of worship. She had not raised such a question ; and considering the Lord's reply, "Ye worship ye know not what," her silence on this point was befitting. But His heart (surely we may say it) was full of the revelation it was His joy to make known. So He tells her of the Father, and of Him as seeking worshippers.

We might have pictured the Almighty as needing to be propitiated, ere He would receive the homage due to Him as Creator from those who craved the permission to render it. But to learn that He is the Father, and as such is seeking worshippers ; that men and women like her, deserving only everlasting perdition, might worship Him in that relationship ; this was new indeed and wonderfully gracious. In some private abode at Jerusalem - the name and locality to us unknown - He had spoken to Nicodemus of the mission of the only begotten Son, and by consequence of something of the acting in grace of the Father. Now to this woman, when alone with Him, He unfolded the desire of the Father's heart to find amongst members of the ruined race of Adam, when become subjects of that grace revealed to Nicodemus, those who could, and should worship Him in the consciousness of filial relationship. Nicodemus had not asked Him about the mission of the only begotten Son of God ; this woman had not asked about the Father ; but the Lord would have the joy on each occasion of making known the truth, which could minister rich blessing to souls. He made God the Father known as One desirous to save the lost, and as the One who was seeking from such a company His true worshippers. But the Evangelist passes on, introducing to his readers in the following chapter the narrative of the impotent man healed at the pool of Bethesda, with the instruction that flowed out of it. The Lord, persecuted by the Jews because of what He had done, answered them in language which only increased their opposition - "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (v. 17). God the Father had been working, and they were ignorant of it. For not only did He compassionate His guilty creatures, and in proof of it send His Son to save them who should believe on Him from the everlasting consequences of their guilt, but He had never rested whilst sin was rampant on earth, and man was suffering in his person or in his circumstances, because he had sinned. The Father had been working in grace all along. Of old, before the fall, God had rested from all His work, which He created and made (Genesis 2:3). Of that rest in the past the Sabbath was a reminder; but man having fallen, that rest did not continue, for His creatures' condition, the consequence of sin, had called forth on the part of God activity in grace and in power, of which the healing of that impotent man was a sample. In their zeal for God, as they thought, they were clearly going contrary to His mind and practice in the past, as well as in the present. "My Father worketh hitherto," attests that as to the past; "and I work," proved it as to the present. Their opposition evidenced that the revelation about the Father vouchsafed on this occasion by His Son, was one quite new to them. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." The Son by His acts, as well as by His words, was therefore revealing the Father; but God's professing people knew it not. Activity in goodness characterised the Father, as all might see.

Now, there is a danger lest the thought of divine mercy should weaken in the soul the sense of divine holiness. There was a danger too, unhappily illustrated in the Jews, of rejecting the Son on the plea of owning God. In view of all this the Lord revealed something more, viz., that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him" (v. 22, 23). So judgment must overtake the rejecters of the Son, who came from and was sent by the Father. On the other hand, life everlasting each one should have who heard the words of the Son, and believed the Father who had sent Him. It was a perilous thing to reject the Son who came in His Father's name. In the following chapter the Evangelist conducts us to Galilee, the only narrative in this gospel of the Lord's ministry in that northern district subsequent to the Baptist's imprisonment by Herod. Now, to the crowd around the Lord who had crossed the lake to follow Him, after He had fed them in the wilderness, He presents His Father as the giver of the true bread from heaven (vi. 32), explaining that He was that Bread, which came down from heaven to give life unto the world. But in a double character of a giver is the Father here introduced : He gives the true bread, and He gives people to His Son. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. .... For this is My Father's will, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day " (vi. 37, 38,40). Yet more. He draws men to His Son. For we read: "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. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard from the Father and hath learned, cometh unto Me" (vi. 44, 45). Thus far we have had a revelation of what the Father is, as made known in His ways in grace towards men. The Lord begins this teaching with the announcement of the way man's spiritual need can be met. From that He passed on to make known the present desire of the Father. He is seeking worshippers ; but such a class is only formed of those who are first made subjects of divine grace. Was it then a new thing for the Father to take an interest in, and care for, men on earth? No. He had been working in goodness and in grace ever since the fall. of man ; the works of power wrought by the Son attested this, and His presence amongst men was the proof of the earnest desire of the Father to minister life and salvation in all its completeness to those who were dead in trespasses and sins. The Son had come as the Bread from heaven to give life unto the world. Every one who shall believe on Him He will raise up at the last day; and all such are examples of the Father's power in grace, for none can come to the Son except the Father which hath sent Him draw them. There was a power then working, of which the unbelieving Jews were in ignorance, - a power put forth by the Father to gather souls to Christ, and thus to gather them out of the world to Him, who is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:2).

Hence the revelation of the Father in this gospel now changes somewhat in its character. It has set Him forth as seeking the best interests of fallen creatures; it will now present Him more in connection with those who have been drawn by Him to His Son, a company of people who are each and all really His children. For with the coming of Christ there was made plain, what indeed had been always true, the need of a divine operation on the soul by the word and the Holy Ghost. The individual must be born of God. The Jews declared God was their Father (viii. 41) Nationally that was, true ; but that could not secure to the individual everlasting blessing. This they had not understood, for they had not been subjects of divine grace, and they showed that in the enmity

they manifested against the Lord, as He told them : "If God were your Father, ye would love Me : for I proceeded forth and came from God ; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me " (viii. 42). Something more was wanted than subscription to a creed, or the resting in national privileges. If God was their Father, they would partake of a new, the divine, nature, and then become special subjects of divine paternal care. In the tenth chapter this last is alluded to, as the Lord announces the perfect security of His sheep: "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are One" (x. 29, 30). We have heard in the sixth chapter of the Father's gift to His Son. Reminded of that here, we also learn how secure the sheep must be if kept by His hand ; but surely this also intimates how precious they must be to the Father. He will never drop them, nor allow even one of them to be plucked out of His hand ; nor can there ever be any divergence in counsel or will between the Father and the Son as to the present and ultimate security of the sheep, for He and the Father are One. From the assurance of security we pass on in the twelfth chapter to the blessings of true discipleship, and the awful future for those who reject the Lord. If any man serve Christ, him will His Father honour (26). If any man reject Him, the word which He has spoken will judge him at the last day (48). A clear and most important announcement, which showed the earnest desire of both the Father and the Son that souls should be saved. With the echo of these words sounding in men's ears (ver. 44-50), and with the reminder that he was sent from the Father, and spake what the Father had said to Him, the Lord's public ministry as set forth in this gospel came to an end. Henceforth He is found only with His disciples, till apprehended by the officers on the night before His Cross. To the former He continues the revelation of the Father, telling them first of His own home on high - His Father's house, whither He was going to prepare a place for His disciples, for whom He will come to receive them to Himself, that where He is there they may be also (xiv. 2, 3). This tells us of His desire for His own, and of His Father's willingness to have them there ; for who could have a home in that house without the Father's sanction? But between the Lord's departure and return an interval was to elapse, so another Comforter would come to be with the disciples, sent by the Father at the Son's request, and in His name (xiv. 16, 26). Hence of His Father's ministry to His saints consequent on His departure the Lord here assures us, and tells us on what conditions we may count on the Father's love (verses 21, 23). Now, that ministry would not be fulfilled by sending merely the other Comforter. It would also be exercised by the Father in making the living branches of the true vine fruitful for Himself, and He would be glorified by the disciples bearing much fruit, and so should they be the disciples of the Son (xv. 2, 8).

After this, in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel, the Lord hands them over to the keeping and care of Him He has thus revealed, whilst He Himself should be absent on high, after first going to the Cross that the World might know that He loved the Father, and as the Father had given Him commandment, so He would do (xiv. 31), manifesting thus in His death, that which He had always displayed in life, the fruit of the divine nature, love and obedience.

He had come from the Father; He had revealed Him ; He would ascend to His Father. But ere He went on high, He sent that message by Mary Magdalene - a joy surely to Him to give, to her to convey, and to the disciples to receive - which, whilst marking the difference there must ever be between Him and them, told of grace in which they shared "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (xx. 17). The same divine person is God and Father of Him and of us.

Chapter 6

01.04. THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER IN THE OTHER GOSPELS.

THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER IN THE OTHER GOSPELS. IN pursuance of our subject, we must now turn to the other Gospels. We have seen traced out in that of John the revelation, first, of what the Father does in the activity of divine grace to those who need life, and deserve judgment; and next, how He cares for those whom He has given to His Son. Coming to the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord first presents Him as the One with whom those, who are disciples in truth, are brought into relationship, and have become partakers of the divine nature. His character, therefore, and His ways are to furnish them with instruction for their walk through this scene. So the Lord often calls Him "your Father," besides speaking of Him at times as His Father ; for obviously there might be occasions when He could only fittingly speak of Him in relation to Himself. Two examples will make this plain. For the first, let us turn to Matthew 15:13, where He replied to His disciples, on being told that the scribes and Pharisees who came from Jerusalem were offended by His rebuke, "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Now, what were His words in John 6:44-45? "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. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto Me." It is plain, since they rejected His teaching, that they had not heard from the Father. They were not God’s children. Had He said on that occasion "your Father" it would have reminded the disciples of the relationship in which they were to God; but saying "My heavenly Father" the Lord would impress on all the absolute necessity of hearkening to His Father, and of being plants of His planting. A second example is met with in Matthew 18:10, where the Lord is warning the disciples against despising a little child, assigning as a reason, that " in the heavens their angels" (i.e., those of the heavenly host who represent them in the presence of God)" do always behold the face of My Father which is in the heavens." "My Father" He said, not "their Father" because it was not here a question of the relationship of the little child to God. The angelic ministry referred to is quite independent of that, being God’s provision for the creature as such. Their need of salvation is taught in succeeding verses. But when addressing disciples, taking them on the ground of their profession, He tells them of His Father as their Father. None but He of course could understand the full blessedness implied in such a relationship. Still, where it existsd it was a very real thing. His Father was the Father of all those who were His disciples in truth. Such, as born of God, were partakers of the divine nature ; hence the character and ways of their Father should be displayed by them. No one on earth has seen God the Father ; yet something of Him should be learned by men from the walk, the daily life, of the Lord’s disciples ; and their Father would be glorified, as men saw that which was right, and owned that it was right, practised by His disciples. Of this the Lord speaks in the sermon on the mount: " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in the heavens" (v. 16). Something of what He is would thus be set forth. A new motive is here presented. Ezekiel had declared that the name of God was profaned among the Gentiles by the

people of Israel, captives in a foreign land, and there manifesting by their evil ways what they were. Now, ere God can sanctify His name through their restoration (Ezekiel 36:20; Ezekiel 36:23), the Lord taught His disciples of the opportunity and of the service entrusted to them in causing, by their good works, men around them to glorify their Father who is in the heavens. As His people, Israel ought to have shown the Gentiles what it was that was well-pleasing to God. As His children, the disciples should be illustrations of the moral character of their Father. In daily life this should be ; but there would be occasions to call for it in a special way. Of such He reminded them when giving directions for their conduct under persecution ; for, loving their enemies, praying for their persecutors, and being merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful, they would be His sons who maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Thus they would be perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect, profiting by the revelation given of Him who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil (Matthew 5:44-48 ; Luke 6:35-36). The Lord had spoken of persecutions to which they might be exposed, and persecutions at the hand of those who professed true zeal for God, and who were reckoned on earth amongst God’s people. The Highest, then, whilst owning them as His sons, would not of necessity shield them from the hatred and opposition of their fellows. Rather would it be the occasion to show forth who and what was their Father. But more. If God was their Father, they had to do with Him who seeth in secret, as well as to represent Him in their ways before men. He seeth in secret: this was to be remembered when engaged in those things which are commonly known amongst men as religious duties. So the Master continued His instruction : "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness* before men, to be seen of them ; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in the heavens" (vi. i).

* "Righteousness," not "alms," is the better reading here. In a threefold way could they practice this - viz., in almsgiving (2-4), in prayer (5-15), and in fasting (16-18); but in whichever of these ways they practised righteousness, remembering from whom was their reward, they were to do it to Him who seeth in secret. This the Lord impressed on them. Their Father’s eye was on them. Their Father was well acquainted with that which they were doing; He would not forget it. " Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee" ** ** "Openly" should probably be omitted in each case.

(4, 6, 18). What encouragement! and at the same time, what a wholesome reminder! There is something, too, very gracious in the Lord’s teaching here. " Thy Father," He said, not " your Father," referring thereby to the birth-tie formed between each true disciple and God. Each can say, " He is my Father;" and, if finding himself alone on earth from whatever cause, with none to turn to here, there is always that eye looking down on him, the eye of his Father who seeth in secret. The eye of his Father. One sees in Psalms 139:1-24 : what an uneasy feeling the saint experiences under the sense of God’s eye being on him, till he gets hold of God’s thoughts (14-18). The eye of my Father being on me should produce no such uneasiness ; rather the contrary, assured that neither locality nor darkness can hinder that eye resting on me. On Peter at midnight, sleeping between two soldiers in prison, and on Paul at night in the storm, when for many days neither sun nor stars had appeared, that eye looked down. The lights in heaven could be obscured by clouds or thickness ; but nothing comes between our Father’s eye and the object it would rest on, for He seeth in secret: a word of comfort, yet a word of warning also ; for is there not a danger of forgetting before whom we are, and who beholds us ? The Lord now speaks of prayer. Vain repetitions are needless, for "your Father," He declared,"knoweth what things ye have need

of before ye ask Him " (8). He not only sees each one, but knows all about each one, being cognisant of all that of which each has need. What confidence should this impart. God is my Father, and He knows what things I have need of before I ask Him. But how often has each one surely in the past forgotten this, even if there have been times when the soul has stayed itself on the remembrance of it. Is prayer then unneeded, a useless exercise? It is unneeded as the medium for informing God of what it is that we are in want; but it is not an exercise thrown away, when the child unbosoms and unburdens itself to its Father who is in heaven ; for it is the appointed way of relief for the heart of the creature thus to pour out its requests to God. So the Lord goes on to teach the disciples how they were to pray, and in doing so teaches them about the Father, who has a kingdom, who daily cares for His children, and who can act in grace, forgiving them when they have sinned. As to His kingdom, it will come, so they are told to pray for it - a kingdom which embraces heaven and earth, a kingdom really bounded only by the limits of created things, a kingdom which shall last for ever and ever. For doubtless the petition, "Thy kingdom come," looks on beyond millennial times for its full accomplishment, even to the eternal state, when, all things having been subdued to the Son, He Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all; for then He will have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father (1 Corinthians 15:25-28). Yet ere this is effected, to which we are taught to look forward, the heavenly saints will experience an answer to this petition in measure, as they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father throughout the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:43). For it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32); but into it only those on earth now enter who do His will (Matthew 7:21).

If any ask who is our heavenly Father, the answer comes, It is God, who shall reign with undisputed sway for ever and ever. All that has resisted His authority, and everyone who has attempted to thwart His purposes, will then be completely and finally vanquished. Nor that only, but for ever and ever will such be obliged to acknowledge His might, and the impossibility of successful resistance to His will. Now, sin is rampant on earth ; ere long, it will seem to triumph for a season. But He who is our Father will triumph fully in the end. To that He looks forward, and teaches His children to do the same. For it is not from lack of power that He has not already interposed. His will is done in heaven; it will be certainly done on earth. Nor is it from lack of interest in His saints that He lets them suffer. He is their Father; but He waits till the set time has come to deal finally with the power of darkness. His long-suffering is salvation (2 Peter 3:15). Of this, each one of His children is an illustration.

Almighty power then is His, yet combined with tender pity and constant thought for His children here on earth. Of old, in the wilderness, Israel experienced Jehovah’s care, as they went forth on the week-day mornings to gather the needed supply of manna provided for that large encampment whilst they were taking their rest. They slept, but Jehovah was working - raining down for them food for the coming day, in the strength of which they could go forth for the ordinary occupations of life. Now, His children are to acknowledge and to prove that He daily cares for them. It is the part of a father to provide for his children ; it is characteristic of our Father that He cares daily for His. "Give us this day our daily bread," teaches that, and the Lord’s instruction about the birds and the lilies is to impress it on us (Matthew 6:25-34 ; Luke 12:22-31). "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? "Again, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them

shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore ; ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31). To guard us from anxious care, we are told that our Father feedeth the birds. To keep the heart calm and confident in danger from enemies, the Lord reminds His own that they are of more value than many sparrows. Yet how slow, surely many a one will say, is he to learn these lessons based on the revelation of the Father. But not only are we dependent creatures, we are also sinful creatures, and need, how often, forgiveness at His hand. Yet this will our Father extend to us, if we act as His children, showing a forgiving spirit towards others (Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:14-15); and a later revelation reminds us that failure on our part does not break the link of relationship between the saint and God (1 John 2:1-29 : i). A most gracious intimation for the heart when it may specially need it.

All-powerful, then in the universe, yet ministering to the weakest, forgiving the undeserving, and willing to direct and to deliver His children from evil; such is our Father as set forth in this prayer by His Son. Nor need we fear to trouble Him by presenting our requests. Though He is God, who orders all things in heaven and earth, He would set each one perfectly free before Him to tell out his wants, since His Son has told us, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; .... If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in the heavens give good things to them that ask Him" (Matthew 7:7-11). Another branch of this subject should be noticed, viz., the feelings of the Father’s heart as revealed in the Word. And, first, in relation to Him who is His well-beloved Son? In the hearing of many dull of understanding, and unable to appreciate the truth which He was revealing, the Son, ever in the bosom of the Father, told out, as He only could, some of the secrets of that bosom, both when speaking in parables and when speaking plainly to those around Him. In two parables He set this forth : the one, that of the husbandmen and the vineyard ; the other, that of the marriage supper for the king’s son. In the former, related by the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the preciousness of the Son to the Father is declared. Messenger after messenger had been sent by the owner of the vineyard to receive its fruits from the husbandmen, but all in vain. What, then, was to be done? The husbandmen had slighted the messengers, and worse, had even put some of them to death, thus evidencing the spirit which animated them, and showing the treatment they justly deserved at the hands of the owner of the vineyard. But he was slow to anger, unwilling, if it could be averted, to pour out on them the vials of his wrath. Not a word had come from the husbandmen expressing regret for the past and promising amendment in the future. No suppliant came seeking for the owner’s forgiveness. Obdurate these men had proved ; unsoftened, unsubdued they remained. What could be done? In Luke 20:13, the lord of the vineyard is described as taking counsel with himself. "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son." In Mark (xii. 6), the preciousness of that son to his father is dwelt upon. He had yet "one, a beloved son ; he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son." Knowing, as we do, of whom the Lord spake - of His Father and of Himself we are taught the Father’s affection for His Son, as the object to Him most precious; willing, indeed, to send Him, but only as the last resource! In the parable of the marriage supper for the king’s son, found in Matthew 22:1-14, we are taught of the Father’s delight in His Son, and of the desire that others should share His joy. But all this fell on hearts estranged from God. The effect of the first parable on such was to make the chief priests and Pharisees seek to lay hands on Him; the effect of the second parable was to make the Pharisees take counsel to entangle Him in His talk. Known, of course, to the Lord

beforehand was all this, yet it did not deter Him from uttering those parables; for if the chief priests and Pharisees could hear them unmoved, others might profit by them, and many in after ages get refreshment from what He then unfolded of the feelings towards Him of His Father's heart, which brings out to us the greatness of the grace displayed in sending His Son. Yet not till we see Him in the glory conferred on Him by His Father (John 17:24), gazing on Him as arrayed in all the tokens of His Father's love, shall we understand as far as creatures can understand it, what divine parental love is in its fulness.

Yet, thank God, we are not to be spectators merely of its display. We too share, and shall share for ever, in the Father's love, of which the Lord spake when on earth. To whom it can flow forth, we read ; and the parable of the prodigal son illustrates it, as the father therein welcomes to his bosom the one who had sinned against heaven and before him. We know of what the Lord was really speaking, desirous to acquaint men with His Father, and to tell out something of His love. Many and many a one has found light and warmth flow into his heart as he has perused that parable ; and, if the Lord tarries, many more may experience the same blessing. The story is told so touchingly; the scene is described so graphically. None need be afraid to cast themselves on His. father. None can say they cannot understand what it was the Lord intended to teach, yet none can fathom the love of which He was speaking. Thank God, none are asked to do that; but they are invited to share in it.

01.05. CHILDREN OF GOD.

CHILDREN OF GOD. IN the foregoing papers we have gathered up something of the revelation, as set forth by the Son, of His Father, who is called in other parts of the New Testament, as being their author, the Father of lights (James 1:17), the Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9), the Father of mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3), and the Father of glory (Ephes. 1: 17); all instructing and comforting statements for those who are His children. For it will not satisfy His heart to be merely Creator the author of lights, mercies, or glory. He desires to have saints, subjects of divine election, and gathered out in time from mankind at large, who shall know His parental love, and enjoy for ever the privileges and the portion He designs for His children. But who are these? Of divine election angels are subjects (1 Timothy 5:21) ; as being holy, too, are they characterised (Mark 8:38 ; Revelation 14:10). But relationship to God as children is peculiar to the elect of the human race. They only of God’s creatures are connected with Him by the tie of birth, though angels, as deriving their existence from God, are called in the Old Testament His sons (Genesis 6:2 ; Job 1:6; Job 2:1-13 : i ; 38: 7). But in the New Testament, none but those who share in redemption by the blood of Christ are called the children of God. Now it is God who makes this known. He might, of course, had it pleased Him, have rested contented with knowing the relationship of Father to His children as a joy for His own heart, and a secret to be kept in His own bosom; but He desired that the children should know of the birth-tie which exists between Him and them, and of the privileged position before all other creatures which He has deigned to bestow on them. For not only are they His children, they are also His sons, and will enjoy the privilege of adoption for ever. A word here on the meaning of these terms. Child tells of the birth-tie between the parent and itself, than which nothing can be nearer. Son speaks of the position enjoyed before others: "Not a servant, but a son" (Galatians 4:7). One might adopt a person to be one’s son, but only one’s own offspring could be one’s child. In human arrangements, children have not always the place and privilege of sons. An illustration may help the reader. Abraham had several children by his wife Keturah, as well as Isaac by Sarah. All of them could call him father; all were his children ; but Isaac alone had the privilege and position of his son. He gave all that he had to Isaac (Genesis 25:5), who was known by all as his son. The inheritance was his, and his alone (Genesis 24:36). To be Abraham’s offspring was one thing, to be his son was quite another. With us who are God’s children it is different. We are His children, and we are His sons. All the privileges which belong to His sons are ours in the greatness of His grace. Both nearness to Him as His children, and position before Him as His sons, He has designed for us to enjoy for ever and ever. Moreover, with the birth-tie, as well as with the privilege of being sons, is linked the inheritance. Romans 8:17 speaks of it in connection with the former: "If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Galatians 4:7 speaks of it in connection with the latter: "If a son, then an heir through God." It is evidently the desire of our Father that we should be acquainted with His purposes about us. Purposes, we say, because the entrance upon our inheritance is still future. What it is, Ephes. 1: 9-14 would teach us; meanwhile, we there too learn that we have the Holy Ghost now given to us as the earnest of it, until the redemption of the purchased possession ; for as yet the Lord Jesus Christ, with whom we are joint heirs, has not received it. A passage in Old Testament history we

may well here recall. There was a memorable day in the life of the patriarch Abraham, when God told him to survey the land which he should possess. He had just yielded to Lot. As the meek one, he did not strive for his place or rights. He allowed his nephew to choose his place of sojourn, which like a selfish man he did, though outwardly in appearance giving way to Abraham. Lot journeyed east, choosing for himself the well-watered plain of Jordan. Lot chose : Abraham left his interests in God's hands. Who was best off? History will tell us. Lot lifted up his eyes, and coveted the best pastoral district for himself. Abraham subsequently, but at God's command, lifted up his eyes to behold the land which was his. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:14-15). Wherever, then, he looked around his eye lighted on part of the land of his inheritance, which God had promised to give to him. But all his security for the possession of that land was in God's promise ; no other token as to it was vouchsafed him.

Like Abraham, we have the promise of an inheritance ; and, like him, wherever we look around our eye lights on part of it. Northward, southward, eastward, westward, Abraham looked, but only looked on the land which would some day be his. Northward, southward, eastward, westward we can look, and still only look on part of our inheritance. But upward, also, we can turn our eye, and there, too, it rests on part of our inheritance. Nowhere on thisglobe can we take our stand to look around, or to look up, where the eye will not rest on some part of that portion which is ours as heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. On some part, we must say, for as yet we have not surveyed it all. Abraham could walk through the length and breadth of the land of his inheritance. We as yet are unable to survey the extent of ours. Of its limits we have heard, but have never seen them. Like Abraham, we must leave earth ere we can enjoy the inheritance promised us ; but, differing from him, we have not only the word of our God about it, but the Holy Ghost has been given to us as the earnest of it (Ephes. 1: 13, 14). Most extensive is it, since it embraces heaven and earth. And what the proper portion of God's child is, a little word of the Lord Jesus Christ's, when on earth, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, shall tell us, in the words of the father to the elder brother: "Child" (as it really is), "thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine" (31). Such is the place, and such is the portion of God's children - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. And though revealed comparatively late in the world's history, we can see it was no afterthought with our God; for the inheritance destined for Israel, and on which they entered, though never in any sense in its completeness till the days of David and Solomon, comprised the territory which they conquered east of Jordan (Numb, 21: 24, 35 ; Deuteronomy 2:24; Deuteronomy 2:31; Deuteronomy 3:12), as well as that on the wes - a figure of earth and heaven, which we shall inherit with the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's children. This speaks of a class, a company of His creatures, chosen out of the children of men - born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God (l Peter 1: 23). The characteristics of the Word, here described, as the instrument by which the children are begotten, tell us of the character of the life of those who are the subjects of the new birth. It is incorruptible and everlasting. Born again ; born, or begotten, of God. In such terms are they spoken of. Born again shows it is an operation of God quite distinct from natural generation. Born of God reminds us of the grace He thus manifests to them. If we ask, What moved God thus to act? The answer can only be furnished by Himself, whose mind no creature can fathom, and of

which none, as we have said, could know anything save as He was pleased to reveal it. "Having willed it" (or, "of His own will") "begat He us by the word of truth," is the answer furnished us by the Word (James 1:18). Sovereign will, which none can bend, and which none can successfully oppose, moved Him to have creatures of the human race in the relationship of children to Himself. Nor is this privilege confined to one nation upon earth; for the evangelist John declares, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Children, not sons, is the term, for John never writes of sons till he has carried his readers on to the eternal state. Then, and then only, does he so describe God's saints. "He that overcometh shall inherit these things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7)- Paul, on the other hand, writes of both as now true of the saints.

We have spoken of the inheritance as our proper portion, if God's children. Connected with that is the condition in which we shall enjoy it, viz., the being in glory. In this, creation has a deep and personal interest, for its condition, made subject to vanity, must remain unchanged till we are in glory. Then it "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God " (Romans 8:21). Hence we understand its joy depicted in the Word at the prospect, as well as at the establishment of the kingdom in power. The joy at the prospect, when the Lamb takes the book to open the seals, John has put on record in Revelation 5:13-14. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,* and in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen, and the elders fell down and worshipped."

* This is different language from that ofPhp 2:10. There, by those "under the earth" the lost are referred to. Here, creatures neither human nor angelic are intended.

Unanimity will pervade non-intelligent creation at that time. Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea will be in accord in the earnest desire for the redemption of the purchased possession. Now, the whole creation groans and travails in pain together. When the Lord comes back in power, its key-note will be changed, and created things will accord Him a glad welcome. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth" (Psalms 96:11-13). What a contrast it will be, creation rejoicing instead of groaning. But another contrast, truly awful to think of, will then be displayed ; creation rejoicing with one accord, whilst many of the human race will be angry at the return of the crucified One to reign, and will combine to keep Him out, if possible, of His earthly kingdom (Revelation 11:18; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:19).

We have spoken of the way by which we become God's children. How wholly dependent on His grace are all those between whom and Himself the birth-tie has been formed. By the word He begets them. Then He had to speak, and to speak to His sinful creatures, ere such a relationship could be formed. Had He not willed thus to speak, no creature could have shared in such a privilege. Had He not spoken, and that to each subject of divine grace individually, none of Adam's race could ever have become His children. The thought, the desire, the carrying out of it were all of

Himself. Creatures formed to enjoy divine parental love should for ever surround Him. Joy indeed would be theirs ; but joy too would be His, a joy which never ends, as the Lord has indicated in the feast consequent on the return of the prodigal. "They began to be merry." Over whom did the father rejoice? Over one who deserved no favour, but the opposite, at his hand. No wonder the evangelist John wrote, " Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know if He (or it) shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-24 : I, 2). Joint heirs with Christ; in glory with Him ; and like Him : these favours will characterise us who are God's children.

How God delights to tell us about the present and about the future! Now are we children of God. By and by we shall be like His Son, bearing the image of the heavenly One (1 Corinthians 15:49); or, as elsewhere expressed, our body of humiliation changed into conformity to His body of glory (Php 3:21). And since that will then be true, moral conformity to Him should characterise each one of us now. For as born of God we are partakers of the divine nature, and as such should be imitators of God, as dear children (Ephes. 5: i), doing "all things," we read, "without murmurings and disputings ; that ye may be blameless and harmless, children* 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 ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain " (Php 2:14-16).

*Children " is the word here. On this line of teaching John dwells in his first epistle, in which, telling us of the characteristics of the divine nature, in that God is light, and God is love (1 John 1:5; 1 John 4:8), he reminds us of the manner in which they were displayed in the Lord Jesus on earth, viz., in obedience and love, and sets Him before us as the One from whom we are to learn, and to shew in our walk what it is to be partakers of that nature. It was nothing new in the world's history for God to have children from amongst men. Every saint as born of.Him is, and was, His child. But the revelation of this relationship to the individuals awaited the coming of His Son, though, as we have seen, something of the character of God as a Father was at an earlier time made known. The Son, however, having come, what is suited for those who are God's children becomes a subject of divine revelation. On this, as we have said, John particularly dwells. In the gospel he had written (i. 18), "No one hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." In his epistle he writes (1 John 4:1-2), "No one hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." What God is, whom no one hath seen, was declared by the Son. What He is, whom no one hath seen, saints know about, who love one another, for He then dwells in them. Born of God, righteousness should characterise him (John 2:29). Born of Him, brotherly love should be in action (1 John 4:7), loving those who are born of Him (1 John 5:1-21 : i). All this is instruction for God's children in common, flowing out of the character of the nature of which they are all partakers. And on this the apostle dwells pretty fully, recognising at the same time different stages of Christian life, some being babes, some young men, and some fathers, and for each class he has also a suited word, as may be seen in 1 John 2:13-27. For each and all of His children has God a Father's heart. Here we can say nationality cannot come in to separate. One family it is, one company. The Lord died, the evangelist John tells us, not for the nation of Israel only, but that He should gather together in one

the children of God who were scattered abroad (John 11:52). Hence the privileges of some as children are the privileges of all who are born of God. So Paul, writing to the Galatians, who as Gentiles had never been enrolled as burgesses of the earthly Jerusalem, could tell them that as Christians they were children of the free woman, as Isaac was, and belonged to the heavenly Jerusalem which is free, he writes, and "our mother" (Galatians 4:26). For they, like us, lived after the cross of Christ. What a difference that made, as the Syro-phoenician woman can attest - a privilege of the children she knew well, but only to own that it was not hers. The children have their place at the table, the dogs are underneath it, so can only eat of the crumbs which fall from it (Mark 7:28). Whilst the middle wall of partition was to be maintained she could only be as a dog, and could not occupy a child’s place. Thank God, it is not so now. All believers on the Lord Jesus are born of God, and thus are members, through divine grace, of His family, and are to look forward to the Father’s house as their abiding, everlasting home.

01.06. SONS OF GOD.

SONS OF GOD.

"SONS" of God. Such is the dignity bestowed on all believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle John, as we have remarked in a previous paper, dwells on the favour of our being "children" of God, whereas the apostle Paul treats of both. This is in keeping with the ministry of these writers. As John's gospel is full of the revelation of the Father, so his first epistle, as we have already pointed out, treats of the fruits of the divine nature, which should be, and as they should be, displayed in all those who partake of it, viz., those born of God. Yet he does not treat of the subject in a dry, didactic way, as one laying down a law, for he presents it to us in One, whose walk through this world was the perfect expression of it. "We show unto you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2). "God is light" and "God is love."

These two short sentences, penned by the evangelist and apostle John, briefly sum up the characteristics of the divine nature. Hence, when fully displayed in a man, they will be manifested in obedience, righteousness, and love. But where could be found one who would furnish the sacred writer with a perfect example of it? An example of one who manifested hatred of his brother the apostle finds in Adam's firstborn. For an example of One in whom brotherly love was perfectly shown forth, he had to run through four thousand years of the world's history, and then could point to it as displayed only by Him who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary (1 John 3:12; 1 John 3:16). How great the contrast, though easily stated. In the one case, life was taken by force ; in the other, it was willingly laid down. Cain in hatred slew his brother Abel; the Lord in His love laid down His life for us. But more than this comes out; for the ruined condition of Adam's race by the fall is clearly displayed, and the virulent poison of sin is seen to have rapidly developed itself. The first man of Adam's race who had a brother, slew that brother; and to no one born in sin could John point as perfectly illustrating in his ways on earth true brotherly love.

Such facts speak volumes to those who give heed to them, and sound the death-knell to all pretension that the natural- man has in him at the bottom that which is really good. So to Him who is the Second Man, the Last Adam, the Beginning of the Creation of God, John turns ; for in Him true love was perfectly displayed by His dying for us on the cross. "Hereby know we the love, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Let us mark the apostle's language: "Know we," he wrote. This is more expressive to us than "perceive we." We have known love, for it has been perfectly displayed, and that in a way which never can be equalled, and never can be repeated. There is but one Only-begotten Son of God, and He dieth no more (Romans 6:9). But we are sons as well as children. So as all the nearness to God, which the birth-tie expresses, is ours who are His children, all that is connected with the blessedness of His sons is ours too, who are saints of God. And as the characteristics of the divine nature, and how they should be manifested in us who are God's children, the Word, as we have seen, sets before us; so, on the other hand, to certain features of the walk of saints attention is directed, as proofs that such are thereby to be known as sons of God. In the one case,

we learn what we should be because we are children; in the other, we show that we are sons by that which we do. In illustration of this last remark, the following passages may be cited:- "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons (not children) of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). Again the Lord speaks, "Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the sons of God " (Matthew 5:9). And St. Paul writes, " As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God " (Romans 8:14). In further confirmation of the way this term "son" is used, and as helping, it may be, the reader the better to seize the import of it, we would remark that the Jews, whilst by natural descent they were Abraham's children, are called, as having a recognised position on earth in connection with that patriarch, "sons of the stock of Abraham" (Acts 13:26). So also are they always really styled in the New Testament, "sons of Israel," never "children of Israel." "Sons," too, "of the kingdom" are they designated (Matthew 8:12). By natural descent they claimed a right to the kingdom on earth, though really only the godly remnant of them will receive it when the Lord comes in power (Daniel 7:27). Christians, on the other hand, are called "sons" of Abraham, but never children of Abraham. We are his sons who are justified by faith, he being the father of all them that believe, for "they which are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). We are not his children as offspring of his stock - 1:e., by natural descent.

Other instances of the use of this term, but in awful contrast to what has just been stated, may here be noticed. Scripture writes of those who refuse the gospel of God's grace as "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 5:6). They were, in common with all of us, "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). They are known by their rejection of the Gospel as "sons of disobedience," having refused to obey it. Judas Iscariot and Antichrist are respectively termed the "son of perdition" (John 17:12 ; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). The tares are designated as "sons of the wicked one" (Matthew 13:38). Bar-jesus, the sorcerer, was addressed as "son of the devil" (Acts 13:10) ; and the Lord termed the proselytes of the hypocritical Pharisees sons of hell - or, rather, "of Gehenna " (Matthew 23:15). Each and all of these openly evidence by their ways what they are, and whither they are going.

Again, speaking in this figurative manner, we meet with the term, "sons of the bride-chamber" (Matthew 9:15 ; Mark 2:19 ; Luke 5:34), as being professedly and openly connected with it; and Christians are called "sons of light, and sons of day: not of night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). Then saints, in the parable of the tares, are designated as "sons of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:38), for they will certainly inherit it; whilst mere men of the world are called "sons of this world" (Luke 16:8), being in their generation "wiser than the sons of light."

Instances enough, it is hoped, have been adduced in illustration of the bearing of this term, which, it will be seen, has reference to the position of those thus described. Let us now turn, in connection with the subject, to that which more immediately concerns us who can really rejoice in the privilege of being sons of God. That such a class should be found on earth, Hosea (i. 10) foretold, and though writing of Israelites, uses the term "sons," which, St. Paul teaches us, makes the passage applicable to those who had been Gentiles : "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people ; there shall they be called sons of the living God" (Romans 9:26). In proof of God's grace to Israel, the apostle quotes Hosea 2:23 ; as showing God would bless Gentiles, he quotes Hosea 1:10. On this truth, viz., that believers are God's sons, the Apostle Paul, we have before remarked, at times dwells, distinguishing it from the blessing of

relationship as a child, as well as from the condition of a slave - a condition similar to which those under age were found. In Romans, in a passage already referred to (viii. 14-16) we read about the former; in Galatians 4:7, we are instructed about the latter - "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir through God." Now this privilege, we thus learn, is common to all God's saints in the present time; and though foretold centuries before the Lord's first advent, it was only consciously known after His incarnation. A passage in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 may here be quoted illustrative of the development of revelation in connection with this line of teaching: "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you." So far is the teaching of the prophecy (Jeremiah 31:9), and of Old Testament revelation. The apostle now adds, "And ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Whose sons and daughters will such be ? The sons and daughters of Jehovah, Israel's God, the self-existing One, who showed that He was the true God when He executed judgment on the idols of Egypt. The sons and daughters, too, of God Almighty, the God of the patriarchs, and who revealed Himself as the Almighty to Abraham when as yet He had no son. But here we must make a distinction. It is one thing to show by our ways that we are God's sons and daughters, and to be allowed because of them consciously to enjoy in our heart the sense of that privilege; it is another thing to become His sons. How is this brought about? Scripture on this point is plain. " Ye are all sons of God " (so the apostle wrote) " through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). We become God's children as born again by the Word (1 Peter 1:23); we become God's sons through faith in Christ Jesus. Any word of God may quicken a soul. In all ages of man's history has God had children. Faith, however, in the Lord Jesus Christ is needed for any in the present time to become God's sons. So, only since the ascension has the privilege been known of being God's sons. " Through faith in Christ Jesus," writes the apostle. Now the Lord is never called Christ Jesus till after the ascension.

Sons of God! The apostle, writing to the Galatians, calls their attention to this, as he points out the difference between an heir under age and one grown up. The former differs nothing from a slave, being under tutors and governors, till the time appointed of the father. Old Testament saints were always, and indeed all saints till after the cross were, really, in that condition, which may be termed nonage. Now, saints are sons as well as children, being viewed as grown up - come of age, as it were - and so no longer infants; and this is true of all real Christians - as Scripture would view a Christian, whatever the stage of Christian growth, whether little children, young men, or fathers. For of little children, John writes (1 John 2:13; 1 John 2:27), that they knew the Father, and had received the Holy Ghost. Now it should be remembered, we do not become sons by receiving the gift of the Spirit; we are sons through faith in Christ Jesus. "And because ye (i.e., Galatians) are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our (not your) hearts, crying, Abba, Father " (Galatians 4:6). The importance of this to meet Galatian error becomes manifest. They conceived that they needed more than they had got, and that they would secure it by being circumcised and keeping the law. The apostle demonstrates that they were grown up children already. To put themselves under law would be to get into a state of nonage, out of which those Christians, who like Paul had once been in it, had been delivered by the death of Christ on the cross for them (Galatians 4:4-5). The Galatian saints were not only children but sons. To have told them simply that they were children would not have helped them ; to teach them that they were already sons met the snare set for their feet. They enjoyed what those under law did not and could not, the privileges of sons. Hence was made transparent the folly of being circumcised and keeping the law

to obtain full Christian blessing. The privileges, we have said, of sons. What are they? To one connected with this relationship the Lord referred in Matthew 17:25-27 - "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own sons, or of strangers? Peter saith, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the sons " (for of such He speaks)" free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money ; that take, and give unto them, for Me and thee." The Lord here associates Peter with Himself in the relationship of son to the One to whom the kingdom belonged, intimating that which would be subsequently taught as true of all believers now, that they are sons of God, and therefore free. On another occasion did the Lord touch on this theme, when, surrounded by publicans and sinners, He uttered the parable of the prodigal son, and told His hearers what the son thought to say to his father: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Full well did the prodigal know the difference between a servant and a son. A child he was by birth, but the position of a son in the house was a different matter. To be reinstated* in that he did not expect, nor was he thinking of asking it. But could he be anything but as a son in that house? That, he owned, was for his father to settle. A son’s place he clearly did not deserve. Yet he was to have no other. His father settled the question, and rightly so. And he let his son hear of it, as he called his servants to rejoice with him, saying, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." All of grace, surely; all of grace to us it is, certainly. Like the prodigal, we do not deserve a son’s place, but the Father is pleased to give us nothing less ; for nothing less will satisfy His heart.

* A word on the form of this parable may be helpful. The occasion which called it forth is stated in the opening of the chapter (Luke 15:1-32:) : "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." The prodigal, then, was the publican and sinner, who was an Israelite in common with the Pharisee, and therefore had shared in all the privileges belonging to Israel. Hence he could say, "am no man worthy to be called thy son" - language which could not suit a Gentile who had never enjoyed the privileges of Israel. This brings us to notice another privilege connected with our subject - that of adoption. God will not rest till we are displayed before all in the position of sons. To Israel as God’s first-born belongs the adoption (Romans 9:4). For any, however, to share in that, they must be descended from Jacob. But a better blessing by far is ours, though similar in character, for we are "foreordained unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephes. 1: 5). We shall be before God, holy and without blame. But more than that is the desire of our God for us; He would have us before Him in the position of sons, and He acquaints us with it as part of that to which we are called, and of which now we are to know the hope (Ephes. 1: 18). Hence the Holy Ghost is given to us as the spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15), whilst we await adoption, the redemption of our body (23) ; for God’s purpose in this stops not short of blessing for our whole person. For this, then, we wait; and for it creation, which now groans under the weight and sorrow caused by sin, also waits, even for the manifestation of the sons of God (19). What a day that will be ! Till then, in the words of the hymn, we may say - "All creation Travails, groans, and bids Thee come."

He will come (Revelation 22:20). Meanwhile, we are furnished by the Son Himself with a revelation of the Father, and are taught of the privileges which belong to those who have a place in the

Father’s heart, a home in the Father’s house, and a portion in what belongs to the Father, as God’s heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. For we are free; we are sons in the house ; we shall have a son’s place before all for ever. Here the sketch of our subject, relationship with God, naturally ends ; but the blessing and the joy of it will surely for us only deepen throughout eternity.

Chapter 9

02.00. Remarks on the Tabernacle

Remarks on the Tabernacle

C E Stuart

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02.01. Prefatory Note

Prefatory Note The history of the Tabernacle, remarks on which form the subject of the following pages, spans a period of well nigh five hundred years. During all that time in form, in measurement, and in use, it remained unchanged. In its structure, it foreshadowed the history in connection with earth of one man, the Lord Jesus, the like of whom had then not been seen by men, and whose history in connection with earth, commenced nearly nineteen centuries ago, is not yet finished; having this peculiarity, which can be read in the parti-coloured curtains, and in the veil, that the day of His triumph and power was only to come after that of His death.

It set forth in the services which went on at its altars, and in the holiest, various aspects of the death of Christ; the ritual in connection with it portraying in type, that the way of approach to God for any of Adam's race can only be by the death of the accepted sacrifice; and that entrance into God's presence for such could only be by blood - the blood of the sin offering. Yet, whilst the Tabernacle ritual was in force, that way was not made manifest.

It represented in the priesthood connected with it the priestly service of the Lord Jesus in relation to His sacrifice, depicting in type, as Aaron moved through its chambers to the mercy seat, the entrance of the Lord Jesus into the holiest by His own blood.

It witnessed too of God's delight in the death of His Son, foreshadowed in the burnt-offering, which typified it, burning on the altar all night till the morning.

It witnessed too of His delight in His redeemed people, in that He could dwell among them; yet its existence, and continued use declared, that the time for God to enter into rest, and for millennial blessing to be enjoyed upon earth, was still to be desired. With Solomon, the Prince of peace on the throne, and the Temple a fixed structure in existence, the Tabernacle's use and service was ended. It was never again seen, or resorted to. With these prefatory remarks before him the reader is invited to peruse the chapters which follow.

02.02. Its Erection.

Its Erection.

Moses, on behalf of the people, had drawn near to God, and had received the terms of the covenant (Ex. xx. - xxiii.) to be made between God and Israel; that covenant ratified by blood (xxiv.). Moses, by God's command, went up to Him in the mount to receive the Tables of the Law (xxiv. 12). There in the midst of the cloud which covered Sinai, Moses remained with God forty days and forty nights, during which he received divine communications about the erection of a Tabernacle, and the institution of the Aaronic priesthood (xxv. xxxi.)

God had taken up Israel to be His people. He had redeemed them by the arm of His power at the Red Sea (Ex, xv. 13), in fulfillment of that promise to Moses, which He commissioned him to communicate to Israel (Ex. vi. 6). Redemption being now an accomplished fact, God would dwell among them. Now this was something quite new. In patriarchal days God had from time to time visited earth, but He had never dwelt upon it. As soon, however, as He had a redeemed people, He made known His desire and intention at once to dwell among them. The thought was His, for though, in the Authorised Version of Exodus xv. 2, the people are made to say, "I will prepare Him an habitation,'' it seems better to translate the Hebrew there, as the Revised Version has done "1 will praise Him."*A Sanctuary the people looked for in the land (Ex. xv. 17), but God's purpose was to have one in their midst in the wilderness, and about it He gave Moses full directions. He desired to dwell among them.

{*The A.V. can plead in support of its rendering the Targum of Onkelos, the Revised Version is in harmony with the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Peshito Syriac translations.}

What a thought is this. The Holy One would dwell in the midst of His people. We say His people; for redemption, which made them His people, had recently been effected. Now, this is a cardinal principle. God only dwells on earth in the midst of those whom He has redeemed; but He does dwell in their midst. Of old it was in the Tabernacle, and subsequently in the Temple. Now His people are builded together for His habitation by the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22). He dwells in the whole company of them by the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Trinity, who is personally present on earth. Redeemed by the arm of divine power, God dwelt in the Tabernacle in the midst of Israel. Redeemed by blood, the blood of Christ (Eph. i. 7), God makes His people now His habitation by the Spirit. In Israel's history there was seen displayed what can flow from redemption. In Christian times we learn the privileges connected with redemption by blood. For God to dwell amongst His people is a wonderful favour. To form His dwelling place is a greater. How precious His redeemed ones are to Him. What delight He must have in them! To return. Moses on the mount with God learnt about the Sanctuary from God; and more, saw the pattern of it when up there with God. Hence, as the Hebrews reminds us (ix. 24), the earthly Tabernacle was not typical but anti-typical of the true one. Moses saw the heavenly one, the type to which the earthly one was to correspond.

It is manifest, then, that no one of the human race, unless taught as Moses was, could have devised the structure which was afterwards raised up, made as it was after the pattern, or type, showed to the law-giver in the mount. One must have known the type to have made the antitype. Its appearance, the materials, and colours of it, all were revealed by God (Ex. xxv. 3-7); metals, textile fabrics, skins, wood, precious stones, sweet incense, and oil, all these were to be pressed into service for the structure, or for the ritual connected with it. Of metals, gold, silver, and brass were used. Of textile fabrics, cloths of blue, purple, scarlet, and white, as well as of goats' hair, were to be employed. The wood was to be shittim wood, or acacia, which grew in the desert, and was, therefore, nigh at hand; whilst onyx stones and other precious stones would be required. Olive oil, too, and certain spices were all specially noted, some to be used in preparing the anointing oil (Ex. Xxx. 23-25), others in preparing the sweet incense (34). In this work Israel was to be employed. The unwrought materials were to be presented by the willing-hearted, and the working them up for use was to be done by the wise-hearted. Room would thus be found for all who were willing to have part in the work, to do what God had never required before - to "make Me," He said, "a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (Ex. xxv. 8). Minute were the directions, whether for the curtains and the boards of the structure, or for the vessels of the Sanctuary; size, shapes, colours - all were prescribed, leaving no room for man's suppositions to work; for who could possibly know, but God, what would suit Him? Who, on earth, but Moses, had seen the pattern to which the Tabernacle was to be conformed? For God's words were: "According to all that I show thee,* the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Ex. xxv. 9). God showed Moses the pattern when in the mount with Him.

He desired to dwell in the midst of Israel, and could, because they were redeemed. But what were the people in whose midst He would dwell? Whilst God was setting before Moses that which He desired, the people began to manifest what they were, and the golden calf and its worship was the result (xxxii.). Did God change His mind consequent on their sin? No. He had redeemed them. On that ground He could dwell among them. Their sin did not alter that, though unsparing judgment on some had to be executed (xxxii. 27, 28, 35).

{*The sense is plainer if we omit, as we have done above, the word in italics, after.} So after Moses had been up again for a second forty days and forty nights, and had brought down new Tables of the Law, the construction of the Tabernacle commenced; and now for the first time he communicated to the people what he had learnt on his first sojourn on Sinai with God. How gracious on God's part was this! He would give that people an opportunity of serving Him, and the privilege of having part in the erection of His Sanctuary amongst them. Privilege, we say, for God only asked an offering from willing hearts. Of this they now learned from the law-giver: "This is the thing which the Lord commanded saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart let him bring it, an offering of the Lord (Ex. xxxv. 4, 5). Thereon follows the list of what was wanted (6-9). But more was needed than the materials. Who would work them up? Again the law-giver spoke: "And every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded " (10). Then follows the list of all that was required, even down to the pins, or pegs, and cords for the curtains of the court, and for those of the Tabernacle (11-19). The congregation, which had been summoned to hear what was required, now departed from the presence of Moses (20). The Lord's offering was asked for. The favour was theirs to bring to Him what would be used in His service. Who would show themselves willing-hearted? Who

would prove themselves to be wise-hearted? Soon was this settled. Let us read about it in the words of the law-giver:

"And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets,* all jewels of gold; and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord. And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins (or perhaps, as R. V., seal skins) brought them. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man with whom was found shittim wood, for any of the service, brought it. And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goats hair. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod and the breastplate; and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses" (xxxv. 21-29).

{*There is a difference of opinion as to the proper translation of some of these trinkets. For bracelets would put brooches, for tablets would put armlets, more correctly.}

What a sight it must have been! The camp aroused into activity. People trooping to the appointed place with their offerings; the witness and fruit of willing hearts. The spinning wheels at work, the shuttles passing to and fro; the smith's hammer dealing with the metals; the saws and planes making ready the boards; the jewellers setting the precious stones; men and women active and earnest in their occupations to get ready the Sanctuary in which Jehovah, their God, would dwell. All the offerings brought to Moses he distributed as materials to the workmen, the wise-hearted among them. Morning by morning the people brought them, till the wise men that wrought all the work of the Sanctuary came every man from his work, and told Moses that the supply for each item was more than enough (xxxvi. 4, 5). Then a proclamation was made announcing that, and the offerings ceased to be brought. Enough, and more than enough, was willingly, heartily offered (7). What joy must have reigned in the camp, and how cheerily must the workmen have gone about their work!

We have noticed the wise-hearted — the workmen, both men and women, this included. We must now mention the two specially set over the whole work. God chose them, and called them by name - the one Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah; the other, Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan; the former was skilled to work in metals, and in cutting stones and wood; the latter was an engraver, and skilled in textile work as well (xxxv. 30-35; xxxviii. 22, 23). No stint was there of offerings, as we have noticed; and God has put on record the weight of metals used in the Sanctuary and Court. Of gold, 29 talents and 730 shekels were offered, and accepted, equal in weight to 1 ton 4 cwt. 2 qrs. and 13 lb.; and in money value (we give it on the authority of the Speaker's Commentary - pre-1900), assuming it was pure, to £175.075 13s. Of silver there were 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, equal in weight to 4 tons 4 cwt. 2 qrs. 20 lb.; and in money value to £38,034 15s. 10d. Of

brass or bronze were used 70 talents and 2,400 shekels, representing a weight of 2 tons 19 cwt. 2 qrs. and 11 lb. The gold and the brass were the fruit of free-will offerings. The silver was obtained from the half-shekel, or bekah, paid by each male of 20 years and upwards as an atonement, in accordance with the law of Ex. xxx. 11-16. The camp, we have said, was aroused into activity. The willing-hearted and the wise-hearted were busy proving - the former, by that which they brought, their title to be so reckoned; and the latter, by their work, to be thus classed. But the stir of the daily toil ceased on each Sabbath day; the spinning wheels were then at rest; the shuttles lay unused; saws and planes were laid aside on that one day in seven - the Sabbath of rest unto the Lord. Is not this the reason why the reminder of Sabbatic observance prefaces the instructions to the people about the construction of the Tabernacle (xxxv. 1-3)? It was work for God to prepare the Tabernacle, but that was to be no excuse for the violation of the Sabbath. Instituted in Eden, the Sabbath was a sign given by God to Israel. Learning first about its observance on their way to Sinai, when the manna was given (Ex. 16.), they were reminded of it at Sinai by the fourth commandment (20.). Then, after Moses had received all the directions about the construction of the Tabernacle, and the institution of the Aaronic priesthood, God charged him to impress on the people the observance of that day (xxxi. 12-17). Accordingly, the law-giver, when about to instruct them in all that was needed for the Tabernacle, prefaces it by a reminder of the sanctity of the Sabbath.

What happy months these must have been, during which the preparations for God dwelling among them were proceeding - men and women earnestly, cheerfully, diligently at work! At length all was completed, and Moses surveyed it, and approved of it, for "they had done it as the Lord had commanded;" and then he blessed them (xxxix. 43). On the first day of the first month, a fortnight short of a year from the exodus, the law-giver reared up the structure, having first received a direct command from the Lord Jehovah to do it, curtained off the court in the midst of the camp, and, by divine directions, put each vessel in its place; and anointed the Tabernacle, and all its vessels, and the brazen Altar, and the Laver as well. Then the Lord took visible possession of the Sanctuary, "for the (not a) cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle; and Moses was not able to enter into the Tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (xl. 34, 35). But seven days more had to pass before all was in proper working order. The brazen Altar had to be dedicated, and the Aaronic priests had to be consecrated, and the fire to come down on the Altar (Lev. ix. 24), which was never to be allowed to go out (Lev. vi. 1-3). We must look into this ere taking a survey, as it were, of that which could be seen.

02.03. The Aaronic Priesthood.

The Aaronic Priesthood. On the mount with God, Moses first heard who were to be the holy priesthood. Aaron, his elder brother, his mouthpiece before Pharaoh, was to have the privilege of being God's High Priest. "No man," we read (Heb. v. 4), "taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." Accordingly, by Divine appointment, Moses was to take unto him Aaron, his brother, and his sons with him, that he might minister unto God in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Ex. xlviii. 1). The reader may remark the coupling together of the two elder, then of the two younger. Was that a fore-shadowing on the part of God of the future of those two, who were cut off judicially on the eighth day of Aaron's consecration, leaving the two younger to discharge the duties of priests throughout the wilderness journey?

Aaron and his sons, marked out by Divine appointment, their apparel and the ritual to be followed for their consecration are at once described (Ex. xlviii.; xxix). God declared what the apparel was to be. Who else, considering of whom Aaron as High Priest was a type, could have designed it? Fitting, too, was it that the making of it all was to be entrusted to the wise-hearted in Israel; for they were filled with wisdom from God to make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he might minister unto God in the priest's office. Holy garments, then, they were, in which he and his sons were to be attired (Ex. xxviii. 4).

First and foremost we have full and minute directions for the High Priest's garments of glory and beauty, all of which, when made and brought to Moses, were passed by him as work properly executed (Ex. xxxix). We shall, however, best get an idea of them all if we turn to Lev. viii. For whereas Ex. xxviii. describes each item, and Ex. xxxix. attests the due carrying out of the Divine directions, Lev. viii. presents Aaron to the reader as being dressed by Moses in his pontifical attire. So we may say that if Ex. xxviii. reminds us more of the workroom, Lev. viii. may be looked at as introducing us, as it were, to the vestry. On the first day of his consecration all the congregation were gathered to the door of the Tabernacle, to see the solemn introduction of Aaron and his sons into the Holy Priesthood. They approached with a bullock for a sin offering, two rams, and a basket, in which was unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil, all made of fine wheaten flour. All this was required for their due installation into the Priesthood, and all spoke of Him who is God's High Priest, whether of His death, or of His life here below.

Now the work of the day began by Aaron and his sons being first washed all over with water; typical of that washing, connected with the new birth, which we all need as children of Adam. Of this it was that the Lord spoke in John xiii. 10, when He said, "he that is washed," and averred of such, that they were clean every whit. In this washing the eleven Apostles had already participated. The next work for Moses was to dress Aaron in his High Priestly robes. This he proceeded to do, and here we must bear in mind the difference between Aaron as a type, and Aaron as a man like us. As we picture him arrayed in his robes, we view him as a type. As we remember that he was washed all over with water before he could put on even one of them, we

behold him as a man, one of the fallen race of Adam in common with ourselves. So, too, we read of his sacrifices which spoke of the excellency, not of Aaron, but of another, even the Lord Jesus Christ, whose present service of priesthood is Aaronic in character, but the order of whose priesthood is after that of Melchisedec, for He abides a Priest for ever. To be dressed, Aaron first had to put on the coat, and to be girded with a girdle. These were of white linen - denoting surely, as the undermost garment, the spotless purity of Him of whom Aaron was a type. Over the white linen coat came the robe, whose colour was blue.

It was called the robe of the ephod, the colour denoting the Lord as the heavenly one (1 Cor. xv. 47), for blue to us on earth is the colour of the heavens. This garment was a long flowing robe or cloak, reaching down below the coat, with a hem at the bottom, on which pomegranates were embroidered, made of blue, and purple, and scarlet; and between each was a golden bell, that the sound might be heard, when Aaron should go in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he should come out; that he should not die (Ex. xxviii. 31-35). Again, then, we are reminded that we have before us but a type.

Next came the ephod itself, the upper priestly garment, which was made of gold, and of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, the work of the cunning workman. These colours, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen are always mentioned in connection with the Tabernacle and Priesthood in the same order for they betoken truth about the Lord as man, as the book of Numbers (iv. 1-13) instructs us. To invert the order of these colours would be to introduce confusion into His earthly history. Blue reminds us of Him as the heavenly One. Purple tells us of His sacrifice. Scarlet foretells that the glory of the world in government will be His. His history in connection with earth comes out then in regular sequence. Then the gold in the ephod witnesses of Him as a Divine Person, figuring, it would seem, God’s intrinsic righteousness, viz., what He is in Himself. One who would be God and man the ephod prefigured, and to it belonged a girdle of the same fabric and colour as itself, called the curious, or cunningly woven girdle.

Now dressed, Moses put on Aaron the breast-plate formed of twelve precious stones set in gold. On each stone the name of one of the tribes was engraved. Further, he put in it the Urim and Thummim,* by means of which the High Priest could learn, as occasion required, the Divine mind. Besides this there were two onyx stones, one for each shoulder, with the names of six tribes engraved on each of them. After that came the mitre, put on Aaron’s head, to which, by a lace of blue, was attached a golden plate, inscribed with the words, " Holiness to the Lord."

{*What the Urim, i.e., lights, and Thummim, i.e., perfections, were, is unknown. They were wanting since the days of Jeshua (Ezra ii. 63). According to the Talmud, the High Priest did not enquire thereby for a private person, only for the King, or the Great Sanhedrin; so for Joshua, as Captain of the Host (Num. xxvii. 21).} By the onyx stones, the names of the tribes in the order of their birth were to be borne before the Lord for a memorial. By the breast-plate, the names of the children of Israel were to be on the High Priest’s heart, when he should go in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And having the Urim and Thummim put in the breastplate of judgment, Aaron would hear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. Thus Israel was to be kept in remembrance before God by the one who, as the golden plate shadowed forth, answered to the holy nature of God. Of that, Aaron was but a type. The next act on the part of Moses, in accordance with God’s directions, was to take the holy anointing oil,

and with it he proceeded to anoint the Tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them, and he sprinkled thereof upon the Altar seven times, and anointed the Altar and all his vessels, both the Laver and his foot to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him (Lev. viii. 10. 12). In this anointing Aaron stood alone, anointed before sacrifice, the foreshadowing of Him who was anointed with the Holy Ghost after His baptism by John, the Spirit coming and resting upon Him, because in Himself He was perfectly holy. To recapitulate - as Aaron now must have appeared, there was seen shadowed forth the characteristic marks of God's High Priest: but the marks of One who had never been seen in this world. Aaron in person, let us remind the reader, did not answer to that which by his pontifical garments was prefigured. Standing there in the sight of all the congregation, there was prefigured by the white coat, the undermost garment, the spotless holiness within of the Lord Jesus Christ. The robe of blue shadowed Him forth as the heavenly One. The ephod, with its colours and gold, gave forth His history in connection with earth. One from heaven would come to earth and die, and after that have the sovereignty of this world; whilst as to His person, He would be divine as well as human, and so perfectly holy that on Him the Holy Ghost would rest, apart from any sacrifice on His behalf. He would be a representative person, the High Priest representing the people before God. As such, all were borne upon his shoulders, and each by the breastplate ever kept in remembrance before God. And competent would He be for such a service, for as the golden plate on the mitre showed, He would answer to the holy nature of God. Was Aaron, then, as dressed, God's High Priest? No. He needed consecration for that. True, he was already anointed. But the anointing did not make him High Priest. For that he must be consecrated. See Ex. xxviii. 41; xxix. 29, which distinguish between these. In common with his sons he was consecrated, and here a cardinal principle is brought out, viz., that consecration for priesthood involves the necessity of death. There never was a High Priest of God's appointment consecrated without death first taking place. At this juncture in the day's ceremonial, Aaron's sons appeared on the scene, and Moses dressed them in their priestly garments. Then the sacrifices were offered up, and in perfect character with the fact that Aaron was but a type, the first sacrifice dealt with was the bullock for the sin offering. Upon its head Aaron and his sons having laid their hands, Moses slew it, and sanctified the Altar with its blood. Next came the ram for a burnt offering, dealt with in the prescribed manner. Then followed the ram of consecration, which having been slain, Moses took of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. The same was done to his sons. The ear, the hand, the foot - all were to be consecrated to the service of God. Next followed, according to Exodus, the anointing oil, which was sprinkled, but with blood, on Aaron and on his garments, and on his sons and on their garments with him. After that, all that was to be burnt on the Altar of that ram, and of the basket of unleavened bread, etc., was first put into the hands of Aaron and his sons, and waved for a wave-offering before the Lord. Then it was all burnt on the Altar, telling us that the strength, typified by the right shoulder - the energy of will, typified by the fat of the inwards - and the whole life, as typified in the unleavened bread, and cake and wafers - were all in Christ wholly for God.

Thus Christ in life, and Christ in death were both portrayed in the offerings put on God's Altar; and though He Himself was spotlessly holy, Aaron as a man, as well as his sons, could only be priests to God, if first were brought those offerings which tell of atonement by blood — the sin offering and the burnt offering, both typical of His sacrifice. The day's service now ended. Moses had the wave breast on this occasion as his part, Aaron and his sons fed on the rest of the ram of consecration,

and on the unleavened bread. For a whole week this service went on, repeated each day, Aaron and his sons remaining in the court of the Tabernacle all that time. At the end of the week, they fully consecrated, and the Altar cleansed, there was at length a holy priesthood, which could minister on behalf of God’s people. So, on the eighth day, for the first time Aaron officiated at the Altar, and offered first for himself and his house, and then for the people. That done, before he came down from the Altar be blessed the people. He blessed them at once on the conclusion of the sacrifice, God thus showing on what ground it is that divine blessing can be bestowed on sinful creatures, viz., on that of the acceptance of the sacrifice. But another most interesting thing is also recorded in that same chapter of Leviticus (ix.). Moses and Aaron next went into the Tabernacle of the congregation. For a time, of course, they were hidden from the people.

Afterwards they came out, and together blessed them. The first time it was Aaron alone. On this occasion Moses and Aaron together did it: What did that mean? We believe it prefigured the time of Israel’s blessing, as Aaron’s act whilst still at the Altar set forth the ground of it. For when the Lord, who is to them both King and Priest, shall come out of the Sanctuary and reappear to their view they will be blessed. So Moses and Aaron, typical of Him, the former as King (Deut. xxxiii. 5), the latter as High Priest, together blessed the people. "And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the Altar the burnt offering and the fat which, when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces" (Lev. ix. 23, 24).

God had taken possession of His Sanctuary. The fire now burned on the Altar. Henceforward the service could proceed. We may now, then, walk round, and see what went on.

02.04. The Court.

The Court.

We must now turn back to Exodus, where alone we can learn what would have met our eye, had we visited the court of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Suppose we had taken a walk in the camp early on the morrow after the eighth day of Aaron's consecration, remembering the events of the previous day, to the Tabernacle, erected in the midst of the encampment of the twelve tribes, we should naturally have directed our steps. Around it, and inside the area occupied by the different camps of the twelve tribes, we should have seen tents on each of the four sides of the Tabernacle, occupied by the three great families of the tribe of Levi. Fronting the court on the south side, the tents of the Levites of the family of Kohath might have been counted on the one hand, and an unbroken line of white linen curtains, to the extent of 100 cubits, would have met us on the other. Turning to the west side, the family of the Gershonites would have been seen in their tents, with an unbroken line before them of white curtains of 50 cubits in length.

Reaching the north side, on which the Merarites were encamped, an unbroken line of white curtains, for 100 cubits in length, would again have met the eye. At length, coming to the east side of the court, opposite to which the tent of Moses and those of his brother Aaron and his sons were pitched, instead of the hitherto unbroken line of white curtains, we should have found a hanging of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen occupying the centre of that side for 20 cubits in length, or about 30 feet, reckoning 18 inches to the cubit, the rest of it being curtained with white linen.

Here, then, was the entrance to the court. There was but one, and to see inside it, men had to come to that parti-coloured hanging; for the white curtains on the three sides were five cubits high, equal to about 7½ feet, precluding anyone but a giant from looking over them.

Entering the court by the hanging above mentioned, we should have found ourselves in an oblong enclosure of 150 feet say, by 75 feet, a holy place (Lev. vi. 26) as the white linen curtains would intimate. Immediately facing the entrance, we should have seen the Altar of burnt-offering, a brazen Altar. Directly behind that the brazen Laver to hold water, and behind the Laver the Tabernacle itself, to enter which both the brazen Altar and the brazen Laver must first be passed, significant of that which was needed ere entering the holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High.

Let us look at these in their order. Fronting the entrance to the court, the Altar of burnt-offering met the gaze of anyone who would enter within. This altar was made of shittim wood overlaid with brass, of five cubits square and three cubits high. It was, it would seem, a hollow case (Ex. xxvii. 8), filled very probably with earth, when the Tabernacle was pitched at any of its camping stations in the wilderness. An incline of earth on its south side, in the place of steps, provided the needful ascent, by which the officiating priest could go up to do his work. Thus he must have been above the offerer and spectators. So we read of Aaron coming down from the Altar (Lev. ix. 22). Surrounding the Altar was a brazen grating, with rings in the four corners of it, for the poles of

shittim wood overlaid with brass to be inserted, by which on its march it was borne on the shoulders of some of the Kohathites. Of two important things we are here reminded. First, that steps up to it had been forbidden, that the nakedness of the priest should not be discovered (Ex. xx. 26); and, second, that, poles to carry it being called for, there was intimated that the time for final rest had not come, nor had the place of rest been reached. Perfection had not yet been attained, and could not while the Tabernacle was in use. The Altar, then, as it was, had a tale to tell. Its subsequent history in connection with Israel is not less interesting as we trace it out. For, coming down for a moment along the stream of time, we read of the brazen Altar in Solomon's temple (2 Chron. iv. 1), and again of the Altar in Ezekiel's temple (xliii. 13-17). To the former there was no need of staves, for the place of rest had been reached, the mount in which the Lord would dwell. For the latter, steps will be made - the very thing forbidden in Ex. xx. 26, for then, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, the rich results of which the priests in that day will be enjoying, their nakedness will not appear. How interesting is this the reader will surely admit, casting its light on the value of that one perfect sacrifice, by which rest for Israel will have been for ever secured, and the nakedness of the priests for ever covered. No perfection apart from that sacrifice. No lack of it when enjoying the fruits of the death of God's own Son.

Surveying Bezaleel's Altar in the early morning, we should have seen the priest, clad in his linen garments and linen breeches, busily at work prescribed by the law. Rekindling the fire? No. That was never to go out (Lev. vi. 12). What, then, was he doing? He was re-arranging the Altar, removing the ashes resulting from the consuming of the evening burnt-offering, putting fresh wood on the fire, and laying the morning burnt-offering upon it. All night had the fire been burning, kept in by the evening burnt-offering. All night had God seen that which was well pleasing to Him. A little column of smoke had been ascending heavenward, which spoke to Him, whilst the people in the vast encampment were fast asleep. It spoke to Him of that which none could then understand but Himself, and which, indeed, none then really knew about. It spoke of the death of His son, of His self-surrender do God's will. Never was the reminder of that to be absent from the eye of God. It was to be ever before Him. How this tells its tale of His delight in that sacrifice! We think, and rightly, of the way in which it has perfectly met our need. God thinks also of what it is to Him. The Altar then re-arranged, the morning burnt-offering was offered up, accompanied by its appointed meat-offering and drink-offering, viz., a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil for the meat, or meal-offering, and a fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink-offering (Ex. xxix. 38-42). Thus was set forth in that daily burnt-offering, and twice each day, first in the morning and then in the evening, the death of Christ and His life on earth as a man, in whom God can find joy. Of this last, the drink-offering it was that bore witness. Had we stayed a little time longer, we should probably have seen an offerer approach with a sacrifice for a burnt-offering, or a peace-offering, or a sin-offering, or a trespass-offering, and have witnessed the dealing with the sacrifice, as prescribed in the Mosaic ritual. First, laying his hand on its head, he had to kill it, and, if it was of the flock, whether of sheep or goats, he would have taken its life at the north side of the Altar, the offal being deposited on the east side, by the place of the ashes (Lev. i. 11, 16). Then the priest, who ascended the Altar on its south side, would have dealt with the blood of the victim in the prescribed manner. That done the offerer would have prepared the whole, or the appointed part, for the Altar, washing, in the case of a burnt offering, the inwards and legs in ********** significant ** of the spotless holiness in Himself, and in His walk of the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing less than that being suited for God to make atonement for us. The whole victim, or

the parts of it, now ready, the priest's services were again in requisition, to lay what had been prepared upon the fire on the Altar, to burn it as a sweet savour. For whatever was consumed on the Altar of burnt-offering was a sweet savour to God (Lev. iv. 31), speaking to Him, as it did, of the willingness of His own Son to bear divine judgment, and to maintain untarnished the holiness and righteousness of God.

We have spoken of the offerer, the victim, and the priest as ordinarily quite distinct, though all three were needed for a sacrifice to be offered to God. And we see also that priestly work in sacrifice did not begin till after the death of the victim. The offerer killed it, except in the apparently abnormal case of the bird. The priest's part was to deal with the blood, and to put the parts to be burnt on the Altar, to be thereon consumed. To this rule the ritual of the great day of atonement presents really no exception, since the High Priest, as representing his house, and representing also the people, killed, as the offerer, the victims. In the case of the true sacrifice, a great change was, however, to be marked. Then the victim, the offerer, and the High Priest were one person - the Lord Jesus Christ. How true was it, that the law, having a shadow of good things to come, was not the very image of the things. The priest and the offerer might in certain cases of old be combined, but the victim was always quite distinct. Who then understood that one man would combine in Himself all three, and be the true and acceptable victim before God?

Leaving now the Altar behind, and moving toward the Tabernacle, we should next have approached the brazen Laver, of the dimensions of which, the capacity, and shape we have no record, so different is this from the brazen Sea in Solomon's temple, described minutely and at length in 1 Kings vii. 23-26. The use of the Laver for the Tabernacle, its place, and its material are however, distinctly stated. Its use was for Moses and Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and feet in the water it contained ere entering the Tabernacle, or before the latter approached the Altar, and that on pain of death if any of them neglected such ablutions. (Ex. xxx. 18-21; xl. 30-32). Ceremonial cleanness must characterize those who served God at the Altar, or entered His Sanctuary, for He is holy. Its place on its foot, or base, was between the brazen Altar and the Tabernacle entrance (xl. 30). Its material was of brass, or bronze, manufactured out of the metal mirrors offered by the women of the congregation (xxxviii. 8). The institution of it, both for the Tabernacle and the Temple, indicated a need, and proclaimed by the providing for that need the lack in the priests of that purity which was suited for God. In Ezekiel's Temple a Laver is unnoticed. Can it be that, as the priest's nakedness will then have been perfectly covered, so the need of ablution ere ministering to God will be a thing of the past?

Passing the Laver, the Tabernacle itself would have immediately confronted us. But ere we entered within it, a glance round the court would have been but natural. Gold, silver, and brass had been freely offered for the structure. As yet, however, we should have seen no gold, and after entering the holy place we should have found no brass; for the last of the brass used in this service was to be seen in the sockets for the five pillars, overlaid with gold, by which the hanging for the door of the Sanctuary was supported (Ex. xxvi. 37). Evidently there was design in this, brass without and gold within. Within the Sanctuary was displayed what God was in Himself as revealed in Christ. In the court there was seen what the individual needed, in order to approach Him. Here brass was exhibited in the Altar, the Laver, and the sockets of the pillars of the court, and of those five also on which the hanging for the entrance of the Sanctuary was suspended. It may well, then, be, as we think of the vessels in the court, that the brass, as has been suggested,* symbolised

God’s righteousness in judgment, and the gold symbolised His intrinsic righteousness. There remains to be considered the silver used, both for the court and for the Tabernacle. In the former it provided the hooks and fillets on which the white curtains were suspended from the pillars, and covered the tops of the pillars as well. In the latter the sockets for the boards were made of that metal (Ex. xxxvi. 24: xxxviii. I7). Now, as all this silver was provided by the bekah, or half-shekel, which each man above twenty years of age brought as atonement money on his own behalf, we can readily understand how silver would speak to every thinking Israelite of divine grace, which provided atonement that he might be preserved alive on the earth. Of atonement, not of redemption, that silver was a witness (Ex. Xxx. I I -16; xxxviii. 25-28). We draw attention to the term atonement, for redemption and atonement are in Scripture distinguished, and should be kept distinct.

{*We have said, "as has been suggested," for the typical meaning of the metals, the gold and the brass especially, is a question of deduction, not of direct revelation. We quote from the one already referred to: "Gold is intrinsic righteousness in God’s nature - that which we approach in. Brass is the judgment of righteousness as applied to man; hence the Altar of burnt-offering was of brass, the Laver was of brass - one judged sin in a sacrifice, the other by the word. It marked the immutable nature of that judgment - God, who could not bear sin, must deal with it. What led me to it was: the sockets of the pillars of the court were of brass, and the fillets and hooks of them silver - what gave stability was judgment - was Gilgal work. The curtains separated the profane from the holy - God’s people, as with Him, from the world at large - their hooks on the pillars were silver and their fillets.

"I am apt to think this is grace as displayed in man - God’s grace; as the brass was God’s judgment - firm and immutable - so did grace secure, but it was the ornament; judgment in God’s ways secures, but it is their stability, and as the foundation God’s immutableness. Grace, in fact, is what all hangs on in its actual maintenance." - Notes and Comments on Scripture, by Mr. J. N. Darby (vol. i, page 321.)} Of God, then, and of His grace, and His righteousness, in connection with judgment, the silver and the brass could speak. Whether those outside the court could see the brazen sockets, may be questioned. But the silver which covered the tops of the pillars must have been visible, one would think, to those without as to those within, proclaiming to all that One, whose dwelling-place was within that enclosure, whilst holy and maintaining His holiness and righteousness, even at the cost of death sacrificially of the victim, was a God of grace, who provided atonement as required. And further, any who entered the Court could see that there was no way to the Tabernacle except by the Altar and Laver. The one who would draw nigh into the holy place must first avail himself of both of them. Not less instructive is it to remark that he must avail himself of these provisions in that order - first the Altar, then the Laver. Death, the death of a substitute, and that substitute able to bear divine judgment for others, must first take place, and be acknowledged by the worshipper availing himself of it, ere the Laver could come into requisition. The sacrifice must first be thought of, ere cleansing from defilement in walk for priestly service in the court or Sanctuary could avail. We know how true this is. For whilst the sacrifice of Christ can meet the guiltiest and the vilest, the Lord stoops to wash the feet of only His disciples. Of the brass we have spoken. Was it a mistake, or a matter without significance, to make sockets of that metal for the five pillars at the entrance of the Tabernacle, when all the rest of its sockets were of silver? How perfectly in keeping was this arrangement. For as the priest crossed the threshold of the holy

place, he was again reminded of the righteousness of God in connection with judgment, which had to be fully met, ere he could disappear from the gaze of those in the court behind the parti-coloured curtain, which screened the entrance of the Tabernacle.

02.05. The Holy Place.

The Holy Place. To the Sanctuary we next come. This was a structure of boards overlaid with gold, with a curtained roof overhead. It consisted of two parts, and was divided into two chambers. Of two parts was it composed, the one called the Tent Ohel, the other called the Tabernacle, or dwelling place Mishcan (Ex. xxvi. 1, 7). Into two chambers was it divided, the outer one called the holy place, the inner called the most holy (Ex. xxvi. 33). On three sides were the boards, viz., the south, the west, and the north. And like the court, on none of those sides was there any entrance. At its east end was the entrance behind a screen of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, which, stretching across the whole width of the Tabernacle, thus formed its eastern side. The boards were of shittim or acacia wood, a tree which, as we have remarked, grew in the desert. Each board was ten cubits in length, and a cubit and a half in breadth. For the north and south sides twenty boards were allotted; for the west side but six, exclusive of the corner boards. The whole structure then was in length thirty cubits long by ten high, and about ten in width, each corner board, as has been suggested, adding half a cubit to the width. Expressing the dimensions in English feet it would give us an erection of about 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and the same in height. The boards 15 feet long were each kept in an upright position by two tenons at their base, which were inserted into sockets of silver, and the whole side was kept together by five bars of shittim wood, which, like each board, were overlaid with gold. Each socket of silver has been estimated to equal about 94 lb. weight of metal. These would tend to keep the Tabernacle steady.

Over the boards, and forming the roof, were curtains stretched across, made of fine twined linen, and of blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim on them, the work of the cunning workman. Ten curtains were required, to be each of twenty-eight cubits in length, and four in breadth. These were coupled together, and stretched across the upright structure, so that they hung down on the three sides of the boards. The curtained entrance, composed of the same material and colours, but without the cherubim worked on it, was supported by five pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold, and their hooks also of gold, but the sockets of brass. Leaving aside for the present any notice of that part which was called the Tent, let us confine our observations to the Tabernacle. Into the holy place the priests alone, besides Moses, the mediator (Num. vii. 89), had the privilege of entrance. They only could see all that was there displayed, but only Aaron of the priests was to enter, and that but once a year, within the veil into the most holy place.

Inside the holy place what a sight, however, must have net their gaze. As they looked around, they could see nothing but gold. As they looked up, they saw the curtained roof of the same colours as were displayed at the entrance to the court and to the holy place, but now with the addition of the cherubim worked on them. The colours, we have already remarked, spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, and gave forth an outline of His history reaching on to the future. The Cherubim worked on the curtains above, and on the veil in front of the most holy place, taught a further truth, viz., that the Holy One, who would come from heaven, and die as the sacrifice, and subsequently reign in power over earth, would also wield the power of God’s throne. For the Cherubim are the supporters of that throne, and are connected in the Word with its action in judgment.*

{*Note. - God’s throne was supported by Cherubim (Ezekiel i; x.), "He rode upon a Cherub, and did fly" (Ps. xviii. 10). From between the Cherubim He gave commandments to Moses (Ex. xxv. 22; Num. vii. 89). The Cherubim, with flaming sword, guarded the tree of life after Adam’s fall (Gen. iii. 24).} Of Christ, then, those curtains spoke. Of Christ the shittim wood overlaid with gold spoke; these last intimating, we believe, something of that mystery of His person incapable of solution by human mental power, viz., that He who is man is also God; "so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and Manhood, are joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man". All then that was seen of the sides and of the roof testified about Him that was to come, viz., who He was, and what would characterize Him in relation to this world, and in relation to the universe. Not only, as we have already remarked, would the glory of this world in connection with government be His, typified by the scarlet in the curtains, and in the veil; but He of whom that would be true would also wield the power of God’s throne. This, we believe, the Cherubim embroidered on the curtains, and on the veil, were intended to intimate. The mystery of His Person the boards attested. His history the curtains could unfold. Of Christ, then, not of the Church, nor of Christians, did the Tabernacle teach.

We have spoken of that which was around, and was common to both chambers. Let us look next at the vessels which belonged to each. In the holy place were the Table of Shew-bread, the Golden Candlestick, and the Golden Altar. In the most holy was the Ark, whose lid was the Mercy-Seat. In the outer chamber, or holy place, as one entered from the east, there would have been seen on the right hand, or north side of the Tabernacle, the Table of shittim wood overlaid with gold, on which were placed the twelve loaves of the shew-bread. Belonging to this Table were various utensils, as dishes, spoons, bowls, and flagons, as Kesavoth perhaps means, all of gold (xxxvii. 16). Beside these were the staves of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, to be inserted into the rings of gold on the four feet of the Table, for the Kohathites to carry it when the camp was on the march.

Turning to the left hand, or south side, one would have seen the Golden Candlestick, all of gold, the only vessel connected with the Sanctuary (unless the Mercy-Seat be viewed as distinct from the Ark of the Covenant) in which there was no wood. In the Laver all was of brass. In the Candlestick all was of gold. To the Candlestick six branches were attached, three on one side and three on the other - thus providing stands for seven lamps, one on each of the branches and one on the middle stem. Connected with the Candlestick were its utensils, all of gold, as the snuffers or tongs, and snuff dishes. Of a talent of pure gold were it and its utensils made, and the whole of the Candlestick was one beaten work of pure gold (xxxvii. 22-24). A bar to carry it was provided (Num. iv. I0), but of what material that was made there seems to be no mention; nor are the dimensions of the Candlestick told us, though its appearance is minutely described. With the Table it is different. Its height, breadth, and length are all noted, as well as the depth of its border round about.

Next, and innermost, just fronting the veil, was the Altar of Incense - made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. It was a cubit square, and in height two cubits. Like the Altar of Burnt-Offering it had horns at its four corners, and it was borne on the march on the shoulders of Kohathites by two staves of shittim wood overlaid with gold, which passed through two golden rings placed on two of its sides under its crown.

Twice each day was the Golden Altar visited by Aaron, to burn incense upon it, at the time of the morning and the evening burnt-offerings; and once in the year on its horns atonement was made with the blood of the bullock and that of the goat, as prescribed in the ritual for the day of atonement (Lev. xvi. 18, 19). Once in the day, at the time of the evening incense, Aaron lighted the lamps of the Candlestick (Ex. xxx. 8), which were to burn all night until the morning (xxvii. 21; I Sam. Iii. 3; 2 Chron. xiii. 11), having trimmed them in the morning, when he visited the Golden Altar to burn incense upon it. Once in the week was the Table specially attended to. For on the Sabbath it was that twelve fresh loaves, which had been baked for that purpose, each of two tenth deals of fine flour, replaced the twelve which had been there for seven days before the Lord (Lev. xxiv. 8). So far for the ritual.

What did all this mean? The incense compounded of four different ingredients, three of which are mentioned nowhere else (Ex. xxx. 34-38), and kindled with fire from off the Brazen Altar, typified the sweet savour of Christ. A perfume it was, pure and holy, and had, it would seem, a fragrance in itself (38) but its full perfume only came out when burnt: teaching us that the sweet savour of Christ was brought out in its fulness by His bearing divine judgment on the Cross. For the fire on the Altar of Burnt-Offering, which never was to be extinguished, was that which came down from heaven on the eighth day of Aaron's consecration - a fitting emblem of divine judgment. By the lamps kept alight all night, and giving light over against the Candlestick, the twelve loaves on the Golden Table opposite to it would be kept in light during all the hours of darkness (xl. 22 - 25). The twelve loaves typified the twelve tribes, and placed on that Table, which spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was seen in the Tabernacle, and that especially at night, that the government on earth in connection with the tribes of Israel, which by and by will be exercised by the Lord Jesus, was a prospect pleasing to God. Outside in the court, whilst the world was asleep, a little column of smoke was all night ascending up to God. That spoke to Him of the death of His Son. Inside the Sanctuary, during the night, the twelve tribes were kept in the light under the eye of God, connected as they were, and are, in His thoughts, with the future glory of His Son. And this is foreshadowed in a very interesting way in Lev. xxiv. 1-8, in which, ere the sin of apostasy is mentioned and dealt with, of which many of Israel have been and will yet be guilty, the twelve tribes, as a whole, are seen, as it were, in the light cast on them by the Candlestick. For they will be preserved as a whole, though individuals among them may finally apostatise (Acts xxvi. 7). Of Christ, then, there was typical teaching in connection with the vessels in the Sanctuary. By the sweet savour, of that which He was to God, brought out in its fulness by His death upon the Cross, there was proof - as well as of His coming day of power, by the loaves being at night in the light cast on them by the seven burning lamps of the Candlestick. Of Christ meeting the sinner's need by death, the Brazen Altar in the Court could teach. Of the sweet savour of His merits before God, the Golden Altar in the Holy place bore witness, and the members of the priesthood were privileged to enjoy with God that sweetness in type, of which the Holy Ghost has taught us that we can share with our God in the present. Of Christ who will have power and glory on earth, and that in connection with the twelve tribes, the names of which will be inscribed on the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 12), the Golden Table with its loaves was a silent but constant witness; the lamps when lighted at night being like to those entering the Sanctuary, that which prophecy is to men now on earth a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn and the day star arise in the heart (2 Pet. i. 19). Never was the coming day of power for the Lord Jesus to be left unsymbolized in the midst of Israel. By day there would be light enough in the holy place for any priest to

minister, and to see the loaves. One curtain, as there only was, stretched over the whole eastern side must have permitted enough light to penetrate through it by day for all that was required. By night the lamps burned, so that the Table and its contents were never enshrouded in darkness. In the permanent structure of the Temple there were of course no curtains for the roof. All was of gold, above and around. As regards the furniture, but one Golden Altar was made, but ten Golden Candlesticks and ten Tables were supplied. Ten, - be it remarked, not twelve, for perfection was not reached in that age. In Ezekiel's Temple the Incense Altar is mentioned, made of wood (xli. 22), for no gold or precious metals does the prophet tell us that he saw in his vision. Further, no Candlestick is mentioned, nor Table of shew-bread either. Can it be that as the Lord will then be reigning in power the type of all that will have passed away? Further, there is no veil mentioned; but doors to the oracle, or most holy place. Hence, after comparing the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and Ezekiel's, we mark progress. In the first there was a veil, and that only, between the two chambers. In the second there was still a veil; for the Lord had not then died, but doors to the oracle likewise. In 2 Chron. iii. 14, we read of the veil. In 1 Kings vi. 31, 32, we read of the doors: evidently things in Solomon's day were in a transitional state. The place of God's rest was reached; for the staves were drawn out of the Ark; but, the Lord had not died. So the veil was there, as well as the doors. By Christ's death the veil has been rent, so a veil will in the future be found no more. But Solomon, acting under the directions furnished by God to David, made doors for the oracle; a foreshadowing of the future Temple in which the chambers will still be separated.

One more remark may be made. The doors are seen in Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel xli, 3, 23), but are not described as standing open. And as the prince and people will not be allowed access to the Sanctuary (xlvi. 1, 10), so, it may be, that the priests will not be allowed access to the most holy place. Under law, as they will be, though it will be written on their hearts that they should not break it, people are at a distance from God. Under grace they can draw nigh, and that into the holiest of all. What a difference!

02.06. The Holiest, etc.

The Holiest, etc. To the holiest we must now turn. This was at the west end of the Tabernacle, curtained off from the outer chamber by a veil of blue, of purple, of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, with Cherubim on it, the work of cunning workmen. This stretched across the structure, and effectually screened off the holiest, so that no priest could see into it. What that veil typified Heb. 10. 20 makes plain to us, even the flesh of Christ; its colours, and the Cherubim telling us, as we have before remarked, something about His history with which all men should be acquainted. On His death God rent the veil (Matt. xxvii. 51). But whilst it hung intact by Divine appointment, the way into the holiest was not made manifest; so Aaron the High Priest could only enter once every year, in the way, and for the purpose prescribed in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. Where exactly in the Tabernacle the veil hung, attached by hooks of gold to four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold, has not been made plain to us in Holy Writ, unless we are meant to understand from Exodus xxvi. 33, by "under the taches," exactly under the junction of the two sets of curtains which formed the roof. For, according to Exodus xxvi. 3, these ten curtains were coupled five together, and joined the one five to the other five by fifty taches, or hooks of gold. If we understand then by "under the taches,"* the hooks by which the two sets of curtains were joined, the veil must have hung about midway in the Tabernacle. Tradition, however, makes the holy of holies to have been a cubical area of ten cubits every way. This is in harmony with the proportions of Solomon’s temple, and probably of Ezekiel’s also.

{*The word keres; a "tache" is only used of the hooks joining the two sets of curtains, both the parti-coloured ones, and those of goat’s hair.} **********

Within the holy of holies but one sacred vessel was found - that was the Ark of the Covenant - a chest of acacia wood of two cubits and a half in length, a cubit and a half in breadth, and the same in height, overlaid with pure gold within and without, and having a crown or rim of gold upon it round about. Its top, or lid, was the Mercy-Seat, made of pure gold, with two Cherubim of beaten gold, one at either end which had their wings outstretched, and so covering it, and their faces towards it, looking down on it. In this Ark were deposited the two Tables of the Law. And four gold rings at its feet, two on each side, in which the staves of acacia wood covered with gold were to be placed, for it to be carried aloft on the shoulders of the Kohathites, completed this sacred chest. This Ark with the two Tables of the Law was typical of the Lord Jesus with the law within His heart (Ps. xl. 8). It was the symbol of God’s presence too, as we shall see clearly further on. On, or between the Cherubim, God was said to sit (Ps. lxxx. 1). So the Mercy-Seat was the place of His throne, from which He gave Moses commandments (Ex. xxv. 22; Numbers vii. 89) for the children of Israel. And on the Mercy-Seat the Blood of Atonement was sprinkled once every year, the cloud of glory, the token of Jehovah’s presence, shining thereon.

Into this chamber no common priest could enter. Aaron only was permitted to visit it once a year, though probably Moses, as Mediator, had at all times access to it (Ex. xxv. 22, xxxiv. 34, 35); for the prohibition in Lev. xvi: 2, ran in this form, "Speak unto Aaron, thy, brother, that he come not at

all times into the holy place within the veil.'' Not a word was here said of restriction to Moses. With him, years after God declared, He would speak mouth to mouth, and the similitude (or form) of the Lord he should behold (Num. xii. 8). Within that chamber only one voice that we read of was heard by human ears; that was the voice of God (Num. vii. 89). Within the veil only one service was conducted, and that on the day of atonement, when Aaron, having entered with the blood of the sin-offering sprinkled it on the Mercy-Seat and before it, and then retraced his steps in silence; for no prayer, that we read of, escaped his lips, nor was any needed; yet a voice, we may say, was heard that day, though not by Aaron. For it was not the voice of God addressing him, or speaking to the Mediator, Moses, but the voice of the blood speaking through the type to God, and speaking better than that of Abel (Heb. xii. 24).

Within the holiest of all the living God dwelt. No light was needed to burn therein. The cloud of the divine presence illuminated it, and the blood of the bullock and of the goat, sprinkled on the Mercy-Seat by Aaron, remained, as he put it, to be by night and by day under the eye of God. And as the Cherubim, the supporters of the throne, gazed down upon it, the action of that throne, which must otherwise have been displayed righteously in judgment, could be displayed towards Israel in grace. For on behalf of them alone was atonement made. And just as none could, nor can fully understand, what the burnt-offering going up all night was to God, none could, none can understand, what that blood on the Mercy-Seat was to Him. Foolish then is it for any soul to remain in suspense about its acceptance, because it cannot fully appreciate the value of that blood. It never can; nor is it asked to do that.

We are to know now, and to rest rejoicing in the knowledge of it, whose death, and whose blood it was, that were thus typically represented annually before God. Still, who but God can tell, what the surrender to death, and the blood of His only begotten Son are to Him. This, however, we see, that, though to enter the sanctuary we must leave the brazen Altar behind, we can never be before God on His throne, where that precious blood does not confront us. Nothing higher can there be for a creature to approach than God upon His throne (Heb. xii. 23). No higher place has a creature where he can stand, than before that throne. Of this the Tabernacle was a type, the holy of holies being a figure of the highest heaven. And if the reader for a moment conceives of the Tabernacle as placed on its end, its eastern side being the base, he will apprehend this, ascending in thought through the holy place up to the holiest before the Mercy-Seat. Beyond that, there was nothing. Higher than before the throne of God no mere creature can reach. And, as it were, on that throne remains ever before God that precious blood, by which all that He is has been glorified and harmonised.

We have said, we never get beyond where the blood confronts us. It is important to be clear as to this. As worshippers, part of the holy priesthood (1 Peter ii. 5), Christians have access to the holy place, and the veil being rent, can enter the holiest as well. Our place then is there before the Mercy-Seat, on the ground sprinkled with blood (Lev. xvi. 14, 15), and not before the brazen Altar. At the Altar was set forth the need of the death of the sacrifice, and substitute. At the Mercy-Seat was declared God's perfect satisfaction with that precious blood, and people being accepted on whose behalf propitiation had been made. To be waiting for pardon, to be praying now for a sacrifice to meet one's need, would be virtually to stand at the Altar and not before the Mercy-Seat. Is not this where too many are found, instead of accepting God's gracious invitation to draw near with boldness into the holiest? Are we not then to confess our sins, some may ask?

Surely we are. Scripture teaches us that (1 John i. 9). It is one thing, however, to confess as a child, who knows the link of life, and of relationship never can be broken, and quite another to continue taking the place of an unpardoned sinner, who needs yet the wrath of God to be averted from him. Such an one is virtually at the Altar in the court, and not at the Mercy-Seat in the holiest. To return. This Ark made by Bezaleel was the only material Ark of the Covenant that ever existed, which God accepted. It was, too, the only vessel of the Tabernacle which had a place in Solomon's Temple. For nine centuries that Ark remained as the place of God's throne on earth. The Ark, which had been with the people in all their wanderings from Sinai to the land, was the Ark which only entered into its rest in the reign of Solomon, the type of the Prince of Peace. On the Cherubim, which belonged to the mercy-seat, the Lord of Hosts sat in the midst His people, till, Solomon's Temple being destroyed by Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, the Ark disappeared, where and how is, we believe, unknown. In the second Temple it was one of the five important things wanting. In Ezekiel's Temple there is no mention of one being required. Neither Ark, nor Veil, nor Candlestick, nor Table of Shew bread, nor Laver are hinted at as being called for. But an Altar of Burnt-offering will be required for the court, and an Altar, called the Table of the Lord, will be found in the holy place. For the atoning death of Christ, and the sweet savour His merits will always be had in remembrance throughout the millennium.

One thing more must be noticed in connection with Solomon's temple. In its oracle the king made according to the pattern revealed to David (1 Chron. xxviii. 11-19) two large Cherubim, which with their wings outstretched spanned together the width of the holy of holies. Each Cherub was ten cubits in height, equal to about 15 feet, and from wing to wing ten cubits in breadth. Their faces looked down the house, for so the word "inwards" (2 Chron. iii. 13), really means, and were not turned downwards like those on the Mercy-Seat. So in that oracle, when the Ark had been carried thither into its place, there would have been seen two Cherubim looking down the house, and two looking still on the Mercy-Seat. Another intimation this seems to be of the transitional nature of that Temple, viz., a looking forward to the time when, Israel enjoying the benefit of atonement, the Cherubim would no longer need to be gazing on the blood, that judgment should be withheld; and also an acknowledgment by those two then gazing on it, that the perfect sacrifice had still to be provided.

We must now turn to the Tent of the Tabernacle, of which mention has been already made. The Tent was formed, of eleven curtains of goat's hair; for Ex. xxvi. 7, if rightly translated, states, "Thou shalt make curtains of goats hair for a Tent, Ohel, over the Tabernacle, Mishchan." Each curtain was thirty cubits in length, and four in breadth, about three feet longer than the parti-coloured ones which formed the roof of the Tabernacle. Ten curtains were ordered for the latter, and eleven for the former. Gold taches coupled the two sets of parti-coloured curtains, brass taches coupled the two sets, the one of five and the other of six of the goat's hair curtains, the sixth curtain being doubled over in the forefront of the Tent, Ohel (see Revised Version). And on each side of the Tabernacle, as well as on the back, west side, those curtains of goat's hair covered it. A covering of ram's skins dyed red over them, with a covering of badger, or perhaps sealskin, as tachash probably here means, completed the tent.

We have noted what the different colours of the veil and curtains of the Tabernacle would teach us. Have the curtains, which formed the Tent and their coverings, any symbolical meaning, it may be asked? We must speak with caution, and without dogmatising here, for it can be but a matter of

deduction. We find that Elijah was clad in a garment of hair (2 Kings i. 8), and later on that kind of garment was the assumed dress of a Prophet (Zech. xiii. 4; Matt. iii. 4). We know that the ram was the animal selected at the consecration of the Priests, and all can understand how suited the seal, or dolphin skin covering would be to keep out the influences of the weather. Hence it may be that, as the parti-coloured curtains of the Tabernacle give us the history in connection with earth of the Lord Jesus Christ, a history, we would again remind the reader, as yet unfinished; so the coverings over the Tabernacle may have prefigured the character of His life in ministry down here, indicating His prophetic service, who was wholly devoted to do God's will (John viii. 29), and who could pass through this scene uninfluenced by the current of things around. For those then inside the Tabernacle there was prefigured the Lord's personal history. For those in the court, who looked at the Tent, His character in ministry was set forth. It was Christ, we must again say, not the Church, or Christians, which the Tabernacle prefigured. So to enter the court Christ was the way. To meet the sinner's need Christ was the sacrifice. To enter the holy place Christ was again the way. To enter the holiest, He had to die. Above and around, inside and outside, Christ in one way and another was prefigured, and yet none of those types, nor all of them together, could furnish a full history of Him that was to come. They were shadows, the body being of Christ (Col. ii. 17). There was more in Him than they could set forth.

We must, to complete this sketch of the Tabernacle, look at it when on the march, and call to mind the movements of the Ark.

02.07. The Levites.

The Levites. To the Tabernacle on the march we have to turn. But at the threshold of this part of our subject we meet with the Levites, to whom duties were allotted in connection with the Sanctuary. So, ere proceeding further, we must trace out a little about Levitical service, as detailed in the Word.

God on that memorable night in the land of Egypt, when He destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians, preserved from judgment all the first-born males in Israel, both of man and of beast. And before ever that hitherto down-trodden people had left Egyptian territory, He made known to Moses the claim He had on all their first-born males, which He would not relinquish, but intended to enforce when they should have entered the land of Canaan (Ex. xiii. 11-16). That claim was again asserted, and inserted too in the Covenant ratified at Sinai between the people and God, as stated in Ex. xxii. 29. And that it should not become obsolete, or be forgotten, again were they reminded of it in another covenant, made by God in their favour shortly after they had sinned in the matter of the calf. Of course, having broken the first covenant, they could deserve no favour from God. He, however, in His grace, entered into an unconditional covenant, as far as they were concerned, by which He bound Himself to bring them into the land of promise. In that His claim on the first-born males was repealed (Ex. xxxiv. 20). Thus three times within one year God spoke of it to Moses, and through him to Israel.

Whilst, however, claiming them, God at the outset declared that they were to be redeemed, though in what way was not revealed till after the congregation had reached Mount Sinai. Of course, every creature ought to serve God, but He made this claim on those only whom He had sheltered from judgment - a claim, and the ground of it, with which generation after generation were to be made familiar (Ex. xiii. 14-16). And though reading of it, as we do, as an ordinance which concerned Israel, we may yet get instruction from it for ourselves, seeing that Christians, as we learn in Heb. xii. 23, are the assembly of first born ones. A designation this is, the bearing of which those to whom the words were written must surely have understood, and which we, with the light that the Old Testament throws on it, can easily lay hold of, viz., that, sheltered from divine judgment, like the first-born males of Israel, we should own His claim on us to be employed in His service. His claim, we say, for surely there is that; yet, looked at in another light, we can call it, and should view it, as a privilege to be employed, as the Levites were, in the service of our God. But to proceed in an orderly way. To Numbers we must turn to learn about God’s way of redemption for the first-born males of the twelve tribes. The normal method, as we would call it, and that which was to hold good for all time, was by a money payment of five shekels to be paid to the priest (Num. xviii. 16). To this there was an exception, but only on one occasion. It is that which now occupies us. An exception, we call it, because it was a transaction which was never repeated though it held good for ever, the tribe of Levi having been taken instead of the first-born males of the twelve tribes, as far as man for man there could be such an exchange; the over-plus of the children of Israel being then redeemed by five shekels each, after the shekel of the Sanctuary, which was fixed at twenty gerahs (Num. iii. 49-51).*

{*The redemption money, it should be remarked, was quite different from the atonement money, of half a shekel in value (Ex. xxx, 11-16). This last was required from every male in Israel who reached the age of twenty, and it was dedicated to the service of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, and applied to the repair of the Temple in the reign of Jehoash (2 Kings xii. 4). The redemption money was only required from the first-born males of the twelve tribes. It was due when such were a month old, and was part of God's inalienable provision for the maintenance of the priests (Num. xviii. 16). The sum thus handed over in the wilderness amounted to above £200, valuing the shekel at two shillings and eightpence of our money.} For the males of Israel redemption was imperative. For the first-born male of an ass it was optional, and depended on the will of its owner. For the first-born male of a clean animal it was impossible. That went upon God's altar. So the redemption of which we here speak was in no sense redemption from judgment, with which it has been too often confounded. There is a redemption from divine judgment, and in that every child of God shares. That is provided by the blood of Christ (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14). Now the redemption of the first-born males was in no sense like that. And this will be clear to the simplest reader, if he remarks that the clean animal could not be redeemed at all, and also that the males of Israel were redeemed at the outset by the Levites being taken in their place, as far as that could be effected. Were the Levites selected to bear divine punishment instead of the first-born males of the twelve tribes? No. They were taken to minister to Aaron. So we read, "and they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the Tabernacle of the congregation (or, Tent of meeting), to do the service of the Tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the Tabernacle of the congregation (or, Tent of meeting), and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the Tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron, and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him, out of (or, on the behalf of) the children of Israel'' (Num. iii. 6-9). The position then, and the service of the Levites, was one of privilege indeed, and from that surely they had no desire to be excused. Moreover, it was appointed them by God, who reserves to Himself the prerogative of selecting the fitting instruments for His work. Quite an army of workers He would have, though at first, like the number of the priests, those available for active service were much fewer than in later times. In the reign of David (1 Chron. xxiii. 3) the Levites, numbered from 30 years old and upward, were 38,000. In the wilderness of Sinai, those between the ages of 30 and 50 years of age numbered 8,580 (Num. iv. 48). We have spoken of those then fitted for full work. We read also of the number of males among them from a month old, which were taken in the place of first-born males of the twelve tribes. These amounted to 22,000* leaving 273 of the first-born males of Israel to be redeemed by money, which, as has been already pointed out, was handed to the priests.

{*The actual number of males of the Levites exceeded this by 300, but these were not included in the number taken instead of the Israelites, being probably themselves first-born males, and so could not be substituted for others.}

Following the order in Numbers in which all this is recorded, we next read more in detail of the service they were intended to perform. We have had already expressed in general terms what it was to be (i. 51). We have learnt, too, that they were to minister unto Aaron, given to him and to his sons, being wholly given unto him out of (or, on the behalf of) the children of Israel (iii. 6-9). But, above and beyond the ordinary work of a Levite when the Tabernacle was stationary, there were special duties which devolved on them when the camp was on the march, but all arranged by

God. If He took them to be His servants, He left to no one, not even to Moses, to suggest what their work was to be. And the same principle is seen in the divine arrangement in the Church of God. "God hath set some in the Church - first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers" etc., and the Spirit, we read, divides to each man severally as He will (1 Cor. xii. 11, 28). Would that this were more remembered. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.'' (1 Cor. xii. 4, 5). In the right exercise of his gift let each one have full scope, whilst subject to the Word in that which he does.

Levitical duties were appointed then as it pleased God. So each Levitical family could set to work, and no one was to interfere with them. To God they were responsible; and from Him had they received authority for their service. And here the principle of election was displayed. For whilst Gershon was the eldest son of Levi, and so his descendants might have expected that they would be selected to bear the sacred vessels on their shoulders, that work was entrusted to the descendants of Kohath, who was Levi's second son. How often do we see in Scripture, that blessing and privilege do not run in the order of nature. The Kohathites were designated as the bearers of the sacred vessels. To the Gershonites was appointed the charge of carrying the curtains, the hanging for the door of the Tabernacle, the hangings of the court, and the curtain which formed its door, and all their cords. To the Merarites were entrusted the boards of the Tabernacle, and the bars and the pillars, the sockets, and all the vessels thereof; and all that serveth thereto, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords (Num. iii. 25, 26, 31, 36, 37).

Each great family thus set to work, would the Kohathites exalt themselves in their own eyes above the Gershonites? How foolish would that have been. For they were mutually dependent on each other, and on the Merarites, too, for the work to be properly performed. Of what use would it have been, had the Kohathites arrived at the camping ground with the holy vessels in their charge, to find nothing ready to receive them, because the Gershonites and the Merarites had not erected the Tent of the congregation. Co-operation was needed, for they all had part in the work. But all that was Levitical service, not the work of the priesthood. So there was no ground for the Kohathites to exalt themselves as on a par with the Priests. For though carrying the sacred vessels, among which was the brazen Altar, they could never officiate at it; nor, though they were admitted to cross the threshold of the Sanctuary, could they enter that holy chamber, till all the vessels had been duly wrapped up by the priests. "They shall not go in to see the Sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die;" so reads the revised version of Num. iv. 20. Each time the camp moved there was the reminder, that the priest had a place and a service in connection with the Tabernacle which no mere Levite could ever attain to. There was a great gulf between the two, which could never be bridged over, and we know that when some of the Kohathites, led by Korah, presumed to put themselves on an equality with priests, God signally dealt with them in judgment; and their censors, turned into beaten plates for a covering upon the Altar, served as a memorial to all time, that no one not of the seed of Aaron, was to draw near to burn incense before the Lord (Num. xvi.). Yet the priests were not independent of Levite service. For God's work to be properly performed the ministrations of the latter were indispensable. How all was balanced, as it were, by the Divine arrangement; for efficiency and due performance of the work could only be secured as each filled their post, and did their part. But more have we to notice. If God called people to do His work, He will provide all that is needed to carry it on. Of this the Gershonites and the Merarites had

marked proof. Their work, when on the march, was more onerous than that of the Kohathites. Two wagons and four oxen, part of the offering of the princes of the twelve tribes when the Tabernacle was reared up, were allotted by Moses to the Gershonites; and four wagons and eight oxen to the Merarites (vii.). Thought was taken for both of these great families, and the one which had the heaviest burden had the greatest help. What consideration was there in this! Nor was it a solitary instance of it. To bear burdens required strength. Now God would not overtax the strength of any one called to labour for Him. So none were called on to take part in Levitical work of bearing burdens, till they had reached thirty years of age, nor were they asked to continue such service after fifty years of age. In the matter of help provided by the wagons the Gershonites and the Merarites alone profited. In the consideration, not to overtax the strength of any Levite, the Kohathites also shared. What a thing it was, and is, to be the servants of God. He, the Almighty, thinks of them, and considers them.

We have now to call the reader's attention to a most interesting ceremony which took place in the wilderness of Sinai, and in the presence of all the congregation, viz., the setting apart the Levites in accordance with the rite prescribed by God, for the duties they were destined to perform. As with the priests, so with the Levites, it was for God to say how that should be done, for He only knows what is needful for those whom He will employ in His service. In the most public way was this carried out; and first both washing and shaving were called for. Their persons were sprinkled with the water of purifying, and the hair of their flesh shaved off; their clothes, too, were washed, and thus they made themselves clean. The need of purifying by water proclaimed that in themselves they were not pure; the shaving all their flesh, betokened the surrender of all thought of serving God just in their natural strength. These preliminaries gone through, they provided themselves with a burnt-offering and a sin-offering, and were ready then to approach the Tabernacle of the congregation. Before that Tabernacle the whole assembly of the Children of Israel was to be gathered. Called together a short time previous to witness the consecration of the priests, they were called together again to witness the setting apart of the Levites.

Spectators they were, yet not spectators only, for they had a part in the ceremony, having to lay their hands upon the Levites, and Aaron was to offer (or wave) them before the Lord for a wave-offering. Laying their hands on them acknowledged identification with them, in that the Levites were to stand henceforth in the place of their first-born males to do the Lord's work. The rightful claim of God on their first-born they thus fully owned, but they acknowledged likewise His way of redeeming their children from a service which He might righteously have enforced. After that the Levites took the initiative, and laid their hands on the bullocks about to be killed on their behalf, the one for a sin-offering, the other for a burnt-offering. Then the Levites set before Aaron and his sons were offered for a wave offering before the Lord - a wave-offering it was called, because all the Levites were to he offered. That done, the days ceremonial was completed; God had taken them instead of all the first-born of the Children of Israel, and now, duly set apart, they could discharge the duties proper to their office. At twenty-five years of age they entered on the Tabernacle service. At thirty years of age they began to bear burdens. And they ceased from this last duty after fifty years of age, yet continued to minister with their brethren, keeping the charge, but doing no service. (Num. viii. 23-26).

Interesting would it be to pursue the history of the Levites, pointing out their unique position, and their distribution in the land. But that would take us beyond our subject, which is the Tabernacle,

and what was connected with it. So here we close, remarking that this subject of the Levites concerns Christians, who are, to speak in Old Testament language, both Levites and a holy priesthood (1 Peter. ii. 5). As a holy priesthood we offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ - a service this common to all. But answering to the Levites, we are to be for the Lord Jesus as they were given to Aaron; for as saints we have individually something to do conducive to the furtherance of God’s work on the earth.

02.08. On the March.

On the March. The Levites duly set apart for the discharge of those duties which would otherwise have devolved on all the first born males of Israel, full provision was thereby made for the work of God upon earth. And now the passover having been kept at the foot of Sinai, the first passover celebrated outside Egyptian territory, the time drew near for a forward movement to take place in the first month, on the fourteenth day of it, the congregation celebrated the passover. In the second month, and on the fourteenth day of it, those incapacitated the previous month kept their passover. Then on the twentieth day of that second month, the cloud was for the first time taken up from over the Tabernacle of the testimony, and the two silver trumpets blew an alarm.

All were at once astir in that vast encampment. The day had come when they were to begin their direct march towards the land of their inheritance. They had started from Egypt for Sinai; for God had told Moses, "when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God on this mountain " (Ex. iii, 12). But called out as they were from Egypt to go to Canaan, their road to it was to be by the mount of God. So their arrival at Sinai was as it were the completion of the first stage of the journey, the second of which was Kadesh Barnea, reached by the people before the end of the second year after the Exodus. And the third was the plains of Moab, having left the wilderness for ever, when they had crossed the brook Zered (Dent. ii. 13, 14). Between Sinai and Kadesh are eleven days' journey (Deut. i. 2). Between Kadesh and the brook Zered thirty-eight years ran by. To return. With the wilderness of Sinai and its adjacent valleys the people must have become familiar. Nearly a year had passed since they first encamped at the foot of what is now called Ras Sufsâfeh in the large plain called Wady Er Râhâh.* They had reached the base of Ras Sufsâfeh, now supposed to be the mount of God, in the third month of the year of the Exodus - the twentieth day of the second month of the second year was to witness their final departure from it. For never in all their wanderings do we read of their return to Sinai, or to Horeb.

{*"An accurate survey of the plain of Rtihah shows it to be 100 acres in extent; and when the open wadies near and surrounding are taken into account, there are in all 940 acres of excellent standing ground in front and in full view of Ras Sufsafeh, which is the Arabic name of the bold bluff or cliff which fronts the plain." - The Bible and Modern Discoveries, by H. A. Harper, p. 138.} The silver trumpets sounded an alarm (Num. x. 5). All were at once astir, but surely in no confusion. Each camp of the twelve tribes had been already made acquainted with its place in the order of march; and each family of the Levites had been instructed as to its special service, and its place in the host, as the vast company march on to Canaan. At the sound of the alarm a spectator would have seen a movement in the camp of Judah; for, its standard reared up, it would have begun the march, leading, as that tribe did, the advance guard of the host. Behind it, but following its standard, would have been seen the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar, after which marched in their appointed place the host of the tribe of Zebulun; meanwhile there must have been great activity displayed by both priests and Levites. The former would at once have repaired to the Sanctuary, and have set busily to work, covering the sacred vessels. Some of the latter would have been seen getting ready the oxen and yoking them to the wagons, so that they might be

laden with the heavier portions of the Tabernacle, and probably with the pillars of the court and their sockets also. The vessels covered, the Kohathites, now called in by Aaron and his sons, would prepare to carry them as God had directed; while the Gershonites and the Merarites would then concentrate their efforts on the taking down of the Tabernacle, curtain by curtain, and board by board, being careful that nothing was left behind - neither a socket nor a pin.

Whilst this was going on in the centre, the movement already referred to would have been visible on the eastern side of the huge encampment. Tents had been struck, women and children had been got ready, and the tribal possessions had been gathered together. An army in itself of 186,400 men had already begun to lead the way, the standard of the camp of Judah being, as we have said, that to which the advance guard rallied. The Tabernacle by this time taken down, the Gershonites and the Merarites with their wagons and oxen, helps for the burdens they carried, would be prepared to follow, numbering 5,830 between the ages of 30 and 50, all able for their work. Following thus early they could re-erect the Tabernacle ere the Kohathites came up.

Behind them would be seen the standard of the camp of Reuben, setting forward according to their hosts. With Reuben was connected the host of the tribe of Simeon, and that also of the tribe of Gad, numbering altogether 151,450 of those who could go forth to war.

Following them, and immediately preceding the standard of the camp of Ephraim, were the Kohathites with the sacred vessels, the number of whom available to bear burdens was 2,750. With them probably marched the priests, and Eleazar, whose special charge was the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil (iv. 16). And here perhaps would have been the bulk of the camp of the Levites, embracing all the women and children (ii. 17). We have spoken of Eleazar, who had supervision of the Kohathites. The reader should remember that Ithamar superintended the Gershonites and the Merarites (iv. 28, 33). The next standard to be displayed was that of Ephraim, with whom were joined the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin, numbering in all 108,100 men able for war. Behind them, forming the rear guard, floated the standard of the camp of the children of Dan, with which were classed the host of Asher, and that of Naphtali, which last closed the long procession. The rear-guard amounted to 157,600 fighting men. Thus of the two largest hosts one led the way and the other brought up the rear.

What a sight it must have been! In what order they reached Sinai we know not. They left it to outward eyes a disciplined host, whom it would have been perilous for the tribes of the desert to attack. Amalek had done so at Rephidim before the people reached Sinai, and had been signally defeated, for God was with Israel, and the intercession of Moses brought down the desired help for victory (Ex. xvii. 11-13). Subsequently, near the place which was afterwards known as Hormah, the Amalekites. in conjunction with the Canaanites, inflicted a defeat on those of Israel who went up to the top of the mountain against the advice of Moses, for God was not with them in that action (Num. xiv. 41-45). When God was with them none could be against them, and no desert tribe throughout all the years after they left Sinai ventured to attack them on the march, or to surprise them by a night assault on the camp. Even Midian, whose power and number must have been of no small account, made no direct attempt to check their progress; but sought under Balaam’s advice to draw down divine judgment on them in the matter of Peor (xxii. 16). To succeed against them whilst under the protection of Jehovah was impossible. If His shield could be withdrawn their enemies might succeed. Skilfully designed was the counsel of Balaam, yet it did not effect its

purpose. In the order in which they left Sinai so they left their different camping stations in the wilderness, the names of which are often indicative, either of what they found at them, and so of the character of the country, or of that which happened to them. Of the former we may find illustrations in Rithmah, Rimmon-parez, Libnah, Rissah, etc. Of the latter Kibroth-hattaavah has fixed for ever in remembrance the lusting of the people for flesh, promoted by the mixed multitude, who seem to have perished then, for we never read of them again (xi. 4). Then Hazeroth (hamlets), and Bene-Jaakan (children of Jaakan), are suggestive of places inhabited, or visited by desert tribes. As often as they moved their camp the lawgiver spoke and addressed God, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee" (x. 35). With the order of march in our remembrance how suited are the words. They were moving on in order under the guidance of Jehovah of hosts. And when the ark rested, the lawgiver said, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Truly could Israel thus be described, whose number was upwards of 600,000, besides women and children.

Here we would notice two points connected with this part of our subject. First, in the grouping of the tribes into four great camps we may observe a plan. The four leaders were Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan. After their standards the tribes annexed to each moved, and in each case, Manasseh excepted, the younger followed the elder. To this one exception no just cause of complaint could be found, for Jacob had settled the precedence of Ephraim over Manasseh, when he blessed them, guiding, we read, his hands wittingly. Judah led the way; not Reuben the first-born, though the latter tribe was chief of the second camp. Reuben had lost his place as the eldest ere Jacob died, and to Judah the aged patriarch prophetically declared that his father’s brethren should bow down. For that tribe to lead the way would seem natural; and to us, who are acquainted with its subsequent history, as the tribe to which the Lord belonged, its place as leader was but fitting. Dan, the chief of the last camp, had Asher and Naphtali attached to his standard - all three were children of handmaids, but Dan was the eldest son of the three, so fittingly he had here the pre-eminence. No tribe, then, could complain of its place in the order of march. No jealousy arising out of it could have been engendered in the breast of any. Jacob’s dying words and dying act settled questions which might otherwise have arisen. Surely divine wisdom was displayed in these different groupings, which were intended only for the wilderness journey: for the arrangement of the tribes in the land, we may remark, was very different to their wilderness association. Issachar and Zebulun were then far removed from Judah; and Simeon and Gad were separated by the Jordan, and by a great part of the territory of Judah as well.

Secondly, the other point to which we would draw attention is the illustration we get from Num. x. of Ps. lxviii. and Ps. lxxx. The former predicts the triumph of God over His enemies on earth in the future. So that psalm opens with the thoughts, and almost word for word the language of Moses when the ark set forward on the march. The latter is a cry for God’s intervention after the temple has been defiled and Jerusalem laid in heaps (Ps. lxxix. 1) a state of sorrow to be known in the future. So the godly remnant will say, "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Thy strength, and come and save us " (Ps. lxxx. 2); an allusion this evidently to the normal place of the Ark, which was just in front of the camps of these tribes. How that psalm, then, bears witness to the fact of the wilderness march. We have said that the normal place of the Ark was just in front of the standard of the camp of Ephraim, carried on the shoulders of some of the Kohathites. But on one occasion, and only one that we know of, this order was not adhered to. For as they were

leaving Sinai to traverse a desert unknown to any of the Israelites, though well known to Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, who was with them, Moses requested the continuance of his presence to be instead of eyes to them. He probably was acquainted with the tracks, and with the places where wells could be got, and pasture found for the flocks and herds which accompanied them. The request was a natural one, and in ordinary circumstances would have been deemed a prudent one, for to direct so vast a company through an unknown country was no light matter. But the circumstances were not ordinary. God was in their midst, and He would guide them. So the Ark, we are told, went before them a three days' journey to seek out a resting-place for them. God would Himself guide them, and that far better than Hobab (Num. x. 33). What a reproof to Moses this must have been. God as it were took the matter into His hands, and led the way to find out a resting-place for His people! And the cloud of the Lord was upon (or, over) them by day when they went out of the camp (34). From place to place they moved. Their camping stations between Egypt and the plains of Moab were never to be forgotten. They are written in Numbers xxxiii., recorded there, when the wilderness journeys were over, but before they entered into final rest on the west of the river Jordan, in the land of the Canaanites.

Viewing the wilderness journey as over, we have next to trace out the movements of the Ark, till it entered into its resting-place in the temple on mount Moriah in the days of Solomon.

02.09. The Movements of the Ark.

The Movements of the Ark.

Israel reached the plains of Moab by the Jordan near Jericho in the fortieth year after the Exodus. An eventful year it was. In the first month of it Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Moses and Aaron, had died, and was buried at Kadesh (Num. xx. 1). Aaron too had died, and Eleazar had succeeded him in the High Priest's office; being dressed in the pontificial attire ere his father expired; for the two together were a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the men of war too, who had come out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upwards had passed away by death (Deut. ii. 16). What changes these were! Besides all this the wilderness wanderings had ceased, and for ever, the moment Israel had crossed the brook Zered (Deut. ii. 14, 15). Arnon too had been crossed, and the plains of Moab were occupied by the vast encampment of that victorious host. For victorious it was, seeing it had waged war with success against Sihon the Amorite king, and against Og, King of Bashan, who was of the giants. Neither could stand against them. A war of extermination it had been. Every man, woman, and child had been cut off, without, that we read of, one Israelite having been wounded (Deut. ii. 33-34; iii. 6). The Amorites, who had wrested part of Moab's ancient territory from them, were found to be too feeble to dislodge Israel from their border. And Og, one of the Rephaim*, an ancient and most powerful race, found that his fenced cities with high walls, gates, and bars could afford him no protection against the invading host. Like a flood, which carries all before it, Israel had overspread his land. All his cities were taken. All the inhabitants were slaughtered. All the cattle and spoil were taken for a prey.

{*The Rephaim, or giants as A.V. calls them, were old inhabitants of the land. Against them Chedorlaomer waged war (Gen. xiv. 5). And their territory God promised to Abraham (xv. 20), excepting as we afterwards learn those districts where they had once been, which were subsequently inhabited by the Moabites and the Ammonites (Deut. ii, 9-22). Some of them had dwelt west of Jordan (the valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem preserves a record of it), and of their descendants individuals remained there till the days of David (1 Chron. xx.)} For the Amorite territory east of Jordan was to form part of the inheritance of Israel; of this God told Moses. "Rise ye up, and take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon behold I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle." Again, "Behold I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land" (Deut. ii. 24, 31). Thus they possessed the country of Sihon, and that also of Og (Num. xxi. 24, 35; Deut. iii. 12). On both sides of the Jordan then was the land of Israel's inheritance, as predetermined by God, though it does not appear that He intended any of them to dwell on the east of that river. The tribes, however, who asked for their portion there got it. But soon did they discover the drawback of it (Joshua. xxii. 24-28). By-and-by all the tribes will be located west of Jordan (Ezek. xlvii. 15-20; xlviii), yet they will possess the territory east of it as well, feeding in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old (Jer. 1. 19; Micah vii. 14; Zech. x. 10). We must remember then, that on the east of Jordan as well as on the west the inheritance of the people, as designed by God, was to be found; a picture this of the full inheritance of the heavenly

saints, which comprises heaven and earth; or to express it in symbolical language, that which is on the east of Jordan, as well as that which is on the west, for Jordan is typical of death. The unparalleled success of Israel against the Amorites, startled, as we know, the nations across the river, making their hearts melt, and depriving them of any more spirit (Joshua. ii. 10, 11). No wonder therefore that Balak, king of Moab, when he saw his nation's old antagonist and victor, Sihon the Amorite, had been helpless before Israel, and he and all his people swept off the earth - no wonder that Balak was convinced of the impossibility of Moab successfully contending with Israel, unless God could be brought to be against them. Hence in conjunction with Midian he hired Balaam to curse them, but without success. God was for Israel, so none could be against them. The people irresistible in war, yielded, however, to the seduction of the Midianitish women and, though not a man fell in battle against the Amorites, twenty and four thousand died by the plague inflicted by God in the matter of Baal-peor. God's wrath was turned away at that time by the faithfulness of Phineas but the tribe of Simeon for many a day bore testimony to what had gone on, in the reduction of its numbers by upwards of thirty-seven thousand, as ascertained at the second census when compared with the first (Num. xxvi. 14).

Now fresh victory awaited Israel in the expedition against Midian. Twelve thousand went out to war. Twelve thousand returned victorious. Not a man was lost, though the five kings of Midian - Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba - were slain, and every Midianite likewise, besides Balaam the son of Beor, who, possibly, when discredited in the eyes of Balak, betook himself to the Midianites, and with them met his justly deserved doom. After all this the people were summoned to hear the terms of a covenant to which they were to be parties, and which they entered into in the land of Moab (Deut. xii. - xxix. 1). On the observance of it depended their continuance in the land, the western part of which under Joshua they were about to conquer. For the time for the departure of Moses had arrived. At the age of 120 he went up Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, saw the land west of the river, but never returned to Israel. He died there alone with God. Of his birthday he had spoken in Deut. xxxi. 2. Near now was the day of his death. That fortieth year thus came to a close - an eventful one indeed. Death had been busy throughout. The prophetess, the priest, the mediator, all had gone - a year to be remembered for that; but to be remembered, too, for the victories achieved over the Amorites and the Midianites without the loss of a single Israelite. But rest in the land was still future, and for that they must cross the Jordan, and fight with their enemies on the west of that river, ere they could take possession of the country there assigned them by God (Num. xxxiv.)

Another year equally to he remembered now began, and on the tenth day of the first month the passage of the Jordan took place. This necessarily brings the movements of the Ark prominently before us.

Israel had been facing the Jordan, which was in full flood, as was customary during the time of harvest; fords there were in the river, but at that season, doubtless, they were few, and impracticable for a great host, though the two spies had managed to cross and to recross near Jericho (Joshua. ii. 7). The passage, then, of the river had to be effected, and not merely attempted, and was no ordinary matter. It was to be the passage of the people of the Lord into the land of their dwelling-place. At the most unfavourable time, and under the most adverse circumstances, it was to be carried out. God, therefore, would take all into His hand, and direct what was to be done. So the Ark had in this a most prominent place, and was to be carried in a

new and remarkable way. In front of Israel's hosts, and preceding all the better part of a mile in advance, it was to lead the way, borne on this occasion, as on three others, to which we hope in due course to draw attention, on the shoulders of the priests, and not on those of the Kohathites. The instructions issued by Joshua were as follows: "Come not near unto it (the Ark), that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore " (Joshua iii. 4). A space of about two thousand cubits was to be left between the Ark and the advanced guard of the people, which was to be thus alone, silently carried on the shoulders of the priests to the brink of the rushing river.

All arranged for, and the people sanctified, the morning of the eventful day on which the Lord would do wonders among them dawned upon earth. At the command of Joshua, the priests took up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth, and passed over before the people. "And as they that bare the Ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the Ark were dipped in the brim of the water (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest), that the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam (or, at Adam), that is beside Zaretan; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground, in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." (iii. 15-17). Such is the historical account of that wonderful passage by the Israelites, but evidently it is the record of an eye-witness (v. 1). The river in flood tide was suddenly arrested, and its waters held back by the presence of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth. No word was spoken that we read of, no prayer put up by Eleazar or by Joshua; but suddenly and mysteriously the stream ceased to flow, and the waters which were descending its channel were arrested at Adam, supposed to be the same as the modern Ed Damich. From that to the Dead Sea (a distance of more than twenty miles if we reckon the windings of the river), the Jordan bed must that day have become suddenly dry.

What caused that? The presence of the Living God, symbolised by the Ark. The waters, which would have been death to the host, were arrested by the power and presence of God. A way that day was made through the Jordan for the redeemed of the Lord to enter the land of their dwelling-place. The people saw how the presence of the Living God had held back the waters of the rapid, and then also deep, flowing river, till all had passed over on dry ground. The passing, begun doubtless in the morning, was finished before night: Till all had crossed, the priests bearing the Ark stood still in Jordan. Before the people had reached the river, the Ark, as we have said, preceding them by a distance of two thousand cubits, entered the river's bed. How this speaks to us of the Lord Jesus, who Himself has passed through death, and now has annulled it, for all His own (2 Tim. i. 10). Death is no impassable barrier to the heavenly saints going in to their everlasting dwelling. As typical of this it was, we believe, that the priests, not the Levites, carried the Ark that day. The Jordan crossed, the people circumcised, the Passover kept, the enemy had next to be defeated in his stronghold. Again the Ark, carried by the priests, had a prominent but a different place in the work which had to be done. All was of God, so by Him the order was arranged. This time those armed for war led the way. After them came seven priests to blow with trumpets. Then followed the Ark, behind which was the rearward. For six days in that order, and the priests blowing the trumpets, the Ark and the host made a circuit of the city's walls. Apparently

there was no result; and what could such tactics avail against the fortified city of Jericho, those within it might have said. At the close of the sixth day the walls remained intact. The seventh morning dawned. The same tactics were resorted to on the part of the besiegers, but instead of one circuit they made seven. At the seventh time of their compassing the city, the priests blew with the trumpets, the people shouted, and the walls fell down flat; so that the people went up every man straight before him, and then took the city. The stronghold of the enemy succumbed to the presence of God. The Lord with His people, and for them, Jericho fell. With the captain of salvation victory was sure.

We must now turn to another scene in which the Ark prominently figured. The war went on: Ai in turn was taken, then the way was laid open for Joshua and all the people to reach the valley between Ebal and Gerizim. Thither they went, unhindered by their enemies still around them. Moses had told them to go there, and though he had never seen the place, he described it as “on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign (or Arabah) over against Gilgal, beside the plains (rather oaks) of Moreh (Deut. xi. 30). He had further told them what to do when they got there. Six tribes, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, here named in the order of birth, were to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless. The other six tribes, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali, were to stand on Mount Ebal to curse. And an altar was to be built of unhewn stones, presumably in the valley between the two mountains, on which burnt offerings were to be offered, and peace offerings also (Deut. xxvii. 1-7).

All that Moses had enjoined, Joshua faithfully carried out. But what we read of in Joshua, viz., the prominence given to the Ark, is not mentioned in Deuteronomy. "All Israel," we read, "and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the Ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the Law’’ (Joshua. viii. 33, 34).

Now, what did all this mean? Why was the Ark there and no mention of the Tabernacle with it? Once only was it taken to the valley between Ebal and Gerizim. Its position was here again changed. How plain it is that there was no imitation. God was directing in all that took place. At Jordan, as we have seen, it had preceded all Israel. There it must have been alone. At Jericho it followed the armed men in their daily march round the doomed city. God was to be seen with His people in the war. Here how different. It was in the valley, borne aloft on the shoulders of some of the priests, with half of the tribes on Mount Gerizim on the one hand, and half on Mount Ebal on the other. What were they all doing there? No enemy had concentrated its forces at that spot. It was not war which drew them to the vicinity of Shechem; it was the ceremony of taking formal possession of the land that had called them thither, in obedience to the directions communicated by the lawgiver. They had come to take possession, as one might say, in the presence of their enemies. For as yet the Amorite confederacy in the south had not been crushed, nor had the northern confederacy under Jabin, king of Hazor, been defeated and dispersed. Much the greater part of the land was still unconquered. But their right of possession was not dependent on conquest, though their enjoyment of it necessitated warfare. Their right of possession rested on a

gift, a grant by God centuries before to Abraham. Here they had met to read their title deeds, as it were, to their continued enjoyment of it as their home. But why was this place selected for this purpose? No other spot on the whole earth was so suitable. It was at Shechem under the oak (or, terebinth) of Moreh that God first promised to Abraham to give his seed the land (Gen. xii. 7). There, close upon five centuries later, his descendants were assembled by the word of God, and in token of the fulfilment of that promise to their father. Faithful He was who promised. He had also done it, and they were assembled there in witness of it. An oak was there, evidently a well known tree (Joshua. xxiv. 26), perhaps the same by which Abraham had pitched his tent, for trees live long. From Shechem Abraham moved to Bethel and Ai. From Bethel and Ai his descendants pass to reach that valley which divides Ebal from Gerizim.

Over ground, then, which Abraham had once travelled his descendants also travelled, but in the contrary direction. He left Shechem for the neighbourhood of Bethel and Ai. They pushed on from the latter locality to reach the vicinity of Shechem. Never again was Abraham at Shechem that we read of. Never again was the Ark carried to the valley between Ebal and Gerizim. But what associations for those acquainted with Abraham's history must that visit have called up! On those three occasions then the Ark was carried by the priests, namely, at the passage of the Jordan, at the investing and fall of Jericho, and at the gathering of all the tribes to Ebal and Gerizim. At the Jordan we read in type of the passage through death unto the home made for the saints by the Lord Jesus Christ. At Jericho we view the walls of the stronghold of the enemy falling flat before the Lord of all the earth. In that valley between Ebal and Gerizim God took possession of the land in and through His people, reminding us of what Eph. i. 18 speaks - God's inheritance in His saints. For as the land was the land of the possession of the Lord (Joshua. xxii. 19), He possessed it in His people; so will it be with the still wider inheritance in which we are concerned - which we shall share with the Lord Jesus Christ. The other occasion on which the Ark was carried by the priests must in order be noticed, but important events took place, and years ran by ere that was witnessed.

02.10. The Ark in Captivity.

The Ark in Captivity.

"He delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand." So wrote Asaph (Psalm lxxviii. 61), the contemporary, we believe, of David, of the capture of the Ark by the uncircumcised Philistines.

Israel smitten before them, with the loss of about four thousand men, bethought themselves of the Ark of God. Remembering, doubtless, the victory at Jericho, they attempted to use it as a charm. "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." (1. Sam. iv. 3). It they thought of, not God. What was the Ark but the symbol of His presence? But as is ever the way, when declension has come in, and ere a recognition of the true cause has been made, things or rites are resorted to as charms. Happy is it when such idle dreams are dispelled. The Ark entered the camp. God allowed it. "All Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." The Philistines, when they enquired about the noise, and learnt what gave rise to it, were afraid, for they said, "God is come into the camp," and they said "Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? These are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 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." (1 Sam. iv. 7-9). The battle was fought with the Ark on the field, and thirty thousand men of Israel, well more than seven times the number slain in the previous engagement. The Ark, too, was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. Was God's hand shortened, that it could not save, or His ear heavy, that it could not hear? No. Israel's iniquities had separated between them and their God, and their sins had hid His face from them that He would not hear (Isa. lix. 1, 2). This was made manifest twenty years after, on that same battle field, when it got its name of Ebenezer (1Sam. vii. 12); for the Lord gave Israel a decisive victory, which terminated the forty years of the Philistines' oppression. On the second occasion they were strong, for they had confessed their evil ways and had put away their idols; and the Lord's intervention had been sought by the burnt-offering which Samuel had offered. The first time they trusted to the presence of the Ark, without confession and without sacrifice. They were shamefully smitten. The second time, confession made, and the sucking lamb offered - the death of Christ thus brought in remembrance before God - the Lord thundered with a great thunder on the Philistines and discomforted them, and they were smitten down before Israel, the Ark being some miles off in its resting-place at Kirjath-jearim, though much nearer the battle-field than when it was at Shiloh. What was needed then for victory was made plain. It is the same in principle now. But to return. The Ark taken, the Philistines transported it to Ashdod, which was near the sea coast, thus traversing with it as captive the whole breadth of their country in its widest part, till they reached the temple of Dagon in that city. What a triumph it appeared for the enemy! The God of Israel unable to protect the symbol of His presence! But soon was it seen and felt how dreadful for the Ashdodites to have the Ark in their midst. The Lord could not work for Israel, but He would care

for His own glory, and that at once. Woe indeed it was for Philistia when the Ark was taken. Sorrowful too for Israel, for their glory was departed (1 Sam. iv. 21). The Ark deposited in the temple, and confronting the idol, night overshadowed the city, and all lay down to sleep. Far off from Israel was it now, and alone, without a priest or a Levite to wait on it; still it was the symbol of the divine presence on earth, and that was to be manifested. Day dawned, the men of Ashdod arose from their slumbers, and found their idol, even Dagon, prostrate in its own temple before the Ark of God. "Dagon," we read, "was fallen upon his face to the ground, before the Ark of the Lord," a silent yet expressive witness of the existence and power of the true God. Dagon in his temple rendered homage to Jehovah. But was that an accident? They took Dagon and set him in his place again. An idol, what could Dagon do? As it fell there it lay, till its votaries picked it up and restored it to its place and position. That was done, and throughout that day it remained as they set it, confronting the Ark of the Lord. Night came, and morning succeeded that night, when the Ashdodites found that Dagon's previous fall was no accident. There lay the idol, not merely prostrate and helpless, but now broken to pieces, the head and the palms of its hands cut off on the threshold, and only the stump, or fishy part of the idol left.* The Ashdodites evidently had been aware of nothing unusual during the night. No earthquake upset the idol's equilibrium. God, the true God, had thrown it down. Dagon must bow before the Ark of the Lord. How quietly yet effectually did the Lord thus work for the maintenance of His own glory! "Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore," - these words of the Philistines received an illustration they never expected. Dagon was broken in pieces by the hand of God.

{*The image was in the form of a fish, with the upper part like a man.} Nor was that all. The Lord's hand was heavy on the men of the place. He destroyed them, and smote them with tumours, even Ashdod, and the borders thereof (v. 6). Now this was not a general epidemic visiting the land. The tumours only attacked those where the Ark was held captive. God was teaching the Ashdodites that His presence and power were solemn realities. Aware of it - made aware in this distressing way - they desired to be rid of the presence of the Ark. So long as it remained so long would disease and death make havoc among them. In an agony of distress they said, "The Ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us; for His hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our God.'' What a confession from the conquerors of the Israelites!

Immediate steps were taken to free themselves from further sorrow. To Gath it was conveyed, the most southern of the five cities of the Philistines. This is proved by the recovery of its site, now called Abu Gheith, as marked on the map of the Palestine Exploration Fund.* Would Gath fare better than Ashdod? Soon was it found in that city that the Ark was a most unwelcome visitant. No idol of Dagon was there to do homage to the God of Israel; but the people of Gath. like those of Ashdod, were visited by disease and death, "The hand of the Lord" we read "was against the city with a very great destruction, and He smote the men of the city, both small and great, and tumours brake out upon them." The same visitation that the people of Ashdod had experienced the men of Gath fell under, only it would seem intensified. For we read of a very great destruction. As with the Ashdodites, so with the Gittites, they traced their trouble to its right cause - the presence of the Ark. To get rid of it, then, as the men of Ashdod had done, was their only resource. So to Ekron they sent it, the most northern city of the Philistine territory.

{*We refer the reader to their reduced map adapted to Old Testament history. All maps of an older date place Gath farther north, and still we have to say its site is a matter of debate, for several

would locate it further north at Tell-es-Safi.} When first taken captive it was carried in triumph across the whole width of their country. Now it made the journey from the south to the north of their territory, and entered Ekron to the dismay of its inhabitants, who cried out, "They have brought about the Ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people" (v. 10). Evidently the report of its visits in Philistia had reached them. Its presence had been accompanied in each place with the infliction of death and disease. And to that Ekron proved to be no exception - it fared no better. The same mysterious visitation attacked their men. "There was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men that died not were smitten with tumours: and the cry of the city went up to heaven" (v. 11, 12). That Ark taken in triumph to Ashdod, made a triumphant progress indeed, throughout the length of the country, and its track was marked by desolation, mourning and woe. Death claimed many victims, and with the tumours with which God had threatened Israel, if disobedient (Deut. xxviii. 27), the Philistines were now afflicted. God's presence was to them an awful calamity. All in those cities writhed under it, and perhaps Ekron more than all. On Dagon, and on all the men of the cities, God's hand was heavy. But the land too was visited. Mice marred it. In these different ways did God show Himself to be God. It was power without grace. God, to whom they were strangers, was laying His chastening hand upon them. Those uncircumcised ones were painfully conscious of His presence and power. But all this was new. The Ark's presence in Israel caused no such effects. What explanation could there be of that? The explanation is at once simple and instructive. God's presence amongst a redeemed people can be productive of blessing. His presence amid the unredeemed can only induce judicial dealing. Between Israel and the Philistines morally there was nothing to choose. But the former were redeemed, the latter were not. To return, then, the Ark was the desire of the five lords. Thus without the slightest compulsion on the part of the Israelites, or yielding to the entreaty of the twelve tribes, they were only too glad at the end of seven months to send it away, for its presence was burdensome indeed to them. But how should they do that? The advice of their priests and diviners was sought, and, when given was strictly followed. A new cart was to be prepared for it, and two milch kine, on whom never yoke had been laid, were to be harnessed to it, and five golden tumours and five golden mice were to accompany it in a coffer, as a trespass offering to the God of Israel. The cart was made, the trespass offering was prepared, the kine were yoked, and off it set. No driver directed them that human eye could see, yet they went straight along the highway, and lowing as they went, for they had calves shut up at home. Unaccustomed to the yoke they nevertheless pulled together, as if trained for their work, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; and though their calves were shut up at home, and maternal feeling was manifested by their lowing, they left their offspring to do the bidding of the Lord of all the earth. Bethshemesh was in the valley of Sorek on the slope of the mountains of Judah. All that distance they went, patiently drawing their burden. What a sight it must have been to the lords who watched them. Dagon could never have done that. But they were the creatures of Him of whose presence the Ark was the symbol. They were creatures doing the will of the Creator, and furthering that day His glory.

Seven months had the Ark been in captivity. Israel had apparently rested quiet under its loss. Now to the surprise of the men of Bethshemesh, one of the cities of the priests, it suddenly appeared on the cart, drawn by the kine. Reaping their harvest in the valley they saw it approach, and rejoiced. The Ekronites had cried out when they first saw it. The men of Bethshemesh could rejoice at beholding it. God was returning to His people. The kine guided by Him had taken the straight way to Bethshemesh, and now, guided also surely by Him, the cart entered the field of Joshua, the

Bethshemite, and there stopped beside a great stone. The journey was over. The creatures had served the Creator, and were now to be devoted to Him in death. The Bethshemite offered them for a burnt offering unto the Lord, and He evidently accepted the sacrifice.

What a difference between them and the Philistines! The latter offered no sacrifice. They sent the golden offerings, a witness of God's hand having been on them; an acknowledgment too that they were unfit, and unable to bear His presence among them. With the Ark's departure they trusted His hand would be lifted from off them; but acceptance before Him they did not contemplate. To be freed from His presence, and from the tokens of His power was all their desire. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron, satisfied that it was the hand or God that had been on them, which was now to be lightened from off them, their gods and their land. The Bethshemites rejoiced at the Ark's return, and offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings. But their joy was turned to sorrow, because, venturing to look into the Ark, the Lord smote them. Lifting the lid of the mercy-seat they must have seen the two tables of the law. Who could be confronted with that, even if a priest, and live? The law was the ministration of death (2 Cor iii. 7). "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this Holy God?" was their exclamation, "and to whom shall He go up from us? was their inquiry. To the men of Kirjath-jearim therefore they sent, who came and fetched up the Ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it (1 Sam. vii. 1). There it abode till David took it to Jerusalem, for never again was it in the Tabernacle; and from the year it left the Tabernacle till it entered its final resting-place in the Temple, the ritual of the day of atonement must have been in abeyance. So in the present, for a Jew there can be no atonement made, nor will they as Jews rejoice in what has really been done, till they welcome back their rejected and crucified Messiah (Zech. xii. 10) When that has taken place, the Mosaic ritual, in accordance with the revision of it set forth in Ezekiel, will again be observed.

One more remark may be made. We have seen how God cared for His own glory, making His presence terrible to the uncircumcised Philistines, and dealing with the men of Bethshemesh for the liberty they took in looking into the Ark. On both His hand was heavy. But the difference was great. Throughout Philistia there was sorrow and death, wherever it was carried, and mice marred the country. In Israel, whilst the men of Bethshemesh suffered for their temerity, the men of Kirjath-jearim were not visited by any plague. The Ekronites deprecated the Ark's entrance into their city. The men of Kirjath-jearim welcomed it, and carried it up to them. They were part of the redeemed people, God's people, and He was their God. None but the redeemed can be at home with Him. Its captivity thus terminated, the Ark's entrance into final rest had yet to be effected.

02.11. The Ark at Jerusalem

The Ark at Jerusalem The presence of God with His people could again be affirmed, the Ark, the symbol of it, being at Kirjath-jearim, in the house of Abinadab in the hill, and kept by Eleazar his son. God had thus shown His desire to be amongst His people, little though they cared for Him. The site of this town has been recognised, it is thought, in Erma, about four miles east from Bethshemesh, in the hills, and about 1,000 feet above that Levitical city. "The most curious feature of the site is the rock platform, the area of which is 50 feet north and south, by 30 feet east and west; the surface artificially levelled, is 10 feet above the ground outside."* It is suggested that this platform may have been where the house of Abinadab stood. Here for about a century the Ark abode, till David assembled all Israel together from Sihor of Egypt (or, the brook of Egypt) to bring it up to Jerusalem. For during Saul's reign, David tells us, they inquired not at it (1 Chron. xiii. 3), a remark which would strengthen the thought, that in 1 Sam. xiv. 18, the Septuagint has preserved the true reading, substituting as it there does, ephod for Ark. We say, strengthen the thought, for there being no variation of reading in Heb. MSS. in that place, one would hesitate definitely to affirm that the Greek translation was right, and the Hebrew text wrong.

{*The Bible and Modern Discoveries, by Henry A. Harper, p. 266.}

Eleazar, to whom the care of it had at first been entrusted, had evidently passed away, ere David took counsel to bring it up to Jerusalem, for in his stead we read of Uzza and Ahio, lineal descendants of that Abinadab whose house was in the hill. To Kirjath-jearim Israel went, with David at their head, for the king desired the symbol of God's presence to be with him in Jerusalem, in which he by divine favour now dwelt. Now began those memorable steps in its further history which would end with its entrance into final rest. Israel had entered on their inheritance in the days of Joshua, but the Ark had no final resting-place till the days of Solomon, between four and five centuries later (1 Kings. vi. 1). The reason of this we can now understand, for till the throne of the Lord was established at Jerusalem, and the Prince of Peace was seated on it, typical of the coming day of power of the Lord Jesus, rest for the Ark there could not be. With David, then, seated upon the throne of the Lord (1 Chron. xxix. 23) the first steps were taken to bring the Ark into its resting-place. The first steps, we say, for we may speak of them as three. The first was the move from Kirjath-jearim to the house Obed-edom the Gittite. The second from Obed-edom's house to the city of David, which is Zion. The third from Zion to its place in the oracle of the house on Mount Moriah. On the first journey it was carried on a cart. On the second it was borne on the shoulders of the Kohathites. On the last it was carried by priests into its final resting place.

All Israel were called by the king's invitation to Kirjath-jearim to bring up from thence the Ark of God the Lord, that dwelleth between (rather, sitteth upon) the cherubim; of this the Psalmist subsequently sung, "Lo we heard of it at Ephratah; we found it in the fields of the wood.'' (Ps. cxxxii. 6).* A new cart was provided for it, and oxen were yoked to it to draw it. On a cart, as we know, it had reached Bethshemesh, though we read not by what means it was transported to Kirjath-jearim. On a cart they proposed to move it to Jerusalem, a distance of upwards of seven

miles. Now this was imitation, which, though at times may be right, is often just the reverse. It was to be so in this case, for they were copying the Philistines, in the place of learning from the written word what the mind of the Lord was about it. God, however, would remind them of that word, and the means taken for that were the stumbling of the oxen, and the death of Uzza on the road for attempting to steady the Ark, as if God needed support from His creatures. So that day which had commenced so brightly was clouded over by the stroke upon Uzza. The anger of the Lord was kindled against him; and David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach (or, had broken forth) upon Uzza. The work of removal was then stopped, and the Ark was carried aside into the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, where it remained for three months.

{*Kirjath-jearim, i e., city of woods, is evidently referred to by "fields of the wood," and that city was inhabited by descendants of Caleb Ephratah (1 Chron. ii. 50), hence, probably, the introduction of Ephratah by the Psalmist.}

Two things are noticeable in the order of that day's proceedings. There was no sacrifice offered up, and for the first time was a service of song introduced; David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets (1 Chron. xiii. 8). We have no hint that God ordered this; but we see in it the proof of spiritual instinct in David, as will be manifested more fully later on.

God was displeased with Uzza. He was not displeased with Israel. This He graciously showed, for Uzza was not smitten because the Ark should have remained at Kirjath-jearim. So the Lord, we are told, blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had. David heard of that, and was encouraged to proceed with his work. The first stage in the Ark's journey was over. The second now began. The king learnt how the Ark should be carried, and now directed the Levites to do it. All Israel were again assembled, coming from all quarters to Jerusalem. Everything being now arranged, the Levites lifted it up by the staves which belonged to it, to carry it out of the house of Obed-edom up to Jerusalem. Again was there a day which commenced with joy, but this time no cloud arose to dim its brightness. The Levites, with all kinds of instruments of music as before, were present to make a joyful sound. And what had been lacking previously was lacking no longer. For when "God helped the Levites that bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, they offered (rather, sacrificed) seven bullocks and seven rams (1 Chron. xv. 26). They sacrificed, we read, for this seems to have partaken of the character of a peace offering rather than of a burnt offering. But six paces had the Levites moved (2 Sam. vi. 13) when these animals were sacrificed. They commenced well, and all went on well, and the Ark entered the tent on Zion; which David had prepared for it. Music and dancing were the accompaniments of that journey. The Levites played, the singers amongst them sang, and David danced. With shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet the Ark entered Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was keeping high festival that day. All seem to have been of one accord with the exception of Michal, Saul's daughter, who entered not into her husband's joy. "She despised him," we read, "in her heart'' (1 Chron. xv. 29), when she saw him dancing and playing before it. During her father's reign that Ark had been neglected. Evidently to her its entrance into the city of David was a matter of no concern. But that only showed how far she was from the current of God's thoughts, and how wide was the gulf in that matter which divided her from David. She had no part in his joy.

It is true the event of that day took place in the midst of a comparatively small nation, and to celebrate it in a becoming festal way none of the surrounding nations had been invited. No representatives from the King of Tyre were there. No ambassadors from Egypt, no Moabite, Edomite, or Ammonite was asked to witness the ceremony, or to share in the feasting which ensued. Yet what took place concerned the whole earth, for it was God entering for the first time that capital in which He delight to dwell (Ps. cxxxii. 14). Evidently David entered somewhat into the importance of it, and the portions from the Psalms which he selected bear witness to it. These 1st Chronicles alone has recorded; Gad and Nathan, to one or both of whom, we believe we are indebted for that part at least of the second book of Samuel (1 Chron. xxix. 29), having omitted all reference to them in their history of that time.

Three Psalms, cv., xcvi., cvi., all of them from the fourth book of the Psalter, and none of which are ascribed to David, were selected by the king to furnish fitting expression for all on that occasion.* With a portion of Ps. cv., viz., vv. 1-15, they began; for David connected that day's ceremonial with the fulfilment of God's promise to the patriarchs to give their descendants the land. So they sang the first fifteen verses of it, and there stopped. Next Ps. xcvi. was sung; for the Ark's entrance into Jerusalem was the earnest of the coming day of glory, when God's supremacy over the nations will be manifested and be owned. All on earth then had a concern in that event taking place in the little kingdom of Israel. But that supremacy, though sure to faith and clear in prophecy, was not then to be made good: and still it is a prospect to which they look forward, for it cannot, we know, be accomplished till Israel are restored to their land. So they closed that day with the first and two last verses of Ps. cvi., which predict a state of things, and a need to which at that time they were strangers; but which we understand, and into which the godly remnant of the future will fully enter. "Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the nations, to give thanks unto Thy holy name, and to triumph in Thy praise'. (1 Chron. xvi. 35, Revised Version). At that time no nation oppressed them.

{*The reader may remark the variations in the Psalms as here given from their text as presented in the Psalter. We call attention to some of them. Ps. cv. in its place in the Psalter is an historical composition, reciting God's way in power on behalf of Israel, as Ps. civ. had celebrated His ways as Creator in connection with this creation. So in Ps. cv. 8, we read the historical statement, "He has remembered His covenant for ever," etc. In 1 Chron. xvi. 15, on that festal occasion the people were exhorted to "Remember His covenant, etc." The alteration was in character with the occasion on which they sung it. Looking at Ps. xcvi. in the Psalter, the variations from it in 1 Chron. xvi. are more, and in full keeping with the character of David's day. The first sentence, which speaks of a new song, is omitted, for the new song seems connected with accomplished redemption through the death of Christ (Ps. xl. 3), and final blessing of Israel (Isa. xlii. 10), events then future. Then the "sanctuary of," v. 6, and the "courts of," v. 8, of the Psalm changed respectively to "in His place," and "before Him:" changes the suitability of which we understand, for the Temple was as yet not erected.}

Other things must now be noticed. When the Levites had gone six paces from the house of Obed-edom, David, as we have seen, sacrificed oxen and fatlings. When the Ark entered the tent which he had pitched for it in the city of David, they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God (1 Chron. Xvi. 1). Then the king blessed the people, an act which no other king but Solomon ever attempted, these two being together a type of the King who will be able to bless the

people in the future. Now this was the last occasion on which sacrifices were offered before the Ark whilst it dwelt in the tent on Zion. So now arranging for the service before it in the future, David kept Asaph and his brethren to minister there, with two priests to blow trumpets; and sent Zadok the priest, and his brethren, to the Tabernacle at Gibeon, there to sacrifice as the law enjoined, with Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest with them, to praise the Lord. The king then instituted a service of song in connection with the worship of God. Till the throne was set up, nothing of that kind was known. Ever after that service was to have its place in divine worship (2 Chron. xxix. 25; Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xii. 24). We who are in the kingdom can thus worship God, for there is no altar now at which service in accordance with the mind of God is to be carried on. In David's day it was different, and the presence of the Ark in Jerusalem, whilst the Tabernacle with the brazen Altar was at Gibeon, made it plain that things were not in perfect order. What then was to be done? The king arranged it all. At Gibeon the Mosaic ritual was to be carried on, but with the addition of a service of song; music was to accompany it, seeing that the kingdom was in existence. So the priests were sent back there, and Heman, Jeduthun, and their brethren were ordered to accompany them. But before the Ark, Asaph and his brethren were to minister in their service of song. Two things were then witnessed by all. At the Tabernacle it was set forth how to approach God, and which is, and must always be by sacrifice; then by the daily and annual sacrifices, and now by virtue of the one perfect sacrifice. Before the Ark it was seen, and it was daily expressed, what is the suited service for those who are where the presence of God is known. That was and must be one of song. Hence, in the thirty-ninth and fortieth verses of 1 Chron. xvi., we are reminded of the way of approach to God: and in verse thirty-seven of the same chapter we are taught what is suited for those who can be in His presence. In other words, there was seen at Jerusalem that which we now know is the proper character of Christian worship, for we are permitted to be in the presence of God, entering within the veil. It was spiritual instinct, as far as we know, which thus guided David - an instinct true indeed, as we through grace can testify. To approach God at all, each and all must come as it were by the Altar, i.e., by the sacrifice of Christ. But once in God's presence, on that ground, praise and thanksgiving are the suited form of worship. This, David understood and carried out. No sacrifices went on before the Ark, only the service of song. Of that which David understood, should Christians, we may ask, be ignorant? He could teach a lesson which many, it seems, have yet to learn. We never can forget the sacrifice, we never, indeed, can get beyond the blood which has been sprinkled, as it were, on the throne; but where we worship is in the holiest, and the character of Christian worship is that of praise and thanksgiving. It would have been just as incongruous to have put the Altar inside the veil, as for Christians to resort to a sacrificing priesthood for the due carrying on of their worship. No sacrificing was permitted by David to go on before the Ark - a lesson for us in this so simple to learn, and when learnt to be maintained tenaciously. With rejoicing the day ended. The king dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine, or perhaps it should be, a cake of raisins. The second stage in the Ark's entrance into rest was reached. In that tent it remained between thirty and forty years, before its third and final journey could be undertaken.

02.12. The Ark Entering into its Rest.

The Ark Entering into its Rest. A red letter day it had been in Israel, when the Ark was placed in its tent on Zion, and perhaps at that moment it was all that David desired, though it did not fully answer to God's thoughts.

There are times, however, when God leads on His people into fuller comprehension of things. Accordingly we read that when David dwelt in his house, built for him by Hiram, King of Tyre (2 Sam. v. 11), and after the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about, that he thought of the contrast, the Ark dwelling in curtains whilst he dwelt in a house of cedar; so he desired for it a permanent habitation. His spiritual instincts were right. The proper dwelling-place for the Ark was a house, but the time for that had not arrived; nor had that one been born, as we learn from 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10, by whom the house was to be erected. David's son, the King now learnt, was to build it, and that son's name was revealed, for he was to be called Solomon, in whose days the Lord would give peace and quietness to Israel. But David whilst on earth was never to behold the house. After his decease his son sitting on his throne would carry out the desires of his father's heart (2 Sam. vii. 12; 1 Chron. xvii, 11, 12). Yet the King was not to be a stranger to all that would go on, for though he was not to witness the gradual erection of the Temple, or ever to tread its courts; with the form of the house, its dimensions, and the details connected with it he was made acquainted by divine revelation made directly to himself. "All this," said David, as he handed the pattern, etc., to Solomon, "have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord, even all the works of this pattern." (1 Chron. xxviii. 19, Revised Version). As with the Tabernacle, so with the Temple, all was designed by God. For who but He could tell what kind of habitation would be suited for the Living God? But where was that house to be erected? The Ark was in the city of David, which is Zion. Now, it was not till near the close of the King's life that he learnt about the locality. Throughout the greater part of his reign common interest was chiefly centred in that part of Jerusalem called the City of David. Human thought would certainly have selected a site in Zion, connected as that was with the early triumph of David (2 Sam. v. 6-9) and which he had selected as his place of residence. But God's eye was on another spot, unnoticed hitherto in the history of the kingdom, and till then in the possession and occupation of the Jebusite named Araunah, or Ornan. The King in the pride of his heart, and allowed to act as he wished, to carry out God's purpose in government to Israel, had ordered the people to be numbered. For that chastisement had to be inflicted, and David being allowed to choose the form of it, a pestilence for three days raged in the land, cutting off seventy thousand men. At the instance of Gad, the seer, the King went to rear an altar on Araunah's threshing floor, that he might there sacrifice, and so the plague be stayed. The floor bought, and an altar reared, burnt offerings and peace offerings were offered. Then the Angel's sword was sheathed by the command of the Lord, and David said, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the Altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chron. xxii. 1). The place where the sacrifice was accepted was to be the spot where Israel were to worship. It is on the acceptance of the sacrifice that true worship is based. The person who was to build the house, the spot on which the Altar connected with it

was to be erected, and the pattern of the structure, having all been revealed, and much wealth collected for its adornment, the aged monarch charged his son Solomon to attend to it, and charged all the princes to help him in it, saying, "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise therefore, and build ye the Sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord" (1 Chron. xxii. 19). Shortly after that he died, and "Solomon sat upon the throne of the Lord as King, instead of David his father ’’ (1 Chron. xxix. 23). But a little time elapsed ere that work which was to signalise him was commenced, for in the fourth year of his reign "Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chron. iii. 1). Seven years were occupied in building it (1 Kings vi. 38). At length finished and beautified, nothing was wanting but the symbol of God’s presence to be carried into the oracle, and the cloud of glory to fill the house, the token that Jehovah had taken possession of His temple. In the month Ethanim, the seventh month, suited preparations were made for this.

All the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chiefs (or princes) of the fathers of the children of Israel, were by the King’s invitation gathered together at Jerusalem, to keep the feast of the Dedication prior to that of Tabernacles. For seven days they kept the former, after which came the eight days of the latter. Met together to keep the former, to the Ark in its tent on Mount Zion all hearts and eyes were directed. "All the elders of Israel," we read, "came; and the Levites took up the Ark. And they brought up the Ark, and the Tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tabernacle, these did the Priests and the Levites bring up" (2 Chron. v. 4, 5). We have quoted the Chronicles, because though the account in Kings agrees very closely with it, there are a few things noticed in the former of which we read not in the latter. The priests trooped up from Gibeon, situated in Benjamin, and north of Jerusalem, and with them the great bulk of the Levites carrying the Tabernacle associated so closely with the wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel. The Levites too, with the trumpet-blowing priests, whose duties had kept them on Zion, prepared to move also. For years there had been two centres of interest, the Tabernacle with the Altar at Gibeon, and the Ark in the City of David. From henceforth there was to be but one, not by Gibeon yielding the palm to Zion, but by both retiring as it were in favour of Mount Moriah. The place of interest, however, on that day was at its outset the city of David, for there still was the Ark of the Lord of all the earth. So before the Ark was found the King, and with him all the congregation of Israel sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. Now what was it all about? A change of residence for the Ark? That was certainly true yet not all the truth. The day was a high day, and what was taking place was that which really concerned all the earth. It was God, the God of Israel; but the one Living and true God, entering into His resting place on earth, a foreshadowing of that which will take place when the Lord reigns in power and in peace. Till Solomon the Prince of Peace was on the throne, the Ark did not enter into its final resting-place. God will not rest till the true Prince of Peace shall be made King over all the earth. As then that which was taking place was a foreshadowing of the future, just referred to, the priests were appointed to carry the Ark into its final abode. When the people went through Jordan, that river typical of death, by the way prepared for them, the priests bore the Ark on their shoulders. The Lord, it was foreshadowed, would make a way for His own through death. When the Lord was pulling down the stronghold of the enemy, the Ark was again carried on the shoulders of the sons of Aaron. When God took possession of the land through His people the

priests carried the Ark. And now about to enter His resting-place on earth, on the shoulders of priests was it taken into its prepared place in the oracle, never to leave it.

Further, the Levites, Asaph and his brethren, separated locally for so long from Heman and Jeduthun, joined company never again to part. And all arrayed in fine linen and standing on the east side of the Altar, the furthest side from the holy place, the priests having all come out of the sanctuary, there was heard the sound of the cymbals, and the psalteries, and the harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets. "It came even to pass as the trumpeters and the singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, "For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever": that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God" (2 Chron. v. 13, 14). The Ark had reached its final resting-place, never more, according to the ritual, to be seen by any one but the High Priest, and that on the day of atonement. Its journeys were over. It rested in the house of God, and well did Solomon understand that; for at the close of his prayer as recorded in 2 Chron. vi. 41, he took up the language of Psalm cxxxii. 8, 9: "Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou, and the Ark of Thy strength; let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness. Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine anointed, remember the mercies of David Thy servant."

David’s desire was fulfilled. The habitation for the mighty God of Jacob had been found, and was consecrated by the presence of the Lord. The Ark was there, and the cloud of glory filled the Temple, as it had of old the Tabernacle.

We have said the Ark was there, for till the Babylonish captivity that Ark made by Bezaleel under the shadow of mount Sinai, and so intimately connected with all Israel’s wilderness wanderings, as well as with their entrance into, and victory in the land, that Ark remained in the Temple. There never was another Ark. And remembering that it was the symbol of the presence of the unchanging One we can understand the suitability of this. Moreover there never will be another owned by God. So we read in Jeremiah iii. 16. "And it shall come to pass when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The Ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it: neither shall that be done any more. "For the Lord Himself will be there (Ezek. xliii. 7; xlviii. 35). But what became of it? This is enshrouded in mystery. It just disappeared. The Temple was burnt by Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard under Nebuchadnezzar, but not till one month after the capture of the city (Jer. lii.). Much spoil was taken to Babylon, but no mention is made of the Ark. Was it burnt? Was it hidden in some subterranean chamber under the Temple area? We know not. A tradition in 2 Maccabees ii. 4, 5 states, that the prophet Jeremiah, being warned of God, commanded the Tabernacle and the Ark to go with him; so he went forth into the mountain, where Moses climbed up, and saw the heritage of God. And when he came thither he found a hollow cave, wherein he laid the Tabernacle and the Ark, and the Altar of incense, and so stopped the door. To this record no credence can be given, for the writer of it proceeds in verses 7, 8 to put into Jeremiah’s mouth words at variance with the tenour of his prophecy quoted above. But whilst regarding this account as fabulous its existence confirms the fact, that nothing is known of the Ark’s disposal or of its end.

Here then we must stop, and bring these papers to a close with one more word about the Tabernacle.

It came up from Gibeon, and presumably was carried into the Temple with all its sacred vessels. It had done its work. The Kingdom was established in the hands of the Prince of Peace. A settled state was reached, and in accordance with that the Temple was erected. Aholiab's work therefore was no longer in requisition. And all Bezaleel's, save the Ark, must have been regarded as obsolete. So, like a dissolving view, the Tabernacle fades away, and there is seen in its place that Temple, which was exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries (1 Chron. xxii. 5). C. E. S.

Chapter 22

03.00. Thoughts on Sacrifices

Thoughts on Sacrifices

C E Stuart

Second edition revised, publisher: G Morrish; the first edition was 1871, publisher: R L Allan (this copy inscribed Catherine Stuart).

03.000. Preface.

Preface. In preparing this Second Edition for the press, opportunity has been taken to revise these "Thoughts on Sacrifices," and to add two papers formerly published in the Bible Treasury, one on "Heave-offerings," etc., and the other on "Drink-offerings."

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03.01. Chapter 1. — The Offerings of Cain and Abel

Chapter 1. — The Offerings of Cain and Abel

There are two points of view from which we may study the lives of men, according as we place ourselves with the spectators, or with the actors. With the former we may scrutinise the conduct, and mark the consequences which flow from it; with the latter we become cognisant of the motives, and trace upwards to their source the otherwise hidden springs of action. The history of Cain and Abel affords us an illustration of this. In reading the account handed down by Moses we are placed in the position of spectators; in reading the brief notice of the history in the Epistle to the Hebrews we understand the position of Abel, and learn the guiding principles of the two brothers. No antediluvian record, if any such existed, survived the flood; to revelation, therefore, we are wholly indebted for what we do possess. Fifteen centuries elapsed between the date of the writing of Genesis and that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, during which the outward history (that is, what a spectator might have recorded) of their sacrifices was all that God had been pleased to disclose. But when, in the fulfilment of His counsels, ordained before the foundation of the world, the message of His grace went forth to all men, and the seed of Jacob had to renounce the earthly promises made to their fathers, if they would receive God’s salvation, the secret history of that day’s offerings was revealed. God unfolds truth in season. Till then its application would not have been understood, for it concerns not Israel merely but all men, as it speaks in language clear and loud of a sinner’s acceptance before his God. "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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. xi. 4.)

What a value God has put on this history! "By it he being dead yet speaketh." A voice then comes to us from the other side of the flood to which man would do well to give ear: and as we listen to it we can be at no loss how to understand its purport, or how to translate its language; for God the Holy Ghost has given us His divine comment on that history. So, whilst we read in Genesis of the awful wickedness to which a child of Adam can stoop, we learn in Hebrews the principle on which one born in sin can be held righteous before God. Of the sacrifices of Adam and Eve we have no record. They were created in innocence, and fell through positive transgression. Their example, then, as to sacrifices, men might plead, did not meet their case. Adam and Eve were directly answerable for their fallen condition, but we enter the world sinners from our birth. Hence the sacrifices of Cain and Abel just meet our case. For like us they were children of Adam, born in sin, inheriting by birth an evil nature. Their position is ours as children of the same father; the ground of their acceptance is the ground of ours likewise, as they possessed by natural generation, in common with us, a nature at enmity with God. Hence, on the first occasion that could arise, this question of a sinner’s acceptance before God, so intimately connected with the everlasting welfare of man, was clearly raised, and the controversy definitely and plainly set at rest, as "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." (Gen. iv. 4, 5.) A look from the Lord settled the question between them, and has taught us that the question was then settled for us.

"By faith Abel offered," etc. Then with Abel it was obedience to a revelation from God, but how communicated it has not pleased Him to record — nor does it concern us. It is the fact of a revelation having been vouchsafed, and not the manner of its communication, we require, to throw light on Abel's actions. With him, then, what he should offer was no question of choice; he learned what God required, and brought it. Thus, at the outside of the garden of Eden, in the wilderness of Sinai, and at Mount Calvary, we behold how in all ages God has declared what that sacrifice is which He can accept. Before the flood, as well as after it, souls to be accepted had to learn this. Yet with all the light of revelation, the accumulated knowledge of ages, and the boasted enlightenment of this nineteenth century, are not many souls even in this country in as thick darkness about the teaching of Cain and Abel's offering, as if that history had never been written, or God's word they had never heard of? Few there are, probably, who have never heard of Cain and Abel; but how many are there among that class who, acquainted with the statements of Moses, have understood the meaning of that voice which, though he is dead, yet speaketh? Are we strangers in our day to such language as this — "That men may be saved in different ways, if only they are earnest and upright?" The narrowness of past generations must be overcome: the bigotry of those who refuse to divorce salvation from the atonement can no longer be endured! Are such voices from the altar of Abel? or are they echoes from the offerings of Cain?

Turning to the Mosaic account, we learn that on one point both the brothers were agreed; they owned that it was right for a creature to bring an offering to his God. Cain seemed as ready as Abel to yield up to the Lord something of what he possessed. There did not appear any backwardness on his part in bringing an offering to the Lord. The ground had yielded increase to reward his toil, and he was willing to present part of it to Him by whose power and goodness the earth was fruitful at all. The occasion on which they thus approached God is not mentioned. Sufficient for us is it to remark that Cain, by his offering, though he acted wrongly, condemns many a one in this day who receives favours from God, enjoys them, learns the value of them, and looks for a renewal of them each morning, without once stopping to think of the Giver, or inquiring in what way He can be approached and worshipped.

"Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." The amount of Cain's offering has not been revealed, nor the number of Abel's sheep, but both, doubtless, drew nigh with no niggard hand; and now these two sons of Adam, born in sin, stand with their respective offerings before the Lord. Cain, doubtless, brought of the choicest of his harvest, the fattest of the fruits of the ground — beautiful sight, we may believe, for the outward eye to admire; whilst Abel, doubtless, stood with the finest of the firstlings of his flock, with their fat. Observe, there is no mention of the blood. This is in perfect keeping with the character of their service that day. Throughout the book of Genesis, it may be remarked, there is no mention of blood in connection with sacrifice to God. It is not till the institution of the passover in Egypt, and the law was about to be given at Sinai, "added because of transgressions," that blood is mentioned at all, and its efficacy is brought out. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" is a truth never to be forgotten; but on that day it was not, it would appear a question of sins to be forgiven, for we read not before this of a single thing that they had done wrong. The question raised was about the acceptance of a sinner, not about the remission of sins. This is an important distinction, and gives great weight to this history of Abel. It was the nature, and not the acts of that nature, that Abel's sacrifice brings into prominence. The blood makes

atonement for sins, but a nature can only cease to exist by death. Death therefore must come in ere a nature can be put away. So we have here the death of the firstlings and the offering with them of their fat, without the mention of the blood. The death of the animals foreshadowed the death of the substitute; their fat, as we learn from the Levitical ritual, the perfect obedience to the will of God of the Substitute, in the inmost recesses of His nature. For, observe, it is not fat lambs that we read of, but the firstlings, with their fat. Doubtless the firstlings were the best of their kind, the fattest of the flock, but that explanation will not satisfy the term "and the fat thereof." "All the fat is the Lord's," we read in Leviticus iii. 16, and, with the inwards, formed "the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour." How expressive must the mention of the fat with Abel's offerings have been to the children of Israel, hearing that history for the first time probably, just when they had learnt at Sinai the value of the fat in God's eyes. The mention then of the fat has a voice, and the offering of Abel a meaning which we can interpret. Cain acted in self-will in the offering he brought. Abel approached as a sinner, put the death of the substitute between him and God, and offered with the animals their fat, thus prefiguring the perfect answer within of the true victim to the will of God; as it is written of Him, "My reins also instruct me in the night seasons." (Ps. xvi. 7.) Abel then drew near acknowledging his need of the death of a substitute. Cain approached as a righteous man who had already a standing before God. He ignored His condition by the fall, so was rejected; Abel owned it, offering accordingly, and was accepted. The fruits of the ground were witnesses against Cain of the fall, for the ground was cursed for Adam's sake; the dead victims likewise testified of it, for death entered the world by sin; but they spoke also of the divinely-appointed way of putting away sin by the sacrifice of God's own Son. Hence "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Neither of them drew nigh without offerings which spoke of the fall (whatever they offered must have done that); but Cain thought to set himself right with God without the death of a substitute, whilst Abel acknowledged the need of another's death ere he could stand in acceptance before God. Abel thus confessed that, as far as man was concerned, his condition was irremediable, for he was a sinner; Cain manifested a disposition by his fruits to make good his standing, and miserably failed, as all must who act in the spirit in which he acted, and refuse to accept the atonement made by the Lord Jesus. Abel took the place of a sinner — a lost sinner; Cain of a soul able to maintain its ground before a holy God. Was this thought confined to the days before the flood? Is it not largely entertained still?

But, it may be asked, why were the fruits of the ground an offering God could not accept from Cain when He afterwards commanded the children of Israel to offer of their first-fruits unto Him? The answer is plain. Their cases were very different. Israel, as a nation, were already redeemed, and had a standing before Him; with Cain it was the question of an unredeemed sinner's acceptance. Cain should have learned that the only ground of his standing before God was through the death of another. Do we not discern the difference of these conditions in the language addressed in the New Testament to sinners and to saints? To sinners the message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To saints the word comes, "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." (Acts xvi. 31; Rom. xii. 1.) As redeemed by blood, God looks for that from His people, which it would be presumptuous for the unsaved soul to offer.

Now the identification between the offering and the offerer comes out — "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Could He have accepted Abel without his offering? Impossible. Could He have accepted the offering without the offerer? Impossible. For by faith Abel offered. He manifested the obedience of faith, and so received the sure consequence — acceptance before his God. "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." He had no need to ask his father and his mother (if they were present) whether he had been accepted, the Lord would have him learn it direct from Himself, so he could leave the place of sacrifice with his mind at rest about it. Abel knew all about it, Cain did likewise. To both was it made plain, that the one was owned as righteous that day, who had taken the place of a lost sinner needing the death of a substitute; and Cain's conduct comes out to us in all its enormity and presumption, when we learn what Abel's firstlings foreshadowed.

But, how graciously did the Lord deal with Cain, when He manifested displeasure at his rejection. Was the Lord unrighteous in His dealings with the two brothers? "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?" Or, as the margin reads, "have the excellency." But to do well was to own, like Abel, what one born in sin needed. How little do men understand this! Yet, what higher or truer ground could Abel take, than simply to confess what he was? It was in this Cain had failed. Yet the Lord would not for that finally cast him off, so He added, "If thou doest not well, sin," or, as is by some understood, a sin offering "lieth at the door:"* and, if offered, his sin would be forgiven, and his position as first-born would still remain to him: "unto thee shall be his desire [that is, Abel's] and thou shalt rule over him." Here we have the first mention of an offering for sin. God told him what to do, but he refused to obey, and instead of the sacrifice, as pointed out, he took his brother's life. Was he desirous to secure the rights of the first-born, and so slew his brother, as others afterwards could say, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours?" It may have been so, but scripture is silent about it. One thing, however, is clear, the way of acceptance, even after he had sinned, was pointed out to him, so he was left without excuse, when he turned from the place of sacrifice without having brought the sin-offering. The Lord would not allow him to be ignorant of what he should do, any more than Abel of the results of what he had done. Multitudes have fallen into Cain's mistake, but what the Lord told Cain He tells them. For Cain, and for them a sacrifice must be offered up. But in Cain's case it was the offering up of one from the flock; in the sinner's case now, it is trusting wholly to the sacrifice of God's Lamb on the cross. How clearly then is the whole question of a sinner's acceptance shadowed forth in this brief history! How has this history spoken to the heart of the readers of these lines? If hitherto it has been read simply as the record of a bygone age, with which we are not concerned, now may its voice penetrate to the depths of the heart, and it be found speaking directly to each soul. We read here what Cain and Abel respectively offered: but we read in it also what men are doing in these days, and how each one should act, if desirous to be found on the same side as "righteous Abel."

{*Others take the word as the action, consequent on his state, "sin lieth at the door," so the Authorised Version and other versions.} From that day the paths of the two brothers outwardly diverged. Abel's body was shortly afterwards laid in the grave, and Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and builded a city, and called it after his son, Enoch. His posterity became famous as inventors of instruments of music, and workers in brass and iron. The flood came and obliterated all trace of his city, if it existed till then, and all trace, too, of Abel's grave: and the

strains of music Cain’s family had first evoked, were hushed for ever into silence as the waters overflowed the earth, But there is a voice which Cain’s malice could not silence, nor the overflowing waters drown; and, whilst all of Cain’s race, with their arts and works, perished in the deluge, this voice still speaks to sinners, telling what they need, as Abel found, who by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, and by it, though dead, yet speaketh!

03.02. Chapter 2. The Sweet Savour of the Sacrifice

Chapter 2. The Sweet Savour of the Sacrifice Genesis viii. 20 — ix. 17.

Fifteen hundred years and more elapsed between the death of Abel and the next sacrifice mentioned in scripture, for the Book of Genesis is not a diary of all that took place before the flood. It records just that, and all that which it pleased God should be preserved by His servant Moses. The waters had abated from off the earth, the face of the ground was dry, and the earth was dried before the living freight was discharged from the ark. In the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, the earth was ready for man, and at the Lord’s word Noah and his family came forth from their hiding-place provided by God.

Before the flood Noah had been occupied with building an ark for himself and his household. After the flood he is found intent on building an altar for God. Preservation from the coming judgment, in obedience to God, necessarily was uppermost in his thoughts then — thanksgivings for the wonderful and perfect deliverance just experienced surely filled his mind now. So of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl he offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord. He did not withhold one of the small stock of acceptable animals which issued forth with him from the ark. Taken in with him to preserve seed alive on the earth, it was right he felt to offer of them on the altar to God so by his offering we see expressed the thankfulness of his heart, but by it we discern something more, the ground on which all blessing could now rest — that of a sacrifice accepted by the Lord. Noah, clearly in his sacrifice, thought of the past, but did he understand anything of the future? The amount of his intelligence has not been revealed, for it would not concern us: but what God saw in the sacrifice, and how He could act in consequence, is set forth, for in that we are deeply interested. To it let us turn our attention.

"The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart," etc. Thus we are permitted to learn what were His thoughts, called forth by the sacrifice, before He addressed a word to Noah and his sons; as before the flood we read of the settled purpose of his heart, ere the patriarch was made acquainted with His mind. (Gen. vi. 3, 13.) Then, beholding the great wickedness of man, He was grieved at His heart. Now, witnessing the column of smoke ascending from that solitary altar (for on all the earth there was not another), He "smelled a sweet savour." On the sixth day of creation God beheld all His works that He had made, and "behold they were very good." Perfect they all were, for nothing short of perfection could come from His hands. Beautiful must His works have been when Adam first surveyed them; and beautiful must that new world have been, as Noah cast his eyes over a scene full of freshness and life. But neither the works of creation, nor the world as it appeared after the flood, caused a sweet savour to rise up before God. For great, wonderful, and beautiful as are His works in creation, no mention is made of a sweet savour rising up before Him till Noah’s altar was reared, and the burnt-offerings, foreshadowing the Lord’s death on the cross, were consumed before Him. Then the sweet savour was smelt, and the fact is noted. And wherein, it may be asked, consisted the sweetness? Noah did nothing to sweeten it. No fragrant herbs, no incense imparted a sweetness to it in God’s eyes. The sacrifice itself was, and

is, a sweet savour. Man could add nothing to its fragrance. The obedience to death of God's own Son has glorified Him, and enabled Him righteously to act in blessing to sinners. When Adam sinned God cursed the ground — when all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth He sent the flood. But, neither the manner of His dealing with Adam, nor the fearful exhibition of His just wrath against sin could change man's heart. After the flood he was the same as before it. Punishment effected no change in his nature; the knowledge gained as an eye-witness, that God must act in judgment against the impenitent, left man, as regards radical alteration, just where it found him. This God saw, however much those just out of the ark might be ignorant of it, and seeing it spoke of it to Himself, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done;" a statement the more remarkable because none of the human race were alive that day on the earth but Noah and those who, in obedience to the word of the Lord, had entered the ark with him. Of them, the sole representatives of the human race on earth, before they had opportunity to manifest what they would be, God thus expressed His estimate, which differs very little from what He said before the flood.

Estimating man aright, He intimates He would deal with him now in a different manner; but what that would be is not here set forth — what is intimated, however, is this, that by virtue of the sacrifice, man having given Him no reason to change, God would alter His method of dealing with him. For us to understand fully what that manner of dealing is, we must turn from Genesis viii. to Romans iii., and there we learn it (21-26), as set forth after the sacrifice had been offered up on the cross. But this is not all the change which the sacrifice would introduce. With the new method of procedure towards men, an element of stability would be introduced unknown before. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." To man in innocence no such announcement was made. The permanence of paradisaical blessing depended on his obedience. By the flood, the natural order of the seasons was interrupted: seed-time and harvest for a year ceased; by virtue of the sacrifice, the order of the seasons will never be interrupted as long as the earth remains, Man can count on this; and man has proved it. God has repeatedly withheld the increase of the earth in its fulness; but the seasons have regularly run their round. The sun has stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon for a whole day: the shadow on Ahaz's dial has returned ten degrees; and supernatural darkness has covered the land of Canaan for three hours, commencing at midday; these things have happened, yet day and night have never failed to succeed each other: and cold and heat, and summer and winter, have annually been experienced wherever man has found a dwelling-place for himself on this globe. An unvarying order was then announced, to continue as long as earth shall last. We can speak of a permanent, because eternal, character of blessing which exists now, on the ground of the accepted sacrifice. Eternal life, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, eternal glory — an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens — are truths with which believers are familiar: statements describing blessings secured for ever to those who owe everything to, and are willing to receive everything on the ground of, that sacrifice offered up once for all, and never to be repeated, because of abiding efficacy before God. From speaking "in his heart," God turns to speak to man. God spoke not in answer to any request, but of His own will. The burnt-offerings needed no prayer to make them acceptable, or to render God propitious. Before He discovered to man His thoughts, we read what they were; and unasked by man, He declared to Noah and to his sons how He would deal with them and with the earth, involved as it

was in the consequence of man’s sin. He addresses Noah, but He addresses Noah’s sons likewise.

Here again we meet with something new, for it was new ground on which man and the earth were to stand. God had held intercourse with Noah, because he was righteous before Him. Often had He addressed the patriarch, but never before his sons. What the Lord could not do before the flood, or even before Noah and his family left the ark, that He could and did do, as soon as the sacrifices were offered upon the altar. In chapter viii. 15, God spake to Noah alone; in chapter ix. 1 He spake to his sons with him. To the righteous one God could speak apart from a sacrifice; to others only on the ground of it. Noah had a place before Him on earth because of what he was; his sons only because of the sacrifice.* This, the shadow of what was to come, is clear to us, who live after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord. What place had we before the Lord’s death in the presence of God? Atonement accomplished, the sacrifice accepted, one with Christ through the Holy Ghost, we stand in Him before the Father, and know a place is ours now which never was, or could have been, had He not died. And do we not discern the propriety of God’s method of acting, in speaking to none but Noah till the ground was publicly prepared on which others could stand before Him?

{*Throughout this history (chap. vi. 9 — ix. 17) the sons of Noah are never mentioned apart from the patriarch himself, and those souls only were brought through the flood in the ark to dwell on the newly ordered earth, who could prove their connection with him — the righteous man.} The standing and the ground of it made plain, we see also that God can act towards them in a manner to which their fathers had been strangers. "God blessed Noah and his sons." A strange yet welcome sound must this have been, for since the days of paradise God had blessed no man. He blessed His works on the sixth day; He blessed Adam and Eve on that day, and He blessed the seventh day, and there His blessing ended. Sin came in, and never again (as far as is recorded) was a blessing bestowed on man, till Noah and his sons received it after they came out of the ark, This too we understand. A creature in innocence God could bless, but a fallen creature He could not till the sacrifice was offered up. And now that the Lord has died, and is risen, God has blessed His people fully on the only ground on which such a favour could be based, as Noah and his family that day learned. Was there not something peculiarly suitable in the time when God did this? He could not do it before the flood and Noah’s sacrifice, but He would not do it after the confusion of tongues had taken place. He did it before man had done anything in the new world worthy of reward, that all should see the blessing rested solely on the sacrifice; and He did it before men were scattered abroad after the flood, so that all men might be assured, without the possibility of misconception, of what Noah and his family had heard. Had the blessing been given after the confusion of tongues, all might not have understood what God had said. He bestowed it before that event in language common to all, that all might learn on what principle it is that fallen man can be blessed by his God.

How full was the blessing! It was an earthly blessing it is true, but a full one, and in one respect fuller than man had even known in the garden of Eden. There Adam might eat of every tree but one, and of every green herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth. He fell, and the trees, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, were taken from him, the herb of the field being his allotted portion outside the garden. (Chap. iii. 18.) Now Noah and those with him, have flesh, fish, and fowl, besides all vegetable productions allowed them. In Eden man was placed under

restriction, outside it he suffered deprivation, but now, in connection with the altar, Noah received a grant larger than had before been enjoyed, "even as the green herb have I given you all things." Not one single article of food is withheld, everything fit for food is placed unreservedly at their disposal. All this too we understand, and the subject receives further illustration when we next meet with restrictions in food. At Sinai, when Israel undertook to stand on their own responsibility before God, restrictions in food appear, as the ordinances about the clean and unclean animals are promulgated. But, as soon as the great sacrifice had been offered up, we learn the removal of all such restrictions, as we read the words — "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles eat?" "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself:" "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving — for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Cor. x. 25; Rom. xiv. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 4): for, when God deals with man on the ground of sacrifice, there is not anything that is good for man that is withheld. To Noah and his sons He said, "As the green herb have I given you all things;" to us the word declares, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Though God gave them more than He gave Adam, they had to learn it was not restoration to his original position, but a new one altogether that they entered upon. The difference between the place in creation of a fallen and an unfallen creature was not forgotten. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," God had said to Adam: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," He also said to Noah and his sons. But to Adam He added, what to Noah He did not, "and subdue it." Was this omission accidental? To subdue the earth was God’s original design for man on earth. By the fall he lost that place, and never can regain it. Another man will effect this — the Head of the new creation. No fallen creature could ever fill this place. Their position, then, as regards the earth, told of the fall, whilst their grant of the articles of food told of the sweet savour of the sacrifice.

One more point must be noticed. By virtue of the sacrifice God established. His covenant with Noah, his sons, their seed after them, and with every living thing that was with them, of fowl, cattle, beasts of the earth, and all that went forth of the ark. The earth and all connected with it thus shared in the benefits of the sacrifice; as far as the consequences of man’s sin had reached on earth, there would be felt the blessed results of the burnt-offering. "And the bow shall be in the cloud! and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." Earth besides man was interested in the covenant, as the creature will one day rejoice in the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

Slight is the sketch here presented: yet sufficiently clear it is hoped, to enable the reader to seize the salient points of the history, and as he reads of what God said and did, to give thanks in his heart for what that sacrifice prefigured, and what God’s dealings with man on that occasion shadowed forth of the blessings believers do and will enjoy.

03.03. Chapter 3. The Passover

Chapter 3. The Passover

Exodus 12. As we read in the book of Exodus of the institution of the Passover, we meet for the first time with blood in connection with sacrifice, and we learn the value of it.

God’s wrath was to be poured out on the Egyptians, but Israel were to be sheltered from it. In the land, at the very moment of the divine visitation, they were to be exempted from its desolating power. The angel of death would be busy around them, but they would be secure, and would know it also, from all risk of his entrance into their dwellings. God had announced, by Moses to Pharaoh the hour of the terrible judgment (chap. xi.), and to Israel the day when it would take effect. (Chap. xii.) Midnight, when all would naturally be asleep, was the appointed hour for Pharaoh and the Egyptians, to feel the weight of God’s arm. On the 14th day of Nisan the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt would take place.

Twice before had God signally interposed to rescue His people from a judgment impending over the ungodly. He saved Noah in the ark, and drew Lot out of Sodom. Now He would manifest something different, namely, the security of His people in the midst of judgment, by virtue of the blood of the lamb. Noah and his family entered into a hiding-place of God’s appointment, shut in by the Lord before the windows of heaven were opened. Lot and his two daughters were drawn outside the area about to be visited by the fiery rain. But Israel remained in their dwellings, their abode for two hundred years, awaiting in confidence the passage through Egypt of the Lord and the angel of death.

What gave them this confidence? Of Noah God had said that he was righteous. Lot, too, was righteous, as Peter testifies. But what of Israel? They were defiled with the idolatries of Egypt (Ezek. xx. 6-8), and in heart and practice were no better than their oppressors. As to righteousness they had none. As to hope of deliverance from anything they could plead in extenuation of their sins there was none. But God’s righteousness as faithful to His promise, was manifested, and the obedience of faith was exemplified, as the people sprinkled the blood outside on the lintel and the two side posts. It was a new position in which they found themselves. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had proved the faithfulness of God, but had never waited in the scene of His judgment, assured that it would not fall on them. This Israel did, resting on the word of the Lord.

"I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord." (Chap. xii. 12.) They knew then what would take place. Neither man nor beast would be exempt. God was visiting Egypt in anger and sore displeasure, and the very beasts would feel the consequences of man’s sin. A terrible hour it surely was for all who realised it. All ranks of Egyptians would feel it, and neither the power nor the wealth of Pharaoh could avert the death of his first-born; nor the miseries already endured by the captive in the dungeon avail to spare his

child. For when God executes judgment on man neither human power can successfully resist the blow, no worldly wealth purchase immunity from its visitation, nor previous suffering mitigate the severity of the stroke. The captive in the dungeon must participate with the king in the punishment God awards to man. It is well to remember this, for men are prone to forget it, hoping that suffering on earth may be pleaded as a set-off against the endurance of the just judgment of God. It was not so in the day of Egypt, it will not be so in the day of the Lord. But whilst the king and the captive must feel the anger of God, there were those who would be sheltered from it, but sheltered by blood. Accordingly one marked feature in this history is the prominence given to the blood, here for the first time spoken of in connection with a sacrifice. The blood of Abel had cried to God for vengeance against Cain; and the blood of any man whether killed by his fellow or a beast, God would surely require. In these cases the blood shed claimed vengeance on the slayer, but in the paschal rite it exempted from divine wrath all who took shelter behind it. "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." Such was God’s promise to Israel, and that all should know how to sprinkle blood on the house, Moses was directed to say, "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side-posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." (Chap. xii. 22, 23.) All then for Israel depended on the blood, and that outside the house. It was the blood the Lord would look for, and the blood would be the only barrier against the entrance of the destroyer. Had any in Israel sat within, saying they believed what Moses had said, yet refused to sprinkle the blood as directed, the destroying angel would have found his way to the first-born of that family. Assent to the truth without a corresponding action was valueless to ward off the blow. Had anyone sprinkled the blood inside instead of outside, the angel of death would have made known his presence within that house, for man had no choice left him as to what he would do. He had to obey implicitly the command of the Lord by Moses, and await in confidence the result. The blood, God was to look at, not man. It was a new method of escape, but a sure one, a plan which man had not devised, but God; for the judgment to be averted was the judgment of God. So all Israel were preserved from the loss of their first-born. With unerring precision did the destroyer pass through the land, entering each house inhabited by the Egyptians, and notifying by the death of the first-born the fulfilment of the word of the God of Israel. Every house of the children of Israel the Lord passed over, for the blood outside showed clearly who were within. What a picture of security have we here, as with closed doors the household awaited the visitation of God. For what were they doing? Cowering from fear? Praying for deliverance? Very different was their occupation, for they were eating of that lamb whose blood had been sprinkled on their door-posts. To revel in the prospect of impending desolation, uncertain of deliverance, is the act of a fool; but to eat when divine wrath is to be poured out, becomes the man of faith. This Israel were doing, for God’s word was their authority; and, observe, it was not their estimate of the blood which barred the entrance of the destroyer, "When I see the blood," etc., the Lord had said. Which of them could value it aright? Who amongst them knew what it spoke of? Had their security depended on their apprehension of its value, in common with the Egyptians must they have been found lamenting their bereavement of their first-born. We know what they doubtless did not, to whose sacrifice it looked forward; but which of the sons of men can even now fully appreciate the value of the blood

of God’s Son? As they were sheltered because they acted as directed, apart from the question of their appreciation of the value of the blood, so with souls now. To wait till we can fully estimate it, will be to wait for ever; but to be saved at all, to be saved for ever, to be saved now there is needed only the obedience of faith. Beautifully simple is all this, and the position of the children of Israel on that night is a clear illustration of the principle of salvation by faith. The immediate object of faith is now different, but the principle is the same; they rested on the blood of the paschal lamb — we rest on the precious blood of Christ.

Two points must now be briefly noticed ere closing this article. The people eat the passover, but with girded loins, sandalled feet, and staff in hand. In haste did they partake of it, ready to march forth at a moment’s notice. Strangership was now their position in Egypt — which for so many years had been their home. Their very attitude, whilst feeding on the lamb, proclaimed the altered condition in which they found themselves. The link with Egypt of two hundred years’ duration was snapped at once, and they marched that very night from Rameses to Succoth, with their wives, their children, their cattle, their substance, even all that they had, with the "dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders." But owning themselves to be strangers in Egypt, they learned what it was to be the Lord’s people. They went out, but He went before them. They marched along, because the Lord had brought them out. They were His, and He charged Himself with the providing of all they wanted by the way. "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night." How altered was their condition now! Lately slaves, now free: pilgrims and strangers in the only land they had ever known as home, with no symbols among them of earthly majesty to rally round, so long associated in their minds only with oppression, but preceded by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, those sure marks of God’s presence with them, they started on the road to the land of their inheritance. The lesson they learned has to be learned still, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. i. 18.) As surely as the threatened blow fell on the firstborn of the Egyptians, so surely will God’s wrath be poured out on all who are not sheltered from it. He revealed the former by Moses, He has reminded us of the latter by Paul.

Similar then as the position of man is now to that of the Egyptians before that fourteenth day of Nisan, being forewarned of the coming judgment, similar too is the manner of escape. By the blood of the lamb alone was there deliverance then, by the blood of God’s Lamb is there deliverance now. But there is a difference to be noted. Moses told Pharaoh and his princes of the stroke that would fall on them, but did not, as in the previous plague of the hail, offer any of them an opportunity of escaping it. To Israel he announced the judgment, but with it he disclosed the divine plan of exemption from its infliction, as it is now declared to all in the gospel. And greater interests are at stake now than then. The death of one’s firstborn is a grievous blow, but the everlasting ruin of one’s soul is a more awful calamity. That men should be saved from this last, God has spoken, and pointing all to the blood of the Lamb, tells us, that He "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

03.04. Chapter 4. The Sin-offering

Chapter 4. The Sin-offering As we trace out different aspects of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, typified in the offerings of old, we discover different features and phases, which unfold themselves to the heart subject to God’s word, like the different features of the landscape, which open out as we pass through beautiful scenery. At every turn something fresh strikes the eye, but each point, as it discovers itself to the diligent observer of the scene, is found to be in harmony with the rest, and really needful to make the whole complete. Without it we should feel there was a want, when all the salient points of the landscape had passed before us in due order. And as the great Architect of the universe has arranged the whole in beautiful order, which His creatures, the more they search into it the more they admire and find delight in it, so He, who knows the end from the beginning, alone knew beforehand how He would glorify Himself through the death of His Son, and therefore could alone by the Spirit so direct the saints of old in their worship, as to bring out at different epochs, yet in perfect order, the varying features of that one perfect sacrifice "which taketh away the sin of the world."

These remarks are suggested by noticing the difference in the manner of presenting the sacrifices in the book of Exodus and in the book of Leviticus. In Exodus those are mentioned which concern, directly or indirectly, the congregation of Israel as a whole. The Passover, the ratification of the covenant at Sinai, the daily burnt-offerings had to do directly with all Israel; whilst the sacrifices, offered up at the consecration of Aaron and his sons on their individual behalf, indirectly concerned the whole congregation, because needful ere the people could avail themselves of a divinely appointed and duly consecrated priesthood. In Leviticus we have something else, for there we read how the Lord provided for the wishes and wants of individuals. Gracious surely was this. God thought of individuals, whilst He charged Himself with the welfare and daily sustenance of the whole congregation in the wilderness. Was any man’s heart filled with a sense of God’s goodness? — He provided the way by which he might give vent to it. Was any one bowed down under a sense of sin? — God revealed the plan by which he might be delivered from it. He would have His redeemed people to be at ease before Him. None need be straitened from an overwhelming sense of His favours — none need be overcome by the weight of his guilt. Joy of heart could be expressed, as the offerer approached the brazen altar with his burnt-offering or peace-offering; and there, at the same altar, the sinner could find relief, as he witnessed the priest busied with his sin-offering or trespass-offering. "It shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him," was God’s mind about the burnt-offering; "It shall be forgiven him," was Jehovah’s gracious declaration annexed to the law of the sin-offering and trespass-offering. Not that the blood of bulls, or of goats, could take away sins, or lay the ground on which man could have communion with his Creator; but this blood spake to God (however ignorant the offerer may have been of it) of that precious blood, the blood of His own Son, to be shed on the cross for the glorifying of the Father, and the forgiveness and justification of the sinner.

Sheltered by blood in Egypt, the people learn at Sinai that no sin could be passed over by Jehovah God of Hosts. Holy and righteous He was, and must ever act in accordance with His nature. What

man might have been inclined to pass over or excuse, that He must take notice of. But whilst all would acknowledge that a glaring trespass could not be passed over in silence, God would teach the people that sins done in ignorance, when remembered, must be noticed, and the appointed sacrifice offered up. Where then was the need, if so inclined, to palliate or pass over as of no moment an act of sin for which Jehovah had provided for the offender's forgiveness? How could they, if they had any just conception of God's omniscience or holiness, suppose He had not seen it, or imagined it needed no atonement? But a consciousness of sin and its deserts, without any knowledge of the sacrifice, must only drive a soul to despair; whilst a knowledge of the way of forgiveness, or the necessity of a sacrifice, would maintain in the soul a sense of God's holiness, and impart to the sinner a knowledge of His grace. For a trespass-offering the animal to be brought was the same for all. (Chap. v. 14 — vi. 7.) For one class of sin-offerings the Lord took knowledge of the ability of the offerer (chap. v. 1-13), and for another class the measure of his responsibility. (Chap. iv.) If the offender was unable to bring anything out of the flock, he might draw near with two turtle doves or two young pigeons. If unable to meet the expense of the birds, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of flour. Where the sin consisted in doing anything through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord which ought not to be done, for the anointed priest, if he sinned according to the sin of the people, and for the whole congregation, a young bullock was to be offered up; for a ruler, a kid of the goats, a male, was the appointed sacrifice; whilst for any of the common people, a female, a kid of the goats, or a lamb of the flock, was the animal prescribed. None could select for himself what he would bring. God decided what was the suited offering, and each must conform to what He had enjoined. How could it be otherwise? The sin was against Him; the creature had acted contrary to the command of the Creator, to God therefore alone belonged the right of saying what should be offered up, for the sinner to have the sense of forgiveness. But though for different classes different sacrifices were enjoined, in each of these cases death must come in, and the blood be poured out in all. Nothing less than this could do — "The wages of sin is death." The death of the substitute must, then, take place, whether the sinner had offended through ignorance or not. Without shedding of blood is no remission; so the blood was shed, and placed where the offerer had his standing. How dearly this speaks of the sacrifice of Christ, needed for each and all, whilst it tells us of the difference of standing of the anointed priest, and of the ruler, or common person, dispensationally before God. (Chap. iv. 7, 17, 18, 25, 30.) The proper victim selected, unblemished in body, the sinner drew near to the appointed place, and killed it; then the priest dealt with its blood, and burnt the fat and the kidneys on the altar of burnt-offering. Till death had taken place the priestly service could not begin — for the priest's work had to do with the altar and the blood. The animal slain, the priest took of the blood, and sprinkled it before the Lord — before the veil of the sanctuary, putting some of it on the horns of the altar of sweet incense within the tabernacle, or on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, and in both cases poured out the rest at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering. What sacrifice this prefigured all may understand. As the burnt-offering and peace-offering, the other offerings in which death took place, typified the Lord Jesus who died on the cross, so did the victims offered up as sin-offerings or trespass-offerings. Those typified the Lord as He was in Himself, these latter what He was made for us. And in these sin-offerings we have a double aspect of the sacrifice, namely, the intrinsic holiness and fragrance of the true Victim, and God's judgment on sin; for besides the death and the blood we have mention of the fat of the inwards, and the ultimate disposal of the carcase. In

common with the peace-offering, the fat of the inwards was burnt on the altar of burnt-offering (chap. iv. 31); but, differing from the ordinance of the peace offering, the carcase was wholly consumed by the priests, independent of the offerer. The blood spoke of the life of the great sacrifice poured out to make atonement for sinners; the fat of the inwards spoke of the will, which in man's case as evidenced by the offering, had not been subject to God; but in His case, whom we have here presented in type was always subject to His Father. I do always those things which please him" was His word when on earth. This, then, which typified His will wholly surrendered to the Father, was burnt on the altar for a sweet savour unto the Lord (chap iv. 31); for whatever spoke of Christ as He was in Himself must have been a sweet savour to the Father. But that which spoke of Him as made sin for us was differently treated, being either burnt without the camp, or consumed by the ministering priest and the males of the priesthood. The victim, then, identified with the sinner by the laying of his hands on its head was never seen by him again. If he had sought for it he could not have found it, nor could the question of that particular sin have been re-opened; for the death of the animal had taken place, and its blood been duly dealt with. How carefully did God thus provide that the sinner's conscience should be at rest about the sin. This is God's way, and He would signify to the soul what can be effected by sacrifice. *By the burning of the carcase by fire God's judgment on sin was expressed, the fire of His wrath having fallen on it; but, burnt outside the camp, it also typified Him who, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. xiii. 12.) So, when sacrifices shall again be offered up with acceptance on God's altar at Jerusalem, the carcase of the sin-offering will be "burnt in the appointed place outside the sanctuary." Outside the camp, outside the gate, outside the sanctuary, speak of the heinousness of sin in God's eyes; but the holy character of the flesh (for it was most holy) tells of the untarnishable holiness of the sin-offering; and as God showed what sin was before Him, He also manifested, by the injunctions about the flesh, the holy nature of the antitype. If the flesh was eaten, it could only be eaten in the holy place, or, as Numbers xviii. 10 expresses it, in the most holy place — "Whosoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy;" "All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it is most holy." And none but the males of the priests could eat of it, for it was the work of a priest alone to put away for ever out of sight the sin now identified with the victim.

{Note by the author — Were I issuing a third edition of this little book I should alter a sentence on page 38 line 20, to run as follows: "By the burning of the inwards on the altar the bearing divine judgment was typified; the fire of God's wrath having fallen on them. The burning of the carcase outside the camp spoke of Him who would suffer without the gate. (Heb. xiii. 12.)" (Written in manuscript and glued in.)} The sacrifice rightly offered up, the sinner could turn away from the altar, and retrace his steps to his tent. But how did he return? With his heart full of hopes of forgiveness, or buoyed up with the consciousness that he had done all he could to make amends? Would that satisfy the conscience? His conscience told him he had offended against God; nothing short, then, of God's assurance of forgiveness could satisfy him, and meet the requirements of the case. But that the offerer had, yet mark how he got it; not from man, not even from the priest, but from God Himself. He could leave the altar with the words, "It shall be forgiven him," sounding in his ears, and awakening a response of thanksgiving from his heart; for they were the words of Jehovah Himself on behalf of His poor sinful creature. The priest could not make more sure what Jehovah had promised; all that he could do was to reiterate the words as God's revelation, "It shall be forgiven him." Thus the sinner was brought to the word of God, and thereon was to rest as on a

rock which nothing could shake. He had not to wait till the morrow to know it, for it depended on the offering up of the sacrifice; yet these gracious words were not forthcoming till the blood had been rightly dealt with, and the fat of the inwards, with the two kidneys, had been burnt on the altar for a sweet savour. Had it been otherwise, it might have been assumed that forgiveness was based on something connected with the offerer. But the words were recorded, only after all had been spoken of, that was to be done, that the sinner might learn his forgiveness was based on atonement by blood, and on that only. As soon as all had been done according to the law, those words could be taken by the sinner as Jehovah's declaration to the burdened heart. He who formed the heart knew what it wanted, and would meet that want as soon as He righteously could. This is always God's way; and never do we read of man being authorised to absolve another from his sins as before God. When it is a question of acceptance before God, or restoration of soul, He speaks by His word to the sinner, and bestows forgiveness as from Himself. A fellow creature might tell him of it, and minister to his need, but could not bestow forgiveness or absolve him from his sins. As priests we can intercede for one another (1 John v. 16; James v. 16), that the hand of God in government may be removed from the offender. The assembly in any one place, or those (if only two or three, Matt. xviii. 19, 20), acting as becomes the assembly, can forgive the sin which has called for discipline, and receive the sinner back to the table (2 Cor. ii. 10); but the question between the soul and God He reserves to Himself — "Who can forgive sins but God only?" stands good still. Thus the Lord appeared to Peter after He rose from the dead, but alone; afterwards He publicly commissioned him to feed His sheep. This distinction between discipline on earth and the soul's restoration to communion with God not being observed, much confusion has in consequence arisen, and men have arrogated to themselves, and assumed the power of transmitting to others, an authority which no priest under the Mosaic economy ever exercised, nor the apostles in the New Testament ever claimed. There is the outward dealing with an individual in the exercise or remission of discipline, and there is the inward dealing of God with the heart. This last must always come first, if the assembly are to act in accordance with God's mind; and what they do is to be ratified in heaven. God deals with the heart, and imparts the sense of forgiveness consequent on confession of the sin; the assembly deals in discipline, consequent on the failure of the individual to judge himself (Matt. xviii.); and the remission of discipline, if rightly done, only takes place when preceded by restoration of the soul to communion with God. In the sin-offering we have the latter brought out — God's assurance to the sinner of forgiveness. In the cleansing of the leper we have an instance of the former; the reception, again, to the enjoyment of all rights on earth of the redeemed people, when the individual has been cleansed from that which defiled. This has the character of discipline remitted — the former of sins forgiven.

03.05. Chapter 5. Discipline and Restoration to Communion

Chapter 5. Discipline and Restoration to Communion Leviticus xiii., xiv.

"Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead. Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them, that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." (Num. v. 2, 3.) Relationships however close, and friendships however strong, could raise no plea on which disobedience to this command might be justified. "Without the camp," spoke of the divinely appointed place for such; "shall ye put them," expressed the responsibility which rested on all to act aright; and none could excuse themselves from submission to this order, who shared in the privileges belonging to that nation. To the nations around them God gave no such injunction; for none but Israel stood before Him on the ground of redemption, and in none but Israel could it be said He dwelt. His presence among them necessitated the removal of the unclean; their position as redeemed involved prompt obedience to the word. "How unnatural," it might have been said, "thus to act against members of one's family;" "How uncharitable to put outside the camp one's dearest bosom friend;" "A merciful God could never require such an act to be done in His name." Such thoughts as these might have passed through many a mind, and the natural man might have endorsed them as correct; but the one taught of God would see they were wrong. Jehovah had spoken, and He must be obeyed. Claims of kindred and affection must give way before the paramount claims of His holiness.

Deeply solemn was this matter. Certainty, therefore, as to the case was to be arrived at, before the terrible sentence went forth against the individual, or even the garment, or the house; but when the case was clear, no word in mitigation or extenuation could be received. How the disease had been contracted, by wilful or accidental contact, was nothing; its hated presence had been manifested, and judgment must accordingly take its course. The priest saw, and pronounced sentence, and forthwith it had to take effect; but, till he could pronounce with certainty, the case was watched. In doubtful cases, after seven days' confinement, the individual, or garment, or house was examined again. If the plague on the man or in the garment had not spread, another week's confinement was ordered, and the garment was washed. If, after this, the plague was found, to be known by the marks given of it in God's word, the awful words pronounced by the priest, "It is a leprosy," betokened the cessation of further forbearance. The man was put outside the camp, and the garment was burnt in the fire. In the case of the house, the diseased stones were taken out, new ones were put in their place, and the house plastered with new mortar. If, after that, the disease still manifested its presence, the whole house was to be pulled down, and its stones, timber, and mortar carried forth outside the city into an unclean place. Thus most careful was the priest to be, that none should be excluded from the camp who ought to be in it, and none be kept inside who ought to be put forth; for with the priest, as having the mind of God, rested the duty of pronouncing that sentence against which we read of no appeal. But what, it might be asked, was there in the leprosy which drew forth such stringent regulations? It was a contagious disease, committing frightful ravages, destroying by slow degrees, and in a loathsome manner the body of its victim. Is

this all that we see in it? Were these laws concerning it mere sanitary regulations for the bodily welfare of that large encampment, and quarantine directions, as it were, for the people when settled in their land? Doubtless there was that in them, but there was more, as the sacrifices to be offered up when the house was clean, or the leper was to be received back, clearly set forth. Leprosy betokened the working of the flesh. In the case of the man it might be an old sore breaking out afresh (chap. xiii. 11), or a new one for the first time displaying itself. But it was the working of evil within which thus manifested itself, and, whilst it continued to work, the man was unclean. When, however, he was covered all over with the disease, the priest pronounced him clean. "It is all turned white, he is clean." The evil within had worked itself out; its activity had ceased. He was clean. The leprosy in the house broke out in the stones thereof (chap. xiv. 40), typical, it would seem, of evil in an assembly, and was connected with the dwelling of the people in the land. (Ver. 34.) Leprosy in a garment, that which wraps round the individual, typified something evil in the circumstances in which the man might be moving. This might occur in the wilderness, or in the land. At all cost the evil must be got rid of; yet nothing more was to be destroyed than was needful to attain that end. But if the cutting out of the diseased part, and the washing of the garment, sufficed not to arrest the plague, the whole garment had to be burnt; so, if need be, all one's surroundings must be got rid of, by the individual getting out of the circumstances in which he has been involved. In this there was something analogous to the dealing with the house, the diseased stones being first taken out, their places supplied with fresh ones, and the whole plastered anew with mortar, if possible thereby to avert the destruction of the whole building; but should that measure prove ineffectual, the disease having spread among stones hitherto free from it, the whole house had to go — the priest broke it down. Now, as the garment typifies circumstances surrounding us, and the house an assembly of believers, we can see why, for the cleansing of the garment, washing was ordered without sacrifices; and why, for the cleansing of the house, sacrifices must be offered up. And, whilst the sacrifices the leper had to bring, were more numerous than those offered up for the house — as both represented God's people cleansed, either an individual or an assembly — we can understand why there were sacrifices common to both, having reference to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And here God's grace manifests itself. Had the laws concerning leprosy stopped with the injunction for excluding the leper from the camp, and for shutting up the house, God's holiness would have been cared for; but the individual or house must have been left in perpetual and irremediable uncleanness. Such, however, was not His mind. No compromise could be admitted between holiness and defilement, but He worked that the leprosy should be removed, and the individual reinstated into all the privileges of God's redeemed people. These chapters then illustrate the exercise of discipline on the people of God. It is not the sinner in his natural distance from God that we have before us, for we meet first with the man inside the camp, but put out of it, whilst the leprosy was working in him. It might have been an old leprosy breaking out afresh, or the plague appearing for the first time. Outside the camp must then be his place, though he had his tent inside it all the time (chap. xiv. 8), till the priest was satisfied he was healed, and all the rites connected with his cleansing had been duly performed. For the garment and for the house there was a provision for the plague proving irremovable; for the individual we read of nothing of the kind. "All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled," was God's provision for the preservation of the camp from his uncleanness, whilst the opening words of the following chapter speak of the days of his cleansing. There might be special cases for which there would be no cure,

for example, Gehazi, Uzziah; but none could sit down in an ordinary way and say their case was hopeless. And who healed him? Physicians could not do it. The priest, too, in this was powerless. God must deal personally with the leper and effect the cure; for observe, the sacrifice was to be offered up after the priest was satisfied he was healed, and not in order to heal him. "Offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." (Mark i. 44.) How the leper was healed is not stated, that was a matter between him and God, as it must always be in what we believe leprosy to prefigure. Restoration of the soul with God must precede the restoration to one's place in the assembly. But restoration of the soul with God is a private matter between the soul and God; restoration to the assembly, as to the camp, is public and before all. The priest pronounced the leper clean, after he saw God had healed him, as he had pronounced him unclean when the evil of the flesh was working. He pronounced on his state, but could not alter it, but God could. So the leper, shunned by his fellowmen, as he cried, "Unclean, unclean," found an eye resting on him whilst outside the camp, and a heart occupied with him unceasingly. For God was working for his healing.

Healed in mercy, he had to show himself to the priest; and now he has to feel keenly his helpless condition, induced by the leprosy. As yet he is outside the camp, and the priest must go out to him. He knew he was healed, else the priest's inspection would be of no avail; but the mere fact of his having been healed by God did not give him the right to re-enter the camp of Israel. It is well to see this — a rule which still holds good in the government of the assembly of God on earth. There is the secret intercourse between God and the soul, and there is the public acknowledgment of having judged oneself, and the owning before all the only ground on which one can stand in the assembly. This is shadowed out in the action, and in the sacrifices which the leper brought. On the first day we read in his sacrifices what the standing is, and the identification with Him who has died and is risen. On the eighth day we see typified the acknowledgment of failure in walk, and consecration, as it were, afresh to the service of Him who died for us on the cross. Sovereign grace can restore, as sovereign power healed the leper; but only on the ground of sacrifice was there then, and is there now, a road for outward reinstatement into the place and privileges of the redeemed company. The priest, satisfied that he was healed, commanded to be taken for him that was to be cleansed two birds, alive and clean, and cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop. One bird having been killed over running water, the other was dipped in its blood with the cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, and the individual was sprinkled with blood* seven times, after which the living bird was let loose into the open field. To the cleansed leper this may have been a mysterious rite — even the priest may not have been able to interpret it — but to us it has a language, and its voice is one of no uncertain sound. It speaks of death and resurrection — even of His who died and rose again, and of the application of that death in power to the soul by the Holy Ghost, through the word. The living bird became identified, by dipping it in the blood of the one which had died; and, flying away from the scene of the death of its fellow, shadowed forth the Lord's resurrection from the dead. The cedar-wood and hyssop seem to be emblematic of the products of nature — comprising, as the two ends of a long chain, all that grows on the earth (see 1 Kings iv. 33); the scarlet is an emblem of the glory of the world. All that was of nature, and the glory of the world, he was to view dipped in the blood of the slain bird; as now, what answers to those emblems should be viewed through the medium of the cross. The cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet were not destroyed, but they appeared, when dipped in the blood, in a new light: so should it be with us. That death as a practical truth, when forgotten, must be brought home afresh to the soul in power.

If nature has been allowed to work where death should practically have been known, that failure must be judged, and the soul, reminded of it, confess the need of the Lord’s death and resurrection first, and the need, too, of their application to its walk on earth.

{*When cleansing the house the living bird was dipped in the blood and the water, and the house sprinkled, it would seem, with both. This may have been done in the case of the leper, though the text does not state it.} But this work of restoring an individual to outward communion with God’s saints, is one for which we must be indebted to the ministrations of others. "Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." ’’Confirm your love toward him." So the leper stood by whilst the bird was killed for him, and he was sprinkled with its blood. But, this service performed, he was able to act, and the first thing he did was to wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he might be clean: after which he could enter the camp. This was the work of the first day, and this the happy result. Thus, as exhibited in type the death and resurrection of the Lord and the individual’s identification with him being acknowledged, cleansing himself is the next and proper work.

Thus far, as regards the sacrifices to be offered up, the cleansing of the leper as well as of the house are accomplished in the same manner. In both what is the real standing is thus typified, as well as the need of that death, and the application of the word by the Spirit to cleanse from the uncleanness which necessitated such stringent measures of isolation. For the individual other sacrifices had to be offered up, as he typified one who had transgressed. But for the house, as we here see, though there were none but clean stones in it, because the disease had manifested itself in the wall, the sacrifice of the bird was necessary ere it would be acknowledged as clean.

Turning back to the leper, he is in the camp a dean man, yet not at home there, having to tarry abroad out of his tent seven days. Whatever might have been his thought of the leprosy, God shows what He thinks of it, and of that of which it is the figure. So, besides the recognition of the standing, there must be typified the acknowledgment of the trespass, and how alone that can be forgiven. This work began on the seventh day, as the man manifested his willingness to cleanse himself by shaving all the hair from his head, beard, and eyebrows, emblems of natural strength and personal comeliness, and by washing his clothes and his flesh in water. That done, the special sacrifices of the eighth day remained to be offered up. On the first day the priest went out to the leper, on the eighth day the former leper took his place at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, but only with the appointed sacrifices. Without them he could have had no business there, for on the ground of sacrifice, and on that alone, could he again stand at the place where the people assembled to meet with God. Had he presumed to come there on the ground of having washed his flesh, and shaved off all his hair, would he have been received? Assuredly not. Unless he had washed and shaved it, it would have been presumption to have drawn near; but without the sacrifices as well, he had no right to approach; and even with these, he needed the priest to present him before the Lord. Now, however, rightly presented, he stood where he might often have stood before without the need of a sacrifice, or any priestly presentation, and learned that a way back into God’s presence there was, but death alone could open it. A trespass-offering, a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering, the Lord appointed for his cleansing. "And the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass-offering, and a log of oil and wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord. And he shall slay the lamb," etc. The significance of the order of these sacrifices we can well understand, since the trespass-offering takes the precedence. The

significance, too, of the action of the priest, we may note, as he brought near the trespass-offering with the log of oil, and waved them, the animal whole and still alive, before the Lord. After this it was killed. Nowhere else have we such an action as this, the waving of the whole animal before the Lord. Can we not interpret its meaning? The leper typifies one who has failed to own himself belonging to the Lord as a man on earth, that is, on this side the grave. This failure is in type acknowledged in the waving of the animal before death. Its death next took place, and the sprinkling of its blood; prefiguring to us in the waving what the redeemed ought to be, and in the death of the animal shadowing out the death of the substitute, and the atonement made, by His blood. The failure requires the death of the substitute that restoration may take place, but that same death God uses to re-consecrate, as it were, to His service the one who has been acting after the energy of his own will. Therefore the priest took of that blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of him that was to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot; and then anointed each place, where the blood had been put, with the oil. "And the remnant of the oil that is in the priest’s hand he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord." How richly God provides for the one who has so grievously sinned, does the leper’s offering teach us. Consecrated, as it were, afresh by the remembrance of the sacrifice, the full divine energy of the spirit of service, as seen in the type, is graciously poured out on his head. After this the other offerings were offered up as prescribed, the work of restoration was complete, the leper was clean. Healed by God outside the camp, the way for re-entering pointed out and conformed to, full restoration to his tent took place, with perfect competency for service. The leprosy itself was removed, and every disqualification it had entailed was removed likewise, and the man could feel himself at home in the camp; but only on the ground of sacrifice. In the sin-offering the words were, "It shall be forgiven him;" here it is, "He shall be clean" — each in its place significant of what it prefigures.

But, whilst we see God’s mercy portrayed, which will not rest satisfied till the leper is completely reinstated in his tent and position among the people, we also learn in the subsequent verses how God took knowledge of the circumstances of the individual. If he could not get all that was prescribed, God would receive smaller offerings for the meat, sin, and burnt-offerings. None should be kept outside because they had not the means of being fully reinstated. Yet all had to bring the sacrifice appointed for the first day, and the lamb for the trespass-offering. These could not be dispensed with, for all alike had to own by the type what the ground of standing is, and the need of a sacrifice for restoration. How true are the words of the woman of Tekoah — and this ordinance of the leper reminds us of them — "God deviseth means that his banished be not expelled from him." (2 Sam. xiv. 14.)

03.06. Chapter 6. Propitiation

Chapter 6. Propitiation

Leviticus 16.

Sin excludes the sinner from God’s presence. "From thy face," said Cain, "Shall I be hid." "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," will be the language of the Son of man when sitting on the throne of His glory, to the goats placed on His left hand at the judgment of the living. (Matt. xxv.) Cain felt the consequences of his sin as regards earth, the goats will feel the consequences of theirs, as here expressed, for eternity. Perpetual exclusion from God’s face on earth Cain saw was his doom; everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord will be the portion of the impenitent sinners (2 Thess. i. 9), and who can lift up a finger in token of dissent from the justice of Cain’s sentence, or the final condition of the impenitent? God is righteous in taking vengeance, else how could He judge the world? But man can do nothing to earn His favour, or restore himself to the position forfeited by Adam for himself and his posterity. A terrible conclusion this is to come to for one who has nothing to hope for, but what he thinks he can merit by his own conduct, but a blessed thing surely it is, when the sinner arrives at this, the right platform to stand on before God, as he learns how God can open a door of entrance into His presence in righteousness, when man, because of his sin, has been excluded in justice.

Shelter by blood has been taught as a type in Egypt; forgiveness of sins, and restoration to communion on the ground of sacrifice, have been illustrated in preceding chapters in this book of Leviticus. Now we learn how propitiation is made, that the sinner should righteously have a standing before God. He needs forgiveness, and he needs justification, and both are effected by blood. (Eph. i. 7; Rom. v. 9.)

Holiness being the necessity of God’s nature, no sinner unauthorised could be suffered to intrude into His presence, and no fire could be used, when the priest drew nigh, but that connected with the burnt sacrifice. Unauthorised, and with unhallowed fire, had Nadab and Abihu drawn nigh, and paid the penalty of death for their presumption. But the consequences of their sin did not cease with their death, as the opening verses of this chapter show: "And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord, and died: and the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron, thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy-seat which is upon the ark, that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat." How gracious of the Lord thus to speak! "That he come not," would dispel all hope, but "at all times" immediately revives it. Unquestionably He has a right to say who should approach Him, and when.

What mercy is manifested in not shutting out a sinner for ever! Aaron then could enter within the veil, as God’s high priest in Israel, the type of Him who has entered the holy place by His own blood.

God’s choice of the one who should enter the holiest (though only on that one day in the year) having been made known, we next read of the manner of his approach, of the sacrifice he must bring with him for himself and his house, of his dress, and of his work. God prescribed everything. Aaron had no choice in the services of that day, nor was anything left to his discretion. He could suggest nothing, he could alter nothing, for who but God knew about the antitype, or what was needful to prefigure Him and His work? To keep Aaron in mind of the only ground of approach, he hears of his sacrifice before he hears of his dress. His dress needed to be described, for he could not have entered the holiest in any other garments; he did not, however, find acceptance because of his garments, but because of the blood of the sin-offering. Having washed himself in water, he put on the holy linen garments, for the garments of glory and beauty could not be worn on that day, nor could the high priest’s garments of daily attire be then in requisition. There was a work to be done which only one who was pure could do, so he wore holy garments expressive of purity. It was a work which, when once really done, could never be repeated. So he wore garments kept for that particular service only. The garments of glory and beauty told out by their colours the heavenly character of the great High Priest, as well as His death and royalty. The holy garments for the day of atonement spoke of His spotless holiness. Was Aaron the one who answered to all this? No; for by the washing of his flesh in water before he thus clothed himself, he showed he was only the type.

Arrayed aright, we next read of the sacrifices he was to take for the children of Israel, two kids of the goats for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering; for there is a distinction made between the offerings for himself and his house, and those for the congregation of Israel. The burnt-offering was the same for both, but the sin-offering was not. One bullock for himself and his house was God’s command, and two kids of the goats for the congregation of Israel. Aaron and his house are thus classed together, and throughout that day have precedence of the congregation of Israel. A distinction and order this was which probably they did not understand, but we learn the meaning of it, and how beautifully the characteristic feature of this dispensation was thus traced out. All the priests were classed together as one family with the High Priest. All believers now are a holy priesthood, in close association with the High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. For Aaron and his house one animal only was needed, for the congregation of Israel two were required: the one, the Lord’s lot, to be killed as the sin-offering, the other, the scape-goat, to be sent away alive into the wilderness.

Another special feature of this day’s service should be noticed; the Lord was first thought of, then what the sinner needed was provided for. This was in character with the special truth brought out that day, propitiation, not redemption. By the blood of the paschal lamb God was righteous in sheltering Israel from His judgments; by the blood on the mercy-seat His holiness and justice were vindicated, and He could righteously have sinners in His presence. But Israel were also redeemed. Redemption looks at the people, propitiation meets all that God is in Himself. How this speaks of what He desires for the sinner, when He provides the way of access for him into His immediate presence! For what was the holiest but the presence chamber of the divine majesty? "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat," God said to Moses. Behind that veil, concealed from all eyes (for what sinner could behold it in its brightness and live?), was the Shechinah to be found, in connection with the throne. The cloud was the cloud of glory, the mercy-seat the place of His throne on earth, who dwelt between the cherubim. Into this place Aaron, a sinner, and a typical

character, was to enter, but not without blood. His entrance at all might show that sinners would be one day allowed access within, his entrance with blood spoke of the only ground on which such could ever enter, and his entrance in a typical character, that of High Priest, told of the need of one to represent the redeemed before God, and to open out the way for them.

Before the cloud on the mercy-seat Aaron was to stand, but how could he behold it and live? God provided for this in a manner as beautiful as perfect. "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." The incense thus came into requisition, and supplied him with what was wanted, but connected with the altar of burnt-offering, for no strange fire could be used, and all else was strange but that which descended from heaven on the altar of burnt-offering. With the cloud of incense, typical of the merits of Christ, rising up between him and the cloud of glory on the mercy-seat, Aaron could stay, for the brief time he did his work, without being consumed by the brightness of the divine majesty.

"We meet our God in Jesus Christ, And fear and terror cease." But on what grounds could entrance into the holiest be based? Propitiation by blood must be made, which Aaron proceeded to do. Israel had sinned, so death had to come in, the death of the sin-offering, and the sprinkling of the blood, that God in righteousness should accept Israel in the person of Aaron their representative. Here also God is first thought of, as Aaron sprinkled of the blood on the mercy-seat, and afterwards seven times before it. Both were needed, but the order must be observed. Unless the blood had been put on the mercy-seat, there had not been manifested an adequate ground on which God could accept sinners. Unless it had been sprinkled before it, there would have been no ground on which they could stand before Him. Nothing short of blood-sprinkled ground would meet the sinner’s need here. How this tells of man’s inability as a sinner to make good for himself his ground before God, as it tells likewise of God’s desire that he should have before Him an unassailable standing. Did men read this sacrifice aright, what room could there be for hoping to make good a standing before the throne? and what need would there be for attempting to effect that, which has been already perfectly and everlastingly settled? A way then into the holiest for sinners, and an unimpeachable standing before God, are here shadowed out; but that way was not opened, nor that standing secured, by the sacrifices then offered up; for Aaron repeated them each year, and the veil unrent maintained inviolate the inner sanctuary of God. Then, one man entered, the high priest; now, all enter who are priests. Then, he went behind the veil; now, we enter through it, and discern the great change that has taken place by the sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood of God’s own Son, as we read, "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," etc. (Heb. x. 19.) Unpeopled was that inner sanctuary when Aaron entered it, and left it. Is the holiest unpeopled now? All who will have access to it may not have entered therein, but how many thousands and even millions are there whose place within the veil is a present possession! Thus God gathers round Himself sinners saved by grace, and where they too never were before, admits into His presence for ever, by virtue of the blood of His Son, souls who deserved everlasting banishment and destruction. Is it that He thinks less of sin than He did in the garden of Eden? His nature forbids that. He is and must be holy, and Aaron and all Israel, as they read this chapter, could see how defiling and grievous a thing sin is in His presence. The presence of the blood proved the need of a

substitute’s death, and the making "atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins," as well as the making atonement for the golden altar (ver. 18), and the tabernacle of the congregation, demonstrated what it was in His sight. None but Aaron could enter within the holy place (that is, the holy of holies), and none but priests could enter within the tabernacle of the congregation, yet atonement must be made for these because of the uncleanness, as well as for the sins, of the whole people of Israel. Where their standing really was before the throne, there atonement had to be made for their uncleanness and for their transgressions. Does not this help us to understand those words in Hebrews ix., "The heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these"? As those places into which Israel never personally entered had to be purged with blood, because of what they were, unclean, as well as what they had done, so the heavenlies, our place, though in person we have never entered them, must be purged likewise by blood — the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus carefully does God exclude the thought of man finding entrance into His presence by any thing he can do, as He tells us that the uncleanness of His people, what they are, must be atoned for, as well as what they have done. The sanctuary purged by blood, Aaron went out, and confessed all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the live goat, and sending him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. The standing and communion of the people with God was made good, and maintained by the blood on the mercy-seat. This they knew was secured when the high priest came out of the tabernacle, for his presence outside in safety told of acceptance within. His re-appearance was the proof of this, as the re-appearance of Him who is God’s High Priest, will tell the believing remnant of Israel of the work of atonement long ago accomplished. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." (Zech. xii. 10.) Besides this, God would have them at rest about the remembrance of their sins, and read in the scapegoat’s dismissal, the complete and everlasting putting away of all their transgressions. All were confessed on the scape-goat, all that were confessed were carried away in type on its head. It bore them all away to a land not inhabited. For Aaron and his sons there was no scape-goat provided. Why was this? Had there been, the peculiar feature of the present dispensation would have been wholly ignored. As typical of Christ and His people now, Aaron and his house stood on that day. Israel will know forgiveness when the Lord returns in person to them. We know it now, though He is yet within the sanctuary. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth tells us what has gone on in the holiest of all. Israel of old only knew what had been done within when Aaron came out, as Israel of a future day will only know what has taken place in the heavenly sanctuary, when the Lord is seen again on earth. We wait not till then, but know now that He has done all that was needful for propitiation, and we are accepted in Him.

Thus we understand why the scape-goat was for Israel, yet, like Aaron’s house, we can make use of it, as teaching in type the complete putting away out of sight and remembrance of all the transgressions and sins of God’s redeemed people. How plainly in this, as in other matters, we see that none could have delineated the work of the Lord as High Priest, hidden from mortal eyes, and the difference between the position of Israel at a future day and God’s saints now, but He who had pre-arranged it all. These sacrificial rites are evidences of the divine origin of the word. The scape-goat dismissed, Aaron re-entered the tabernacle and changed his dress, first washing himself with water in the holy place, and then he offered the burnt-offerings, and burnt the fat of the sin-offering. All connected with the sin-offerings that day had to wash themselves; all were

defiled by them, whether the man who took away the live goat, or he who carried the carcases outside the camp. It needed one undefilable really to make propitiation; and that one must, like Aaron, be High Priest according to God's appointment, for that was priestly work which he must do alone. For in it none could share, or be present even in the sanctuary whilst it was being done, for till done there was no right of entry for God's people into His presence.

Helpless were the people in all this. They might see Aaron cast lots over the goats, they might catch the last glimpse of his skirt as he entered the tabernacle of the congregation, but nothing could they do to help him. Their part was to rest, and to afflict their souls. The need of the work Aaron did they were to own, for it intimately concerned them. To share in it was impossible. Entire rest from all work, like the sabbath day, characterised this tenth day of the seventh month. In this, in common with the sabbath, it stood out in marked distinction from all other days of general observance. Both spoke of perfect rest: the sabbath of God's rest after creation, in which man and earth shared; this of man's rest from all effort to repair the ruin caused by sin, that God might work to establish in righteousness everlasting blessing for man and the world, and unhindered communion between His people and Himself.

03.07. Chapter 7. Cleansing from Defilement

Chapter 7. Cleansing from Defilement

Numbers 19.

Sin in God’s sight is a far more serious matter than it often appears to man. God views it in the light of His nature, man generally in the light of the consequences to himself. God judges that to be sin which man would often pass over or excuse; hence, whilst sins committed needed a sacrifice to put them away, a sacrifice was required ere a person could be cleansed, who became unclean by defilement from without. This is the characteristic of that special sin-offering set forth in Numbers xix.

It was an offering for sin (see vers. 9, 17), yet the one to be sprinkled might have done nothing that he could have avoided, and might, indeed, only have acted aright. That, however, was not the question here, and all reasonings on such ground must have been silenced at once, for the Holy One of Israel had spoken to Moses and to Aaron, and communicated this ordinance of the law, that none in Israel, whether of the seed of Jacob, or a stranger that sojourned among them, should defile the tabernacle of the Lord. He who is Light was alone competent to say what would defile the sanctuary. Great was the privilege of Israel to have Jehovah’s tabernacle in their midst, but great was the responsibility resting on all within the camp, because that tabernacle was the sanctuary. Defilement permitted in them would have tarnished the purity of the sanctuary, and compromised the character of Him who was pleased to inhabit it; so, whilst the sin and trespass offerings were needful where sin had been committed, this was absolutely requisite because Jehovah dwelt among them. Thus, in Leviticus we see God providing against the breaking out of sin in those whom He had redeemed out of Egypt, and in Numbers we read of His gracious provision for putting away defilement contracted by contact from without. In accordance with the laws of the offerings, those for whom the sacrifice was needed brought the victim. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer, without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke." As the ashes were to be kept for the use of any in the camp who might need the water of separation, none could say (the high priest excepted) he would never require it; so all are concerned in the bringing of the animal. And here, as elsewhere, God decides what the animal should be, for it is His holiness that has to be thought of and maintained. Unmixed in colour, unblemished in person, unbroken by the yoke so as to be subservient to man’s bidding, such are the characteristics to be sought for, and found, in the victim God could accept, conditions answering to Him who unvaryingly did His Father’s will, in whom is no sin, and who, as the faithful and true witness, suffered death at the hand of His creatures. The heifer was brought to Eleazar, not to Aaron. The High Priest could not defile himself for the dead, though the priests could for those of their family. (Lev. xxi. 2, 11). Eleazar therefore officiates here, and is found with the heifer outside the camp. Slain by some one (not by the priest), the priestly work of sprinkling the blood began, after which the whole animal — its flesh, blood, skin, and dung, were set fire to before his eyes. Again the priest came forward, and cast cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet into the midst

of the burning of the heifer. Having sprinkled of the blood seven times towards the face of the tabernacle of the congregation, and having cast into the fire the symbols of nature and worldly glory to be consumed with the heifer, his part in the work of preparing the ashes was done. Another person had already set fire to the animal, whilst a third collected the ashes, and laid them up without the camp in a clean place, to be mixed with water for use as often as occasion required.

Very simple was the rite, but very telling. In common with other sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, the blood had a prominent place; but, differing from all other offerings, the blood of the heifer was sprinkled towards the front of the tabernacle of the congregation. It did not reach the altar, for it was sprinkled outside the camp, though in the direction of the entrance to the tabernacle of the congregation. In common with the offerings at the cleansing of the leper we have mention of cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet, but then they were dipped in the blood of the bird that was slain, while here they were consumed with the animal itself. Like the sin-offering, whose blood was brought inside the sanctuary, the heifer was burnt outside the camp; but then the inwards were burnt on the altar, here they were consumed with the rest of the heifer, for it was not an act of sin, done even in ignorance, with which the perfect obedience of the Lord was contrasted, that was here to be set forth in its true character, but the terrible nature of sin so contrary to the nature of God. And, as on the day of atonement, the priest had to wash his flesh in water after he had concluded the special rites of that day; and both the man who burnt the sin-offering, and he that led the scape-goat away, had to wash their clothes in water, and bathe themselves, and after that re-enter the camp; so, the priest who sprinkled the blood of the red heifer, and the man who burnt her carcase, as well as he who gathered up the ashes, had to wash their clothes in water, and the two first to bathe their flesh as well; but, differing from the special ordinance of the day of atonement, all those who were concerned with the preparation of the ashes of the red heifer, were unclean until the evening. How all this tells of the holiness of God, and the character of sin in His eyes! An offering for purification for sin as this was, all the rites connected with it took place outside the camp, inside of which was God’s dwelling-place on earth. Without the camp was the leper’s place till healed in the goodness of God. Without the camp everyone that had any issue, and all that were defiled by the dead, both male and female, were to be put, in accordance with God’s command. (Num. v. 2.) So here, to mark what sin is in God’s sight, without the camp was the heifer killed, and without the camp were the ashes kept. Holy was the sacrifice, else it could not have been a sacrifice fitted for His acceptance; clean were the ashes, and they were to be kept in a clean place, for both the heifer and the ashes spoke of One in whom is no sin: the heifer, of Him who offered up Himself; the ashes, of the fiery judgment of God He has endured; but, as connected with sin in any way, God would mark by the words "without the camp" what sin really is in the eyes of the High and Holy One, and those concerned with the preparation of the ashes had themselves to acknowledge it. Ceremonially clean when they began their work, they were ceremonially unclean when they had properly done it. The ashes prepared, the occasion of their use is next declared — the sprinkling of any one defiled by the dead. Here also we see shadowed forth what sin is before God. "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days." To touch the dead body of a clean beast which had died, rendered the person unclean till the evening (Lev. xi. 39); to touch the dead body of a man, however good he might have been, rendered the man unclean seven days. How humbling to the pride of man! A descendant of Adam, who was made in the image of God, after His likeness, was more defiling when dead than the body of a beast. Why was this? By man came sin, and by sin came death. Death witnessed of the

presence of sin, for death was the consequence of it. Surrounded with the consequences of sin, and often made to feel them keenly, as death entered the family or the tent, yet a man could not always help being in the tent where death had entered, or refrain in the call of duty from touching a dead body, or a bone, or a grave. God knew this. It might not be a wrong act on the man's part, for God did not command them to refrain from this (the priests, outside certain family relationships, excepted), yet He pronounced whoever did touch the dead body, etc., unclean for seven days. And mark this, the period of uncleanness could not be shortened; no excuse, no argument could avail to set aside God's word, or procure a relaxation of this stringent rule. On no ground could defilement by the dead be passed over as a thing of little consequence, or be excused by the exigencies of the occasion; for, even if the Passover was nigh at hand, those unclean by a dead body must wait for the following month, before they could again commemorate the redemption of the people from Egypt. Touching a dead body was a serious thing in God's sight, whatever it might have been in man's; for He judged according to the holiness of His nature, not according to the necessity of the case.

What an illustration this affords of the nature of God! All that came into the tent, and all that was in the tent where death entered, were rendered unclean by its presence. Contact with defilement defiled, and entrance into the place where death was became a cause of defilement likewise. Inflexible was the standard of God's holiness, which must be maintained, whatever it might cost His creatures. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," cried the seraphim (Isa. vi. 3), and here we see exemplified in some degree what that holiness is. Had it been an atrocious act of sin which called forth this stringent rule, to guard the holiness of God from being sullied by the sinner's presence, all must have agreed in the justice of his exclusion. But here, where man might not have been able to avoid it, born in God's providence into a world in which death has found an entrance, whatever excuse he might have been prepared to offer, or whatever plea of inability to have kept himself clean he might truly have urged, nothing could avail when the holy character of God was in question. Unclean he was, and unclean he must be, till the appointed epoch had passed away. God could admit of no compromise. The man had not sinned, it is true, but he was unclean, because death, the wages of sin, was there. It was no question, then, about the measure of a man's guilt, but entirely a question about the nature of God. How little, surely, is this understood even in these days.

Made to feel in himself how sin excludes from the presence of God, and how holy He must be who so jealously guarded the purity of His sanctuary, the man, whilst learning the defiling character of sin, and all connected with it, might learn also the gracious provision of His God for the effectual removal of his uncleanness by the sprinkling of the water of separation. How to be made clean when defiled he could not have discovered, but God had disclosed the means to be used, manifesting thereby the utmost care for the sanctuary, but manifesting also His real desire for the defiled one. "He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but, if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean." The water must be used on both days. Purified he would be if he conformed to God's law, but the full time must elapse before he could be clean. The clean person must use the water with hyssop, and twice must the unclean one be sprinkled. A little thing it might seem to touch the dead body, or to be in the tent; but the man must deeply feel what sin, and all connected with it is before God. On the third day, and on the seventh day was he sprinkled. It was no hasty work, done in a moment

and forgotten. Sprinkled on the third day, he must wait till the seventh day arrived, and then be sprinkled afresh before he could be clean. The condition he was in as unclean must be pressed home on him. He must feel it fully, as a whole period of time elapsed between the act which defiled, and the final act of bathing himself on the seventh day at even. Besides this, he had to own himself indebted to a clean person for the sprinkling of that water, by which alone he could begin to emerge from his state of ceremonial uncleanness. Without the sprinkling with the water on the two separate occasions, he could not have been cleansed, and without the washing of his clothes and himself in water, the cleansing must have been imperfect. Of what does this rite speak to us? It tells of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ under the judgment of God for us, brought home to the conscience in power by the Holy Ghost. His death was needed to atone for our sins, His death was also requisite to put away sin, and to be applied to the believer as an adequate motive for his walk in separation from evil on earth. How great then was the need of that death, and how rich are the provisions we have in it. By it God’s holiness is maintained, and because of it the defiled one can be cleansed. And, as the type sets forth what was needed, so the order therein enjoined is the order with God’s people now. First, the death of Christ is applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost, then separation from what is unclean around us will take place; just as the man was first sprinkled, and then he washed himself. He washed himself because he had been sprinkled, and that twice; not to fit himself to be sprinkled, for another — a clean man, must move in that matter first of all on his behalf. Humbling fact! And since it was a question of cleansing from what had defiled him by contact, or by his presence within the tent where death was, and not of standing before God, he needed not the immediate services of the priest (they had been rendered in the preparation of the ashes), but the offices of one that was himself ceremonially clean. The aspect of priestly work is towards God, so the blood of the heifer had been sprinkled by the priest towards the face of the tabernacle of the congregation. None but the priest, the type of the Lord Jesus Christ, could do this; but the using the water of separation on behalf of another was an act of a different character, for it shadowed forth that service which one believer can do for another, as, beholding him entangled in that which is defiling, he applies by the power of the Holy Ghost the word — which tells of the death of Christ, and the consequent position of His followers on earth — to free the soul from all that communicates only uncleanness. And as the sprinkled one purified himself, and washed his clothes, and bathed himself in water; so those, to whom such a service is rendered, must themselves acquiesce in it, and act accordingly. "Blessed are they that wash their robes [so we should read], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Rev. xxii. 14.) There is such a thing as "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1), besides having our feet washed by the service of another. (John xiii.) But, to minister to one in need of such offices, the individual must be clean himself.

Another thing comes out. Though only an individual was defiled, the consequences of his act were not confined to himself. Outside the camp because defiled (Num. v.) he was nevertheless a member of that, in the midst of which God dwelt. So, if the means prescribed for his cleansing were despised, or even neglected, God must have acted, because he defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. Hence, there was but one alternative. Death must come in in any case; but it was either for the man to avail himself of the death of the heifer, or to suffer death himself under the judicial hand of God. He might say he did not want the cleansing. That would show how completely he disregarded the peculiar privileges of the people of Israel, but that plea would not avail him. He

could not shelter himself from what flowed from his position as an inhabitant of the camp, on the ground of his individuality. It mattered not what he desired, action must take place, because he belonged to the congregation in the midst of which was the sanctuary.

How holy then was that place! All connected with his cleansing felt it. The person who sprinkled him had to wash his clothes, and the man who touched the water of separation was unclean until the evening, whilst the poor defiled person, unable to sanctify himself, imparted pollution to whatever he came against. What a state to be in! But death, the death of God’s own Son, provided all that was needful. No compromise of God’s holiness, nor continuance of defilement could be allowed for a moment, nor was there the need of either; for that death, as viewed in the type, maintained the one, and purified the individual from the other.

03.08. Chapter 8. Heave-offerings and Wave-offerings

Chapter 8. Heave-offerings and Wave-offerings The heave-offering (t'rumah) and wave-offering (t'nuphah) formed part of the provision made by the Lord for the priests and their families. By a grant, everlasting in its duration, God thus endowed the house of Aaron; "And this is thine, the heave-offering of their gift, with all the wave-offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons, and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever; every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it." (Num. xviii. 11.) To this law there was annexed one exception: "If the priest's daughter be married to a stranger, she may not eat of an offering (t'rumah) of the holy things. But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat thereof." (Lev. xxii. 12, 13.) Whilst the people were in their land, before the captivity, as well as after it, the priests received these offerings (Neh. x. 37-39; xii. 44; xiii. 5); and when faithfully surrendered by the people, they were found to be a plentiful provision. (2 Chron. xxxi. 10.) When the nation shall be restored, never more to be exiled from the land of their fathers, this grant made in the wilderness shall be again acknowledged; and in God's holy mountain, the mountain of the height of Israel, there will He require their offerings (t'rumah), and the people shall bring them, that the priest may cause the blessing to rest in their houses. (Ezek. xx. 40; xliv. 30.) The need of bringing the offerings Malachi iii. 8 makes plain. The returned remnant had robbed God of tithes and offerings: so the announcement of the prophet follows, "Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The tithes and offerings were God's; though the portion of the priests. Defrauding the priests of their just due, they robbed God, and lost the blessing. When finally restored to their country, the law being written on their hearts, they will bring all the appointed offerings, and the priests provided for will cause the blessing to rest in their houses. The terms in which this grant was made distinguish between the heave-offering and the wave-offering. The heave-offering was a portion of their gifts — "heave-offering of their gift;" the wave-offering might be the whole of the thing offered. The idea conveyed by a heave-offering was the taking up a part to offer it to God; whereas the idea of the wave-offering is more general, implying consecration to God, for it was waved before the Lord. A gift might therefore be termed both a heave-offering and a wave offering; but every wave-offering could not be also called a heave-offering. To heave required a residue from which it was lifted up; to wave, the gift itself only was requisite. When the people were permitted to contribute of their substance for the tabernacle, their gifts were called heave-offerings (Ex. xxv. 2, 3; xxxv. 5, 21, 24; xxxvi. 3-6), for they offered of their possessions; but in Exodus xxxv. 22; xxxviii. 24, 29, the gold and the brass which they brought were called wave-offerings, because consecrated to the service of God. Again, in Leviticus ix. 21, we read of the breasts and right shoulder of the peace-offerings of the congregation, at the consecration of Aaron and his sons, being waved before the Lord. But in Exodus xxix. 28 the breast and right shoulder are termed a "heave-offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace-offering, even their

heave-offering unto the Lord;" for looked at as a part of the sacrifice of their peace-offering, they could together be called a heave-offering. The distinction between these terms is clear, and always kept up; for whilst, as above, the breast and the right shoulder could together be called a heave-offering, scripture, when describing them as separate portions, with one exception, noticed lower down (Num. vi. 20), speaks of the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder; for the whole breast was waved, but only one shoulder was heaved. A portion of that which the shoulders symbolise was thus claimed by God, whilst all that the breast shadowed forth was declared to belong to Him. By the shoulder, capability for service seems to be symbolised; and by the right shoulder, that that, which was best able to bear the burden, should be yielded up to Him. (See Gen. xlix. 15; Josh. iv. 5; Ps. lxxxi. 6; Is. ix. 4, 6; x. 27; xxii. 22.) Compare also Nehemiah ix. 29; Zechariah vii. 11, where disobedience is described as "withdrawing the shoulder." By the breast affection would appear to be symbolised. The heave-offering included the right shoulder of the peace-offering (excepting in the case of the Nazarite referred to below), and one* out of the whole oblation which accompanied the animal offered up as a peace-offering (Lev. vii. 11-14); the first of the dough (Num. xv. 20), and the tithes (Num. xviii. 24), including the corn, wine, and oil for the priests' use. (Neh. x. 39.) Besides these regular heave-offerings, the atonement-money when the congregation were numbered (Ex. xxx. 13-15), the Lord's portion of the spoil of Midian (Num. xxxi. 29), and the king's present, and that of his counsellors, with the offering of the children of Israel for the second temple (Ezra viii. 25), are called heave-offerings. And when the land shall be divided among the tribes afresh, the portion to be set apart for the Levites and the sanctuary will be regarded as a heave-offering. (Ezek. xlv. 6, 7; xlviii.) Differing as these offerings do the one from the other, they have one feature in common, namely, that they are all portions taken out of a residue, whether of fruits, of animals, of money, or of land, and as such are called heave-offerings.

{*For the constituent parts of the oblation see Leviticus vii. 11-14.}

Turning to the wave-offerings, beside the breast of the peace-offering, and the rites at the consecration of Aaron and his sons, already referred to, there was the sheaf waved before the Lord, the first-fruits of the harvest, on the morrow after the sabbath in the passover week; and the two wave-loaves, with their accompanying sacrifices, offered in the feast of weeks. (Lev. xxiii. 10, 17-20.) In addition to these were the offering of the leper on the eighth day of his cleansing (Lev. xiv.); the jealousy-offering (Num. v.); that of the Nazarite at the completion of his vow (Num. vi.); and the taking of the tribe of Levi for the service of the priests in lieu of all the first-born of Israel. (Num. viii.)

Understanding by the act of waving before the Lord consecration to Him, the breast of the peace-offering was waved in token that the affections should be, and in Him whom the sacrifice prefigured would be, consecrated to God. So also the waving of the sheaf on the morrow after the passover sabbath, typified the sanctification, or consecration, as risen from the dead, of Him who is the first-fruits (1 Cor. xv. 23), and who rose on that day. At the expiration of the seven weeks, the two loaves baked with leaven were brought out of Israel's habitations, and were waved before the Lord with the prescribed offerings. But here we meet with a most significant injunction. They were waved with the sacrifices still entire, though killed. Death had taken place, but not dismemberment. The whole animals were waved with the two loaves. (Lev. xxiii. 19, 20.) Remembering what these two loaves typified — the Jew and Gentile together offered to God as the first-fruits of the harvest (James i. 18), we can see the reason of this peculiar feature in that

day’s ritual, the whole animals waved, but waved after death. Those who compose the church are thus, as it were, consecrated to God as a whole. But since the church was only formed after the resurrection of the Lord, and has its standing in resurrection, the animals were first killed, and then waved. Death took place before the significant act of consecration was performed. Then, death having taken place, the animals were waved whole before the Lord by the priest, presenting thus in type the saints who form the church as a whole consecrated to God, belonging for evermore to Him. The sacrifices of the leper on the eighth day of his cleansing bring before us another thought, beautiful surely, because true, and clearly shadowed forth in the act of the priest. In the leper cleansed we have an individual formerly redeemed, now restored to communion with God’s people. The disease which had its seat in his flesh having broken out, he had been put outside the camp; but healed, the priest had looked on him, and pronounced him clean, and his offerings had to be completed on the eighth day of his cleansing. "And he shall take two he-lambs without blemish, and one ewe-lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour, for a meat-offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil . . . and the priest shall take one he-lamb, and offer him for a trespass-offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord: and he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin-offering and the burnt-offering, in the holy place; for as the sin-offering is the priest’s, so is the trespass-offering; it is most holy." (Lev. xiv. 10, 12, 13.) On the day of Pentecost they waved the sacrifices after they had been killed, here the trespass-offering was waved with the log of oil before death. Why this marked difference? In both cases the whole animal was waved, to show that all connected with, or typified by, the sacrifice should be held as consecrated to God. In the case of the leper, however, the living animal was waved, to show that man as alive on earth should be really given up to God. Redeemed in grace, a member of the assembly which had God dwelling in their midst, all his life ought to be consecrated to God. In this he had failed, so the offering waved was a trespass-offering, not a peace-offering. The peace-offering spoke of communion enjoyed, the trespass-offering, of communion interrupted by sin on the part of the offerer. With the trespass-offering there was waved a log of oil, with which the quondam leper was to be anointed on the tip of his right ear, his right thumb, and the great toe of his right foot, and the rest of the oil in the priest’s hand was poured over him, in token that now his ear must hear, and his hand act, and his feet walk, as directed by the word of God, and the rest poured over him, to show that whilst he had failed before, he was evermore to remember he had been consecrated to God. The jealousy-offering, too, was waved. The charge against the woman was one of unfaithfulness to her husband, so the offering (a tenth part of an ephah of barley-meal) was waved before the Lord. Consecration to her husband as his wife should characterise her: this the offering spoke of, and this her husband had charged her with violating. So the priest was to take the jealousy-offering from her hand, and wave it before the Lord. (Num. v. 25.) In the Nazarite we have special consecration, separation unto the Lord. When that time of special dedication was ended, the Nazarite presented himself at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and brought his sin-offering, his burnt-offering, and his peace-offering, with the accompanying meat and drink-offerings. The sin and burnt-offerings having been properly offered up, he presented his peace-offering, a ram, with the basket of unleavened bread. The ram was brought because it was a question of special dedication to God, just as in the consecration of the priests, the ram of consecration was enjoined to be offered up. When the ram had been killed and dismembered, the right shoulder sodden, with one unleavened cake and one unleavened wafer, was placed in the

Nazarite’s hand by the priest, and then waved by him (that is, the priest) for a wave-offering before the Lord. (Num. vi. 19, 20.) In the ordinary peace-offerings the shoulder was heaved with the cakes, here it was waved; for this offering did not spring from a thankful heart rejoicing in its blessings, and desiring to present something of its substance to the Lord in recognition of His goodness; but it was the public declaration that the time of special separation to God had ended, so the right shoulder, with the cakes, was waved before the Lord. The man had been wholly separated by his vow to God; now he was to pass out of that state which he had voluntarily entered. Hence all was waved, not heaved, and the shoulder symbolising service was the portion commanded thus to be offered.

One more wave-offering has to be noticed — that of the Levites, taken for the Lord’s service, instead of the first-born in Israel. When that was done in the wilderness, the Levites did not only bring a burnt-offering and sin-offering, but were waved by Aaron as an offering themselves. "And Aaron shall wave the Levites before the Lord for a wave-offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord." (Num. viii. 11, 13, 15-21. See marginal reading.) On that day all the Levites were publicly consecrated to God’s service — all the first-born in Israel belonged to Him (Ex. xiii. 2), but He accepted the Levites in their stead, as far as they would go, man for man. A heave-offering here, as in the other cases, would have been out of place. It was not some of the first-born whom God claimed, nor some of the Levites that He accepted. He claimed all the first-born, but took all the Levites, as far as they would go, in their stead, a wave-offering of the children of Israel.

Comparing the different passages, then, in which the heave-offerings and wave-offerings are mentioned, the distinction between them comes out, and the teaching regarding more especially the latter is made plain. We see that the language of scripture is indeed accurate, and may note in this, as in other things, that the substitution of one term for another (often found in the writings of men) would introduce confusion in the things of God, and mar the beauty of the lessons intended to be conveyed by the divine author of the book.

03.09. Chapter 9. Drink-offerings

Chapter 9. Drink-offerings

Drink-offerings, like burnt-offerings, were known amongst men before the giving of the law. At what period they were first introduced, or on what occasion a drink-offering was first poured out, are facts shrouded in obscurity; for we read not of them till the days of Jacob, and then not till his return to Bethel from Padan-aram, where God had on a former occasion spoken to him. There, on the stone he set up for a pillar, he poured out, as far as we know, his first and only drink-offering. In this action however there was method and perception. He knew evidently when to erect a pillar, and when to pour out a drink-offering thereon.

He set up pillars several times in his life — a favourite practice, it would seem, with him. He erected one by Galeed, east of Jordan, to stand as a witness of divine intervention on his behalf, and which served with the heap, raised by him and his brethren, to point out the boundary, across which neither he nor Laban were to pass to the injury of the one by the other. (Gen. xxxi. 24, 25, 52.) He set up another on Rachel's grave, in the way to Ephrath (Gen. xxxv. 20), an abiding memorial to point out the spot where the body of his beloved was laid. But neither at Galeed, nor at Rachel's grave, did he pour out a drink-offering. It was not the fitting time, nor were they the places for such an expressive action, and doubtless he understood that. His action in erecting a pillar at Galeed betokened his sense of the propriety of having a monument pointing heavenwards, to remind all whom it might concern of that eventful passage in the history of Isaac's younger yet favoured son. The pillar on Rachel's grave, erected by her sorrowing husband, attested his deep concern in what had there taken place. Years however before he had thus left his mark at Galeed, a pillar had been erected by him at a place afterwards to be known by the name of Bethel, that is, God's house; a name which he on that occasion gave it, where God had just bestowed on the benighted traveller (Gen. xxviii. 11) promises of the land, of a numerous seed, and of divine protection. Here he did not content himself with raising up the stone for a pillar, but he anointed it likewise, owning thereby that to him it was holy and consecrated ground. Yet he did not then pour out a drink-offering thereon. Had he trusted God implicitly, he might have done that; but evidently, from the compact Jacob made with Him, to be fulfilled if He really brought him back to his father's house in peace, Rebekah's son manifested a want of trustfulness in the promises of God.

Galeed and Rachel's grave were places ever to be remembered; so was Bethel, but with this difference, not only was it henceforth to be connected with the fortunes and history of the patriarch, but he had learnt to look on it as God's house, where He had unexpectedly to Jacob discoursed with him. Years passed away before he re-visited that spot in Canaan. The sanctity of the place however was indelibly impressed on his mind. It was to Jacob like no other spot on the whole earth. His act of anointing the stone on the first occasion that he visited it makes clear what he thought of the place; and his command to his household, and to all that were with him, to put away the strange gods that were among them, and to be clean, and to change their garments, when he was about to re-visit it, showed that his thought about it had remained unchanged.

Arriving there he built an altar, which he had not done before, and during the night God appeared to him, and confirmed and even amplified in detail what He had on the former occasion promised him. So now, his heart being full, the patriarch sets up again a pillar; but this time, before anointing it, he poured out a drink-offering upon it. It was one thing to start forth on his journey from Bethel to visit lands to him unknown with God's promises given, but as yet unfulfilled; and quite another thing to be there on his homeward journey with wives, children, and a plenitude of earthly possessions, such as one engaged in pastoral pursuits would most value. What then he did not do before that he does now. It was fitting to erect a stone for a memorial, of that he felt sure. It would be proper, too, to repeat his former act, and to anoint the pillar in token of the place being to him and his family a holy one. But more than that was needed. God had confirmed promises made on the occasion of his first visit to Bethel, and the patriarch could see in his altered and improved outward circumstances proofs in a measure of the fulfilment of that which awaited its complete accomplishment. Hence in his eyes the time had come to pour out a drink-offering, in token of his joy in that which God had so graciously bestowed on him. So he poured out his drink-offering on the stone, and that before he anointed it. On his first visit to Bethel, the holy character of the place struck him — God was in it. On his second visit the grace and faithfulness of God were prominently before him; so his first action after again erecting the pillar was one expressive of the feelings of his heart, called forth by what God had just said to him.

Many years intervened between that visit to Bethel and Jacob's dying communication to his children in Egypt; but we never read of a similar act on his part to express the feelings of his heart. Halting on his journey to Egypt at Beersheba, he offered sacrifices there unto the God of his father Isaac (Gen. xlvi.); the number and the character of which are to us unknown. It is evident however, that he sacrificed with no niggardly hand, for more than one animal must have been slaughtered by him that night; but, though blood flowed freely, no drink-offering, it would seem, was brought by the patriarch on that occasion. He sacrificed at Beersheba before God spake to him; he raised up the pillar at Bethel after God had appeared to him. A drink-offering with the sacrifices would have been, judging from the order at Bethel, an anachronism. For he poured it out, not to ask for a favour, but in token of his joy at receiving one.

Then too he had returned to the land, now he was about to leave it: so, though starting forth on his journey to Egypt by divine permission, with promises of divine protection and assurances of a return to the land given to him and to his seed, we can understand from the character of Jacob, as previously developed, that, even after he had received God's gracious communication, he was not in that condition of spirit which required for its manifestation, and to give itself vent, the pouring out a drink-offering, which told not less plainly what was in the heart, than the clearest enunciation of the human voice.

Turning over the pages of the word in chronological order, we read next of what Job was accustomed to do in the way of sacrifice for his children after their festal celebrations, each one of his day; and what God commanded his three friends to offer on their own behalf. (Job i.; xlii.) In neither chapter however are drink-offerings mentioned. Nor is this surprising: for as we learn from the ordinance about them, subsequently given to Israel, they were never commanded to be brought when men sacrificed on account of sin. And it was on account of sin that burnt-sacrifices were provided by Job for his sons, and were offered up by his friends. The patriarchal period ended, we next meet with sacrifices on the occasion of the visit of Moses' father-in-law to the

camp of Israel at Sinai. That time Jethro officiated as priest (Ex. xviii. 12); but neither then, nor subsequently when by the lawgiver's command the young men offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings under the hill, at the ratification of the covenant with the Lord by the congregation of Israel, have we any hint of the patriarch Jacob's example at Bethel having been followed by those encamped in the wilderness of Sinai. Certainly on the latter occasion, when the people had the blood of the covenant sprinkled on them in token, of what they deserved, and incurred if they failed in the performance of it, a drink-offering would have been quite out of place. From the time of Jacob, then, till the erection of the tabernacle, and the consecration of Aaron and his sons to minister at the altar, that simple but telling rite is never mentioned in the word. From the day however that the Aaronic priesthood was fully established, no day was to pass on which a drink-offering could be omitted. It was always in season in connection with the morning and evening burnt-offering (Ex. xxix. 40-42); for there was that in type offered up every day on the brazen altar, which was fitted to cheer the heart of every one who understood anything about it. And now we are taught of what the drink-offering was to consist — strong wine, to be poured out unto the Lord (Num. xxviii. 7); for wine it is, as Jotham in his parable expresses it, "which cheereth God and man." (Judges ix. 13.) And surely there was that in type on the altar, which was eminently fitted to do this, the lamb of the burnt-offering, foreshadowing the perfect surrender of the Lord Jesus Christ to do His Father's will.

Let us pause here a moment to contrast the action of Jacob with the injunction of the law. Jacob out of the fulness of his heart, of his own voluntary will, without any divine command, poured out his drink-offering on the stone. God on the other hand enjoined the drink-offering as an invariable accompaniment of the daily burnt-offerings. Jacob's action was dictated surely by what he felt at the communication made to him, and the favour he already enjoyed. But the drink-offering under the law, being commanded by God, could not be considered as the measure of the people's joy in the sacrifice on the altar. It did surely portray what those concerned in the sacrifice might feel; but their measure of apprehension, and their joy in that which the lamb pre-figured, fell doubtless far short of the mark. And we must admit that our apprehension of the work of Christ, and the joy therefrom derived, falls far below that which God discerns and has found in the sacrifice of His Son. The measure of the offerer's joy did not then govern the measure of the drink-offerings; but the drink-offering expressed the full measure of joy, which could be found in that which the burnt-offering prefigured. Now as none but God could fully estimate that, He it was who prescribed in the law how much wine was to be poured out each morning and each evening in connection with the daily burnt-sacrifices. Jacob's drink-offering was not connected with a sacrifice. Under the law the drink-offering with a meat-offering was the invariable adjunct to the morning and evening oblation, and we never read of a drink-offering commanded apart from a sacrifice. Jacob then gave expression to what he felt. The drink-offering under the law typified what those concerned in the sacrifice on the altar might feel.

Turning back to the law, we learn that, though at times we may concentrate our thoughts on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in one or other of its aspects, as set forth in the different sacrifices which typified it, yet to have a just estimate of its value, so as to share in the joy which flows from it, we must ever remember His life as manifested on earth before the cross. Of this the meat-offering, which accompanied the daily burnt-offering was a type. His death we should remember; but who it was who died, as evidenced by His life, must ever be kept in view. When

both are before us, His life and His death, the drink-offering finds its place. But no drink-offering was commanded apart from the sacrifice. No drink-offering was enjoined in connection with the meat-offering by itself. No drink-offering would the sons of Aaron have poured out in connection only with the animal on the altar. A whole Christ, as it were, must be before the worshipper before a drink-offering would be in place. When that was before the eye and the heart, the drink-offering was not to be withheld: the wine which cheereth God and man could then be poured out in token that in the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and died, there was that which gave joy to God, and in which those by whom it was offered could share. And as atonement was portrayed in type upon the altar, God made known that men could have joy in common with Him, though only in connection with, and with reference to, that which the sacrifice on the altar prefigured. And this was to hold good for Israel, for those born in the land, and for the stranger which sojourned with them as well. (Num. xv. 13-15.) Yet, never, let it again be observed, was this offering commanded to be brought apart from the sacrifice on the altar, though Israel, it would seem, did separate the two in their idolatrous rites. But not only was the drink-offering to accompany the daily oblation, for in Numbers xv. we are instructed that, after the children of Israel had entered their land, as often as anyone, whether of the race of Israel or not, brought a burnt-offering of the herd or of the flock, a sacrifice in performing a vow, or a free-will offering, and at Israel's solemn feasts, a meat-offering and a drink-offering were to be the accompaniment for every animal offered up. In Exodus xxix., where the daily burnt-offering was spoken of, the measure of the drink-offering was fixed at the fourth part of an hin of wine. In Numbers xv. however, we learn that the measure of the wine varied with the size of the animal. But though it varied with the size and character of the animal offered up in sacrifice, it always corresponded to the amount of oil appointed to be used in the accompanying meat-offering. The offerer knew that he had to increase his drink-offering the larger the animal he brought; but the measure of oil, appointed for the accompanying meat-offering, was the measure of wine, which he had to provide for the drink-offering. From this rule we read not of any deviation, and its propriety we can surely discern. For if the wine was the expression of joy to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ in His life and in His death, the measure of joy derived therefrom corresponded to the measure of the Holy Ghost within Him, of which the oil in the meat-offering was typical.

Thus corn, wine, and oil, products of the earth, were all called into requisition with the slain animal, either to delineate what He was, or to express what was found in Him. In Christ, and in Him alone, of all who ever trod this earth, was there no failure. His life, His ways, His acts, fully corresponded to the Holy Ghost in Him. Hence joy in Christ was, and is, exactly proportionate to the Spirit which dwelt in Him. In His life, and in His death, He acted throughout only as led of the Holy Ghost.

Such then was the drink-offering under the law, foreshadowing the joy which God and man could find in the man Christ Jesus. A common subject of joy then there is between God and us, but its measure varies not with our apprehension of what there is in His Son to delight the heart. God has told us what the measure is which can be found in that perfect, spotless One, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. What an idea of God's delight in His Son do the sacrifices of sweet savour bring before us! Noah was a perfect man in his generations. Job had none like him in all the earth. Abraham was called the friend of God, and on him, to order his house aright, God declared He could count. David was the man after God's own heart. But each of these, though thus described by God, fell short of answering perfectly to what a man on earth should be. The Lord alone has done that; and the measure of the drink-offering, varying, but always

commensurate with the oil of the meat-offering, tells it us in type, as His life and His death afterwards exemplified and proved it. Thus what the Lord was, as made known by the New Testament, sheds a bright light on the types and shadows of the Old. And now for a time all such offerings as the law enjoined have ceased, to be renewed however when God again takes up Israel as His earthly people. Then sacrifices will be offered up afresh on the altar, and drink-offerings of wine be poured out again to the Lord. (Ezek. xlv. 17.) And Israel surely will have understanding as to their meaning, and partake intelligently in God’s joy in Christ, as derived from His life and from His death. And then too will they see, as we can now, how abhorrent it must have been to the Lord, when that action, which expressed joy in the Lord Jesus, was made use of in connection with idolatrous rites, of which Jeremiah so often complains. They burnt incense, he tells us, and poured out drink-offerings to the queen of heaven, and to the false gods. Incense spoke of the merits of Christ, drink-offerings (as we have seen) of the joy to be found in the life and death of the Lord Jesus; yet the people by the incense they burned to idols, and the wine they poured out (Jer. vii. 18; xix. 13; xxxii. 29; xliv. 17), professed by their action to have learned the merits attaching to false gods, and to have found joy in a rite which, little as they knew it, was really the worship of demons. (1 Cor. x. 20.) What an insult it was to God, and to Him who was represented in the sacrifice, for Israel to give drink-offerings to idols! We understand the heinous character of such a practice, when we learn what the offering, as appointed by God, really expressed. And we can enter into Joel’s sorrow, when the meat-offering and drink-offering were withheld from the house of the Lord. It was true, as he exclaimed, "Joy and gladness are cut off from the house of our God." (Joel i. 16.)

03.10. Chapter 10. The Crucifixion

Chapter 10. The Crucifixion (Matthew xxvii. 38-52.)

Turning from the Old Testament to the New to investigate the subject of sacrifice, we turn from types to the antitype, from the shadows to the substance, from the laws about the sprinkling of the blood of bulls and goats, to the history of the shedding of the blood of Christ, God's own Son, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. In the Old Testament we have traced out God's gracious provision for fallen man — a sacrifice; in the New we learn what man really is, as God saw him from the earliest days of his disobedience and estrangement of heart. In the cross is displayed God's great love, and how far it could go on the sinner's behalf; and, at that same cross was brought out, in a manner never before manifested, what man is, as his treatment of God's Son is set forth by the inspired historians. That the heathen, who were without God, should persecute in ignorance God's Son, might not have surprised any of us. But, to learn that He appeared on earth among His own people according to the flesh, and found that His bitterest enemies and most determined opponents were the chief priests and Pharisees, affords proof of the utter corruption of man's heart (however richly he may be blessed on earth, or highly favoured with a divine revelation), which could not otherwise have been credited. Knowledge even of the word of God, unless the Holy Spirit applies it to the soul, cannot impress his heart, nor temporal blessings, however great, subdue his enmity to what is of God. The rulers of the Jews knew Messiah would come; in Christ, too, they saw One who did good to all who were in want of it, as no man had ever before done; yet many a time did they attempt His life, and at last succeeded in their design. Had Pilate hearkened to the entreaties of his wife, or acted in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, he would have saved the Lord from death; for the chief priests it was and the elders, who "persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." (Ver. 20.) It was in obedience to the popular cry, reiterated when Pilate had remonstrated, and to show his fidelity to the Roman Emperor, that, though conscious it was from envy the Jews had delivered Jesus unto him, he handed Him to the soldiers for immediate execution.

Crucified between two thieves, but recently scourged, and unable alone to bear His cross to the place of execution (Luke xxiii. 26) surely it might have been supposed that at the sight of His sufferings, man's enmity would have been changed into pity, and his bitterness have given way to compassion. Three people were crucified together, but to one only do we read that revilings and taunts were addressed, and that one was the Lord Himself. Had they taunted the thieves, it would not have been surprising, for they had offended against society; but He had only "gone about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Had they reviled them all indiscriminately, it might have been set down to popular ignorance. But the Lord Jesus alone was thus treated, and none of the chief priests, who witnessed what took place, interfered, that we read of, to check the malice of the people, or to lift up a voice on His behalf. Man, there unrestrained by God's hand, showed of what he was capable. The passers-by "reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Power manifested would in their eyes be proof of His

divine Sonship. To their taunt He vouchsafed no reply; but, because He was God’s Son, He remained on the cross. They associated power with Sonship. He owned that obedience was involved in the relationship, and showed His perfect obedience to the will of His Father by staying on that cross. They knew not the value of their words as they thus reviled Him. How could the Son have acted in contravention of the Father’s will? Their words spoke of relationship, which, if real, implied subjection to the Father. Their use of them at such a time proved how little subjection to the Father was in their thoughts. "Save thyself." Such language revealed the current of their thoughts, that self, not the Father’s will, should be the guiding principle for man’s conduct. Unconsciously, surely, by this they justified the sin of Adam and Eve, and proved their descent from them, begotten in Adam’s likeness.

Another class of the people of Israel witnessed Him, who was the sacrifice, offering up Himself, and as they witnessed His sufferings, they mocked Him. It was the chief priests, and scribes, and elders who said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." They acknowledged His works done on behalf of others, yet refused to admit the claims which those works substantiated. Of His life on earth they were not ignorant — of His acts of kindness and power they could speak. Those acts testified that He was God’s servant — the Christ — as the men who professed to expound God’s word should have known; yet they asked, after all they had heard and seen, that His claim to be the Messiah should be settled by His immediate descent from the cross. Power exerted for the benefit of others was a proof of His Messiahship — power, put forth to save Himself from death when on the cross, was never predicted as a proof that the King of Israel was on earth. They rejected what the word of God would have led them to look for, and asked for a sign which no prophet had authorised them to expect. It was right to connect the presence of the King with the display of power, but it was wrong to connect it with the exercise of that power to save Himself. The passers-by had proved their ignorance of the subjection due from the Son to the Father — the chief priests here showed their ignorance of the word of God; and, stranger than all, they unwittingly fulfilled the Psalms as they taunted Him with being forsaken of God. (Compare v. 43 with Ps. xxii. 8.) How strange that those who professed to teach from the word should have fulfilled the prediction, as they hurled at Him this taunt, the bitterest and most cruel of all. If such was the conduct of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, can we wonder at what follows? — "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."

What an exhibition, then, have we of man, the religious man by profession, as the Jew was; and the educated man, who professed to know God’s word, as the chief priests and the scribes. They had crucified the Lord between two thieves, but, by their behaviour to Him, they proved themselves to be the true companions of those whom they had associated with God’s Son. Man’s trial of four thousand years was ended. He had acted as the tool of the enemy, and driven out God’s Son from the world He had originally created; for Jesus, "when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."

What could God do under such circumstances? That He should immediately act in power, who had been a silent spectator of man’s atrocity and sin, was only what could be expected. He did act in power, for we read, "And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." But, whilst acting in power, He did not act in judgment against man, because He had acted in judgment against His own well-beloved Son. For

during that time of darkness, mysterious to man, when all nature mourned for the death of the King,* brought about by the creature's iniquity, whilst men on earth, as far as we read, were silent — awe-struck apparently by the strange, unnatural gloom in which the land was enveloped — God's well-beloved Son, who had always done on earth that which pleased His Father, was experiencing the full weight of God's anger against sin. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Death took place, the death of the sin-offering, and the shedding of that blood without which there could be no remission; but, now shed, the ground was laid, and all could see it, on which God could publicly deal in grace with those who deserved His everlasting wrath. Here, then, we learn, at the earliest possible moment at which it could be displayed, what that sacrifice is in God's sight, and what He can do in consequence.

{*There are passages in Ezekiel xxxi. 15; xxxii. 7, 8, which may help us to understand the suitability of the darkness at the time of the Lord's crucifixion. The language of Ezekiel is figurative, the language of the evangelists must be taken in its literal meaning. God by the prophet spoke of the mourning of nature at the fall of the Assyrian, that great cedar which towered over all; and at the fall of the Egyptian monarch, "the young lion of the nations." If such language could be used even figuratively concerning the fall of such monarchies, how suitable and expressive was that supernatural darkness when the true King of Nations (Rev. xv. 3, margin), under whose rule alone all can be blessed, was about to leave the world by death!}

"The veil was rent." By His command it had been erected; by His power it was rent in twain, Under the eye of the mediator of the first covenant that veil had been first erected; because of the sacrifice of Himself, the Mediator of the new covenant, the veil was rent in twain. He who had caused it to be erected, alone had authority to part it asunder. He caused it to be reared up when first there was a redeemed nation on earth. He caused it to be torn asunder when first redemption by blood had been accomplished. So soon as the Lord had died, there was manifested in the temple what had taken place on Calvary. Outside the gate the Lord had suffered, but inside the sanctuary God showed what His death was in His sight, as the rent veil betokened the way into the holiest, opened out for sinners, by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Outside, in the most public manner, God also acted, as inside the temple He had severed in twain the veil; and the earthquake which took place told of something extraordinary that had come to pass, for "the rocks rent, and the graves were opened." "By man came death." The existence of graves bore witness to his sin, and its temporal consequences — death. "By man came also the resurrection of the dead." The graves, opened by divine power on that day, illustrated this truth. By divine power were they opened, not by power from within, the inhabitants forcing their way out; for though the graves were opened by the rending of the rocks and the earthquake, none of the saints arose till after the Lord's resurrection, an earnest of what will be when the present resting-place of the bodies of God's saints shall be tenantless, and death be robbed of its prey. Thus, before the descent from the cross, and the Lord's entrance into the grave, by the exercise of divine power, there was seen, what through the sacrifice was effected, namely, entrance for sinners as worshippers into God's presence, and recovery from the grasp of death. The consequences on earth of man's sin were not removed; but what he had lost by the fall he could enjoy in a new way, and what he had incurred by sin he could see the way out of. Before the fall Adam could hold direct intercourse with God in the garden. After the death of God's own Son, the sinner could be admitted into the holiest of all. By sin man was brought under the power of death; by the

atonement the way out of death, not return from it, was made plain to all God’s saints.

Without the intervention of a prophet, without the sound of a voice, God spoke on that day in terms all may understand. Man, by his acts and words, had testified of his deserts; God, by the exercise of power, without the utterance of a syllable, proved what the death of Christ was in His sight, as He thus acted on man’s behalf. Great was the convulsion of nature, yet we learn not of any disaster. No house engulphed its inmates, no tottering wall fell on the passer-by. Power was displayed — all must have felt it; not, however, to make man suffer according to his deserts, but to display openly, and that immediately, the blessed results for man of the death of God’s only Son.

03.11. Chapter 11. The Penitent Thief

Chapter 11. The Penitent Thief

Luke 23: 34-46. In the history of the crucifixion as given by Matthew all is dark — unrelieved by the faintest streak of light — till after the Lord Jesus had given up the ghost. In the history of what then took place, as revealed by Luke, there are rays of brightness at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of that wondrous time. In Matthew we have no utterance of our blessed Lord recorded, from the time that He stood before Pilate, and acknowledged that He was the King of the Jews, till He cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." But in Luke we read of what He said to His Father, and the words which He addressed to the thief, and these sayings shed a gleam of light and sunshine on what in Matthew is a picture of midnight darkness, enwrapped in the murky clouds of human wickedness and brutality. In Matthew, as Emmanuel and as Messiah, He is seen rejected, but suffering for men; in Luke, as Son of man, He is presented suffering as Man, yet caring for men. Thus we read in Luke how, on His way to the cross, He took notice of the company of the women which bewailed and lamented Him, and bid them not weep for Him, but for themselves and their children, for the consequences which would follow His cutting off as Messiah. With the cross before Him, He was concerned for the sufferings, justly deserved indeed, of those who would be visited for the great crime about to be perpetrated. For, if such things were done in the green tree — Himself — what would be done in the dry? the Jewish nation, fruitless, sapless, fit only for the burning. On the cross the same spirit was displayed, when He interceded with His Father for His murderers, and assured the penitent thief of the immediate future before him. It was others He thought of, commiserated, prayed for; or to whom He announced the welcome news of companionship with Himself in paradise. From Matthew we learn what God thought of the sacrifice; in Luke we discern who it is that suffered, for He could speak to God as His Father, and yet hold intercourse with the convicted thief. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, yet One with whom the thief would be that day in paradise, He accepted the prayer of the man dying by His side, and granted him more than he had asked. He prayed, and yet answered prayer. He prayed to the Father as the Son, and answered prayer as God. He prayed for others, "Father, forgive them," and spoke to the Father about Himself, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." God, and yet man, the Son from all eternity, having life in Himself, yet surrendering up life on the cross in obedience to the Father’s will, He died in love for sinners — He entreated for them forgiveness. Where before had such language been used? — where had such a spirit been manifested? The Jews might righteously ask for judgment on their enemies — He sought divine forgiveness for His, for a new epoch had commenced on earth, and a spirit very different to that which was consistent with Judaism was now displayed.

If anything could have softened man’s heart, or stopped him in his mad career, surely we might have thought that this prayer for His murderers would have had such an effect. But they gave Him hatred for His good will, hating Him without a cause.

They heard His prayer, yet paused not in their course, for we read in the sentence following it, "and they parted his raiment, and cast lots." The evangelist, by this manner of telling what took place, brings out, in striking contrast, the difference between His spirit and theirs. He had thought of others; the soldiers, intent only on gain, concerned themselves with their share of His garments; and the chief priests and people availed themselves of the opportunity to display the bitter enmity of their hearts.

They were ignorant of the heinousness of their guilt; but He interceded for them, and by His intercession showed His sense of the enormity of their crime. For why ask forgiveness if they had never needed it, why pray for them if they could have procured it for themselves? His act testified of their sin, and His words told of His relationship to God, against whom they had offended.

They were ignorant of what they were doing, therefore He prayed for them; yet their ignorance was no valid plea for acquittal in God’s sight, so that the Lord’s intercession was needful. God does show mercy to those who sin grievously in ignorance of that which is pleasing in His sight; witness Paul, who thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. "I obtained mercy," he writes, "because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." God could be gracious, but He could not gloss over his iniquity; so with them who crucified His Son. And the Lord, by His prayer, showed what their guilt was, whilst He offered up Himself as the true sacrifice, and petitioned the Father for their forgiveness.

Besides addressing His Father, He gave ear to the penitent thief. Had we only His communication to the thief, apart from all else, the grace He therein manifested must strike the most cursory reader; but reading it in close connection with His prayer to His Father, its value is enhanced. He had rightly gauged the measure of their sin who then took part against Him, amongst whom must be classed the thief, now penitent, but lately a reviler, for which, as for his lawless acts, he had need of divine forgiveness. A trophy of grace when the chief priests and people were still deriding the Lord, and the other thief reviling Him, he stood out before all, in the very agonies of death, as a disciple of the crucified and rejected One by His side. He rebuked his companion, acknowledged the justice of their sentence, but fully justified the Lord. "We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss." And, turning to Him, he owned Him as no common man, even the only One who had a kingdom on earth, of which death could never deprive Him. "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

What words were that day uttered at the cross! The Lord interceded for His persecutors, and the-dying thief acknowledged his sin, yet desired to be remembered by the King in His kingdom. Had he been innocent, such words would have been natural; but, being guilty, they must have sounded strange to any who heard them, for in the presence of his future Judge he was not afraid to confess his guilt, nor desirous that it should lie in merited oblivion. How completely was he at ease with the Lord, of whom naturally he had every reason to be afraid. He was a sinner, and he acknowledged it. There was something, however, in the Lord, which gave the thief unbounded confidence in His presence. He did not ask for any sacrifice to be offered up on his behalf; his prayer tells us that he did not feel the want of it, and the Lord’s answer shows us there was no need of it. "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," not into, but in — that is, in the royal pomp and power which belonged to Him who was then, and is still, the King. The thief looked on to a future day, and assuredly that prayer will be manifestly fulfilled; but the Lord, in answer, spoke to

him of what would take place that day. "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Nothing had been done by the dying man to put his sins away. On the cross he had added to the sins of his past life by reviling God's well-beloved Son. But, ere he breathed his last, and indeed immediately after he had given utterance to that petition, the communication was made to him to set at rest for ever all doubts about the future, for the real sacrifice was being offered up by his side, and the effect of it to himself the Lord made known to his heart. "To-day shalt thou be with me," The convicted thief was in the company of the Saviour, and never should they part. But observe the language. There was a difference between them, and He would have the man know it. He did not say, "We shall be together," but "Thou shalt be with me." With Him was the portion of the converted soul, and in paradise. Here, then, we meet with the earliest possible example of the fruit of the atoning work applied to an individual, and the example is a fine one. Of the man's guilt there was no doubt, of his everlasting blessing there can be no two opinions. His confession tells us of the one, the Lord's words assure us of the other. In Genesis iv. we have the earliest possible teaching as to the standing before God of one born in sin; in Luke xxiii. we have the earliest possible proof of the value of the sacrifice to a sinner, of which Abel's lambs were types. So perfect was the work, so all-sufficient the sacrifice, that for ever and ever this converted thief shall know companionship with the righteous One then by his side. What a public testimony this history is to the sufficiency of the Lord's atoning work, to make a sinner meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. "With me," not merely saved, not simply a hope of heaven, but with Christ, the Holy One of God.

"In paradise." There had been one on earth, and Adam had walked in it. In the Old Testament, however it is spoken of as connected only with what is past; in the New Testament we read of it as present and future. "With me in paradise," were the words of the Lord to the thief that day. "To eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of my God," is the same gracious Saviour's promise to those who shall overcome now. Ceasing to be found on earth, there is a paradise elsewhere, and the redeemed — not the innocent — shall enjoy it for ever, eating of that tree in its midst, which would have entailed everlasting misery on Adam and his descendants, had he partaken of it after the fall. The dying man was to enter it that day — Paul was once caught up into it, and the heavenly saints will one day be in it. Forfeited for himself and his descendants by the first Adam, it has been won, and is for ever secured to the saints above, by the obedience unto death of the last Adam. Are we wrong in saying, for ever secured? It is true that the Lord did not say this to the thief. He spoke of the end of that day, but did not speak of the morrow. "To-day," were His words. He told him when that blessed condition would begin, for it must have a beginning, but He spoke not of a time when it was to end. Cannot each one, who reads that history, draw the conclusion? He spoke not of its ending, for it never will end; for ever and ever will that believer be with His Lord, a witness of the exceeding riches of His grace, a vessel fitted to tell out His praise.

Singular must this soul ever be, as the one who was converted when crucified by the side of the Lord, yet his portion with Him is not peculiar to himself; it is for all, and will be shared in by all who, like him, shall have confessed God's Son during the time of His rejection by the world.

03.12. Chapter 12. The One Alternative

Chapter 12. The One Alternative When Christianity first claimed man’s attention, and asserted its divine origin, there was another system of religion indisputably of divine appointment, and confessedly of great antiquity.

Before Romulus had laid the foundation of Rome, and the era of Nabonasser of Babylon commenced, and centuries before the Trojan war, a people had been brought out of Egypt to whom God gave a ritual in the wilderness at Mount Sinai. Miracles, which the Egyptian magicians rightly ascribed to the finger of God, were wrought by Moses, as a witness that Jehovah had sent him to lead forth His people from Egypt. Miracles, which the Jews were unable to deny, were done by the apostles of the Lord Jesus — proofs of their divine mission. In the presence, then, of these two systems of religion — the one inaugurated in the wilderness, the other in an upper room in Jerusalem, the former claiming attention by its imposing display, and acknowledged antiquity; the latter demanding the obedience of all men to its fetching, as God’s provision for the salvation of Jew and Gentile — which were men to follow, to which were even the Jews to be conformed? He who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, was pleased to allow both to exist for a time together, that the superiority of Christianity over Judaism might be seen; and, what the Mosaic ritual pointed to as man’s requirement, might be found supplied in the one sacrifice of which the first teachers of Christianity had to speak.

Between these two creeds there were truths in common, and characteristics somewhat similar. Repentance from dead works, faith in God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead, were acknowledged, and taught, when the Lord appeared on earth. Both, too, spoke of a sanctuary, a sacrifice, and a high priest. The Jews had a sanctuary on earth, recurring sacrifices, and a priesthood, which by reason of death was transmitted from father to son. The followers of the Lord Jesus spoke of a sanctuary in heaven, of one, and only one sacrifice, which had been offered up on earth, and the unchanging priesthood of the Lord Jesus, who ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him. (Heb. vii. 24, 25.) Thus the followers of the Mosaic ritual of necessity took the place of expectants. The sacrifices which were offered up year by year, proved by their recurrence never to have made the comers thereunto perfect. They told of a want, but confessed they could not meet it. The disciples of the Lord, on the other hand, looked back to His sacrifice as all that was needed, and to which no addition could ever be made. They, too, waited, it is true, but not for an effective sacrifice; they waited only for complete salvation, to be fully known when He shall appear the second time. (Heb. ix. 28.) So to turn back from Christianity to Judaism was to take a retrograde step, and in renouncing it, souls were taught that they renounced the only hope of escaping the wrath to come. For men then, when once the truth had reached them, there was really no choice. If they left Judaism, they confessed by their very act that it could not provide what they needed; if they remained in it, they owned by the recurring sacrifices that it had not procured what they wanted. If they left Christianity, what other divine provision was there, which could avail them before the throne of God? This the word of God makes very clear. "If we sin wilfully, after that we have

received the knowledge of the truth [and what is sinning wilfully, verse 29 tells us], there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Outside of Christianity, then, there was nothing for the sinner. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" — a solemn statement, which shuts the door against everything besides the sacrifice of Christ, and tells at the same time what that claimed to effect. How decided is the language, that none should be mistaken as to the future — "no more sacrifice for sins" — then a sacrifice was required; for, why speak of none remaining, if men could get to heaven without one? But, if the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus could not put away sin, nothing else would — the last, the only resource was gone if that had failed. So if men rejected it, they rejected the only sacrifice of divine appointment which ever professed to put away sin, to embrace a future of despair, and the certainty of divine judgment. "There remaineth . . . . but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." With such an alternative, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, or nothing, to stand between the soul and the outpouring of God's wrath, the question might arise — is it sufficient for this end? In trusting to it do I trust to that which can do what I need? Have I in it an effectual shelter from a future of divine vengeance? How full, how clear is the answer! "No more sacrifice for sins," is the statement of God's word, if the atonement made on the cross is rejected. "No more conscience of sins," if that sacrifice be accepted. Without it the worshipper can never be purged; by it he is purged once for all. Imperfection was stamped on the Mosaic ritual, hopeless despair is attached to the final surrender of Christianity, whilst perfection, as to the believer's standing, is ensured by the true reception of it. For, as before the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross, none, which could put away sins, had ever been offered up; so, since that sacrifice has been accomplished, none can be substituted for it. And do we not trace the same hand, and discern the same mind, as we read the ritual of Leviticus, and peruse this portion of the epistle to the Hebrews? At the altar of burnt-offering the sinner could know of his forgiveness; and God desired He should be assured of it. Turning to the cross the sinner can rest satisfied of the complete and everlasting remission of his sins, and the Holy Ghost is a witness of it "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin;" no uncertainty, as far as God is concerned, shall cloud the sinner's prospect. The one meditating apostasy is warned, the believer is assured.

How secure is the basis on which all now rests! The sacrificial ritual, in which man could take part, could never purge the conscience. The one sacrifice — in the offering of which man could take no part — is the only one which can. The priests offered, and that rightly, many sacrifices — the Lord Jesus offered up Himself. And now statements are made concerning believers, which were never made before. Sanctified by God's will through the offering of the body of Jesus once, by that same offering they are perfected for a continuance, and find a way new and living into the holy of holies, which He has consecrated for us by His blood through the veil — that is His flesh. All is ascribed to His sacrifice and work, who is the One in whom the Father is well pleased. All is done for us by a man it is true, but it is the Man Christ Jesus. Sanctified, perfected, forgiven, with boldness to enter the holiest — such is the order traced out. Sanctified, set apart for God; perfected, so complete in standing before Him; forgiven, so at rest about our sins; what could follow, but the free right of entry into the innermost chamber of the sanctuary?

How the Spirit delights to dwell on the perfectness of the sacrifice! Of the sacrifices according to the law, and of the priests that offered them, we learn the hopelessness of trusting to the one, or of

looking to the other. "Can never" is spoken of them; "once for all" and "for ever" is spoken of the sacrifice of Christ. To him who turns from this sacrifice there remains no more offering for sins; for him, who accepts it really, there can be no more remembrance of his iniquities. What need, then, is there of any other? It has done all we want, yet we stop not there. It has done far more than we could have thought of, and procures all that the creature can for ever take in and enjoy.

Abel outside the garden offered up the lambs, and received witness that he was righteous, yet never re-entered paradise. Outside the gate Jesus died, and the holiest is in consequence opened to the believer for ever. Aaron entered the holiest on earth, and found it an unpeopled place, for men could not enter the presence of the divine Majesty. Believers enter by faith the holiest in heaven, and know it is their place for evermore. At Sinai, when God appeared in majesty, the people retreated from the place assigned them, and stood afar off. (Ex. xx. 18-21; Deut. v. 5-27.) Now we read different language. Bounds were set round the mount, which they were not to overstep, lest death should overtake them. We are invited to draw near with true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. And, as the words of the exhortation remind us of what we are in ourselves, they disclose to us what that one offering has done for us who believe. Where man never was before, there we can be, and what he never could have done for himself, that we are made through the work of the Lord Jesus once for all on the cross. From Abel to the cross the different aspects of a sacrifice, such as the sinner needs, have been traced out in the word of God; but whilst each fresh sacrifice told of the want, by none were the requirements of God’s justice and man’s need met, till once in the end of the ages God’s well-beloved Son appeared to put away sin. Then each offering found its antitype in the sacrifice of Christ, and offering a sacrifice for sin ceased, not because the case was hopeless, and nothing could be found to meet the sinner’s need, but because the full atonement had been made, and the value of that sacrifice then offered up remains ever the same in the presence of His Father and our God.

03.13. Chapter 13. Christian Sacrifices

Chapter 13. Christian Sacrifices

During four thousand years sacrifices were offered up, and accepted by God, which told of man's condition as a sinner; for eighteen hundred years God has desired from His people no sacrifices but those suited for saints. Taught of God, men brought the former; instructed by the Holy Ghost, God's children should present the latter. An altar, of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle, is ours now who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This marks a difference between Christianity and Judaism. But, as the priests of the house of Aaron fed on the sacrifices, being partakers of the altar, in spirit in the most holy place (Num. xviii. 10), but in person in the holy place in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation (Lev. vi. 16, 26; vii. 6), so we, as priests, have something to feed on, in the heavenly sanctuary to which we now have access; and, as feeding on what God has provided, should bring the offerings He has appointed, and, strengthened in our souls for service, present those sacrifices with which He is well pleased. When the truth of man's condition by nature as a sinner is apprehended, that he is dead in trespasses and sins, a lifeless soul before God, the folly of his doing anything to earn a title to divine favour, or to commend himself to Him against whom he has been living in rebellion, is manifested and admitted. Life, it is seen, must precede activity. The sinner must be born of God before he can please God. The quickening power of God in grace is as much needed to act on his soul, as the Creator's power was requisite to bring him forth from the womb. This is the lesson which man is slow to learn, and, till he has learned it, if his conscience has been at all aroused, he is the subject of a grievous delusion, attempting as an unsaved soul what none but a saint can effect. The sinner must receive from God; the saint should render to God. For the sinner God has provided and accepted the sacrifice; from a saint He is willing to receive one. The sacrifice of Christ meets all the sinner needs, and because of it, when trusted to, believers have something which they can offer. Of old, in the sanctuary was the appointed place for the worshipper to draw near; now, outside the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ, believers must be found. To one familiar with the history of Israel in the wilderness, these words "without the camp" present no vague idea: for, when the people at Sinai had departed openly from God in making the golden calf, all, who were true-hearted in the midst of the general defection, went outside the camp to the tent which Moses had there pitched. (Ex. xxxiii. 7.) So again, when the Hebrews in the Apostle's day, obedient to Moses, gave heed to the prophet for whom he had directed them to wait (Deut. xviii. 18), they found that their place, like that of the faithful before them, was outside the camp. Profession without life would not do, and obedience to God's word forced them into this trying position. A new place befitted them, as a new calling characterised them. A heavenly calling was theirs, with a place on earth outside the camp. The temple ritual, with the instruments of music David made, they had given up to go outside the camp, but not as silent sufferers from the malice and hostility of their brethren. They bore a reproach, it is true, a reproach which for flesh and blood is hard to bear, they bore His reproach who had suffered without the gate. Jerusalem, Canaan, with all the promises of earthly glory in connection with Messiah on Mount Zion, they gave up; the land, in which they had lived as theirs

by divine favour, they came to regard as no longer their home; pilgrims and strangers, they journeyed forth afresh, like the patriarchs with a home in prospect; like the people in the wilderness, with a country in promise, but of which, though tasting the fruits, they had not the full enjoyment. They had on earth no continuing city, but they sought one to come. What a change this was for them! Peter tells us something of it, as he directs the eye of the faithful among the dispersion from earth and earthly hopes to heaven and the appearing of Christ. As strangers, then, and pilgrims, they went forth outside the camp as to their place; but able to offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of their lips, confessing Christ's name. Often had the temple courts resounded with the service of song; still the same Psalms might be chanted which David composed, and the sons of Korah, generation after generation, had taken up; but the sacrifice of praise which God could now accept, the Apostle lets those believers know, would be continually offered up elsewhere. No time would henceforth be unseasonable, no place unsuited, where a heart, conscious of God's grace, was occupied with His goodness and mercy towards sinners. In the inner prison at Philippi, and at the unusual hour of midnight, that sacrifice was offered and accepted. From the apostle at Rome, as from his brethren in the faith in Jerusalem, it could ascend at all hours to the throne of God. The strangers of the dispersion in Asia Minor could render it, and from the rugged island of Patmos, John, the apostle and evangelist, offered it. (Acts xvi.; Eph. i.; Col. i.; 1 Peter i.; Rev. i.) Without restriction as to time or place, or the frequency with which it might be brought, one condition regarding it was, and is indispensable, "By him," that is, Christ, "let us offer," etc. On the ground of His death, and by Him alone, can any draw nigh with it. Where that is unknown, or He Himself is rejected, no such sacrifice can God receive. It is connected with the Lord Jesus, and with His finished work on the cross. That must be first known, and He must become the object of the soul's faith, before it can offer this sacrifice which God delights to receive. What Paul states, Peter also affirms (1 Peter ii. 5), that spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. He first struck the right note by Whom alone they can be presented. "In the midst of the assembly will I praise Thee" were the words of prophecy, of which we know the fulfilment. He who hung on that cross, bearing God's judgment against sin, was heard and delivered; so, He has sounded the key-note, for those who share in the deliverance and redemption effected by His blood. But varied are the sacrifices the redeemed can offer. Romans xii. 1 tells us of one kind; Hebrews xiii. 16, of others. The mercies of God are the grounds for the one, the word and example of Christ (may we not say it?) furnish them for the others. To do good, to act as He acted, are sacrifices well pleasing to God; to share with God's people what belongs to us, is a service saints can render. On earth the Lord Jesus went about doing good (Acts x. 38), in this we may imitate Him. As on high we shall learn to the full what it is to share with Him, called by God into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord (1 Cor. i. 9), so on earth we may thus follow Him. To give to God, to communicate to His people, to do good to all, these are christian sacrifices, but all closely connected with the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. That alone furnishes the basis on which they can be brought. Because recipients of grace, and conscious of it; because partakers of a new — the divine nature, godlike activity should characterise His saints, and praise proceed from their hearts. The word provides for this, and supposes it. (Eph. v. 19, 20; Col. iii. 16, 17.) But sacrifices attempted to be offered on other grounds, or apart from Him in whom we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, must, like the first-fruits brought by Cain, be rejected by Him to whom professedly they may be presented. For to bring a sacrifice which shall supplement the one offering of Christ on the cross, to ensure the sinner's acceptance, or to

attempt to approach the throne of God apart from the atoning work of His well-beloved Son, is either a denial of the value of that work, or of the truth of God’s holy word. But offering by Him the sacrifice of praise to God, the sufficiency of His finished work is acknowledged, and the soul’s state by nature is thereby confessed. These things really owned, full scope is afforded for the relief of the heart by thanksgiving, and for the activity of the new nature by service. But it must ever be remembered that, what God can receive from His children He will reject when offered by an unsaved soul. Like Israel, His people can bring the first-fruits, which from Cain He would not accept. All, however, whether for sinners or saints is ordered. The former must accept the sacrifice of Christ; the latter, as standing on it for acceptance, are privileged to render the service of praise.

"Jesus, Captain of Salvation, Conqueror both of death and hell!

Thou who didst, as sin’s oblation, Feel what Thou alone couldst feel:

Through Thy sufferings, death, and merit, We eternal bliss inherit, Thousand thousand thanks to Thee, Jesus, Lord, for ever be!"

Chapter 38

04.00. TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES OR 30 Years of Christian Work. BY C. E. STUART, AUTHOR OF "OUTLINES OF THE ROMANS," "FROM ADVENT TO ADVENT,"

TEXTUAL CRITICISM FOR ENGLISH BIBLE STUDENTS," ETC.

04.01. PREFACE.

PREFACE. THE rise and early progress of any remarkable movement must ever have an interest for the thoughtful and the inquiring. We see then some of the original labourers at work. We learn something of the springs of the movement. And, whilst noticing results, we can trace the causes which conduced to its success. If that is true of the many remarkable movements of which this world has been the theatre, what shall we say of the rise and early progress of Christianity? That must ever be to the Christian a study of intense interest. A movement like it has never been known. It started into life with all the energy of a giant, just when to human thoughts the mission inaugurated by its Founder had received its death-blow. It spread without human patronage, and without the aid of human power. The great ones of the earth where it arose, and those who wielded the sword of government in different countries to which it spread, were none of them at first in its favour, but for the most part manifestly hostile. Yet it progressed. Threats, imprisonments, scourgings, tumults, legal prosecutions, and even the fear of martyrdom, were alike insufficient to cow its supporters, or to check their ardour in propagating their views. It was intensely aggressive. It admitted of no compromise with any creed in the world. It claimed to be the true faith; and, as such, alone offering that which was needful for everlasting salvation. It had confessedly truth in common with Judaism, yet was jealous of any Judaising teaching. It alone, it proclaimed, could furnish any inquirer with the full revelation vouchsafed by God, for the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

We have read in the Gospel of Luke of the birth and life on earth of its Founder. The birthplace, however, of the movement recorded in the Acts was really an upper room in Jerusalem, its time was the feast of Pentecost, and its first company numbered one hundred and twenty souls. But the number of its adherents in that city swelled to upwards of three thousand ere its first day had closed. And that remarkable result was effected simply by preaching the Gospel of the grace of God. Soon the company numbered five thousand. Priests and people in Jerusalem and Judsea, and subsequently men and women of wealth and position elsewhere, came under the sound of the preached Word, felt its power, and bowed to it as the truth of God. Never before had people of all classes and various creeds in such numbers given heed to a message from heaven. That a history should be written of such a movement need not surprise us. But, as with another remarkable movement fifteen centuries earlier, only one history has in each case come down, written in the latter case by an eyewitness, and in the former by a contemporary of that which he records.

Profane history of their several dates, as far as preserved to our day, knows little or nothing of the marvels that the inspired historians record. Nor is this to be wondered at. For as with Israel at the Exodus, so with Christians in apostolic times, the conflict lay between them and the ruling powers of their day. Naturally, chroniclers of those times, who recorded the victories of their rulers, were little likely to hand down records of their defeats. And such there were in connection with the struggles against the emancipation of the Israelites, as well as against the rise and spread of Christianity. An authentic history, however, we have of both these epochs. Inspired histories we have to call them, because written under the guidance and by the direction of the Holy Ghost.

Remarkable indeed, as we have called it, was the first movement we have referred to, because it was the springing up, as it were, suddenly of a nation into political existence, with a country in prospect to which they were marching. Yet the second movement was the more remarkable, since it was the taking out of nations of a people to be gathered only to the Lord. In the former case it was the dawn of political life of a nation, born, as it were, in a day. In the latter it was the calling out of an assembly, limited to no country, peculiar to no race, embracing men and women of different nationalities, formerly practising diverse religious rites, and the blending them into one company, uniting all by the tie of spiritual brotherhood, and knitting them close together as members of that one body of which the Head was the crucified One in heaven. Marvellous were some facts in connection with each. The Red Sea had been divided for the passage of the Israelitish host, and the waters of the Jordan were arrested to let the people go over dryshod. That night in the sea and that day in the river channel were surely never forgotten by those who were present. And night after night, too, in the wilderness, a food, hitherto unknown on earth, and never again supplied after Israel rested on the west of Jordan, fell around their camp wherever it was pitched. Yet more marvellous were some of the facts connected with the latter movement. Galilsean fishermen were heard suddenly speaking in languages they had never learnt. They spoke intelligibly, and doubtless fluently. They spoke in the ears of those in whose mother tongue they were expressing themselves. These heard, they marvelled, and attested that the men were speaking in the tongue in which each listener was born. Other marvels there were; for, what had never been known, the shadow of Peter passing along the street was eagerly desired by sick ones to overshadow them, and clothes from Paul’s body conveyed healing virtue to such as had need of it.

Further, the Apostles were imprisoned ; the doors were locked; the keepers outside were on guard; yet the whole company, the Twelve, were brought out by angelic agency, without the knowledge or suspicion of even one of the warders, who were found in the morning to be guarding an empty gaol ! And the Apostles, thus set free, were found continuing their mission, publicly speaking in the court of the Temple "all the words of this life." The rulers now doubted, and well they might, whereunto that would grow. Then Peter, arrested, and imprisoned by the king, and chained to two soldiers to keep him safe, was set free in the hours of night without one of his guards being aware of it. He walked out of the prison unchallenged, and, accompanied by the angel, passed out by the iron gate into the city, which had opened of its own accord. Bolts and bars, soldiers and warders, were alike powerless to detain those whom the Lord would set free. Divine power was working for and with the Christians.

Another startling fact was recorded. The relentless persecutor of the new faith was suddenly converted, and became a most zealous champion of the truth, confounding the Jews as he reasoned with them. The work still spread wider and wider. Gentiles were converted, and Christian assemblies began to be formed outside the land of promise. What the rabble of Thessalonica declared was indeed true - the world was being turned upside-down.

Then at Philippi Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and their feet made fast in the stocks; and though their backs had been lacerated by scourging, unjustly and unlawfully administered, and their wounds remained undressed, yet their spirits were free, and prayers and praises at night poured forth from their lips. The prisoners heard them. Suddenly an earthquake took place. The doors were opened. Every one’s bonds were loosed. The prisoners were free. Yet none escaped. Of liberty, so dear to the captive, no one availed himself. And, stranger than all, the jailor was found

prostrate before those two whose feet he had made fast in the stocks, anxiously inquiring of them the way of salvation. Nor did he ask in vain. The enemy would, if possible, stop the work in Philippi. It burst out afresh, where none would have looked for it - inside the walls of that city's prison.

Then, too, the energy of faith, as displayed in the Acts, must not be forgotten. We see the disciples, when threatened with the rulers at Jerusalem, kneeling together in prayer for boldness to speak the Word. And Paul, stoned one day at Lystra, and drawn out of the city for dead, departed on the next day to preach the Gospel in Derbe. Nothing damped their energies or chilled their ardour. And what shall we say of manifestations of grace - as Stephen praying for his murderers, and Paul and Silas preserving the jailor from impending self-destruction? Ere closing, we must call attention, first, to that touching scene of men, women, and children on their knees on the shore at Tyre, under the open canopy of heaven, commending Paul and his company to the Lord - an open-air prayer-meeting on no common occasion; and, next, to that last meal on board the vessel within sound of breakers, yet not in sight of land, when Paul encouraged the toiling, half-famished company to take food, his faith in the promise of God imparting confidence to all on board. No romance could be more thickly studded with incidents of. the deepest interest than this short, simple, yet truthful narrative of St. Luke, destitute as it is of any rhetorical flourish or wordy embellishment. A history he has, under God, given us which we venture to say is without parallel in the ordinary writings of men. It is the history of the power of the Word of God, that sword of the Spirit wielded by men under the guidance of the Holy Gbost - miracles attesting in the first place the commencement of a new dispensation, and then confirming the word of the first preachers of the Christian faith. To this book, so fruitful in instruction for the labourer and for the ordinary disciple as well, the reader's attention is sought to be directed in the following pages. And may it be that a fresh study of the Acts shall increase in the former his confidence in the power of the Word, and minister to the latter refreshment and comfort, as he recalls the care of the Lord evinced for all those given to Him by His Father.

04.02. INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

"Acts of the Apostles," or the shorter title "Acts," is the designation in one of the oldest uncial MSS. of that book of the New Testament which is the earliest and the only inspired history of the Church of God on record. As to its author there can be no doubt. The writer of the Third Gospel is the writer of the Acts. And the same man for whom that Gospel was written was before his mind when he penned this the later history. Luke is by general consent acknowledged to be the writer of the Third Gospel. He must therefore by consequence be the writer of the Acts, as its opening sentence indicates.

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken [or, received] up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the Apostles whom He had chosen" (i. 1,2). So reads the short introduction. Luke had written an account of the Lord Jesus Christ's sojourn upon earth from His birth to His ascension. He will now write an account of the effect produced in early years by the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell on this earth in the Church of God. For about thirty-three years was the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling here below. Of the Church's history, for the first thirty years of its existence, Luke writes for the benefit directly of Theophilus, and indirectly for all his readers in subsequent ages. Who Theophilus was, in whom the Church historian was so deeply interested, as we have remarked in the companion volume, that on the Gospel of Luke, is now wholly unknown. How Luke became acquainted with him, and where, are facts buried in oblivion. His name only has been imperishably preserved, being embalmed in the pages of Holy Writ. Yet some day we shall see him. He will come with Christ. He will reign with Christ. And the teacher and the pupil will be together in glory, both trophies of Divine grace. We have said we know nothing of Theophilus - of his parentage, of his abode, or of his life. Very different is it as to the historian. Though neither his birth nor his death are matters substantiated by reliable history, we know a good deal about him from the Acts and from the Epistles of St. Paul. But having traced that out, as far as Scripture is our guide, in the volume already referred to, there is no need to repeat it here. We would only now remind the reader that he first joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10); then went with him to Philippi, where apparently he stayed till the Apostle revisited it (xx. 6) ; after which he travelled with him to Jerusalem, sailed with him to Rome, and never left him, that we read of, till the latter's martyrdom.

04.04. The Uncial MSS

The Uncial MSS

Taking the period covered by his Gospel and the Acts together, Luke travels over the first six decades of the Christian era - years these were of eventful interest indeed. Ere the period connected with his Gospel had closed, it became evident, and was openly confessed, that a great prophet had been raised up, and that God had visited His people (Luke 7:16). So declared the multitude of Nain, when the widow's son was brought back to life by the commanding voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. But they thought only of that which concerned Israel, and their words had no reference to anything beyond. In the second part of these eventful decades a new thing was witnessed. God had "visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). So spake James at the first Christian council. Interesting then, how interesting must this history ever be to us ! Yet if the number of uncial MSS. which have preserved its text be any guide to the estimation in which it was formerly held, it must be admitted that it did not meet with that general acceptance which it deserved. For of those containing the whole Gospels or parts of them, we can now reckon up sixty-six. Of those containing the Pauline Epistles, either wholly or portions, only twenty can be cited. But of the uncials which have handed down the Acts, either the whole of the book or but fragments of it, only fifteen in all can be named. Copies therefore of the Acts in the days of uncial writing were evidently in no great request.

Just three uncial MSS. give the Acts entire. These are the Alexandrian in the British Museum, the Vatican at Rome, and the Sinaitic at St. Petersburg. These three are the most ancient MSS. of the New Testament known. Another, the Porphyrian, is later, dating about the ninth century. This uncial contains all the Acts but chapters 1:-ii. 13. Another MS., the Codex Laudianus, we would here notice. Now kept at Oxford, it was once in the possession of Archbishop Laud - hence its name Laudianus - and was by him presented to that University. Written most likely in Western Europe, says Scrivener in his "Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament", p. 159, it may have been brought to England by Archbishop Theodore, and was certainly, it is thought, used by Bede, the celebrated English historian, who died about A.D. 735. It is a bilingual codex, having the Greek text with a Latin translation side by side in parallel columns. It lacks 26: 29 to 28: 26. The other uncial MSS. of the Acts contain but portions, more or less in extent. What is true regarding the uncial MSS. of the Acts is no less true of the cursive MSS. About 638 such MSS. of the Gospels are reckoned up by Scrivener. Of such containing St. Paul's Epistles, he enumerates as distinct copies 295; whilst for the Acts and Catholic Epistles, which are usually found together, the same authority only gives 252. All this bears out the remark of Chrysostom, quoted by Meyer, that the Book of the Acts was much less known and read than the Gospels. The Canon of the New Testament. A few words on the order of the canon of the New Testament may not be out of place. We have said that the Acts and the Catholic Epistles are usually found together in MSS. This is the case in the three oldest uncials - the Vatican, the Sinaitic, and the Alexandrian. Yet as to this order there was evidently no fixed rule, nor was the place assigned the Acts in the sacred volume always that next to the Gospels. For in the Codex Sinaiticus the thirteen Epistles of Paul precede

the Acts and the Catholic Epistles. Again, in the Codex Bezae it is evident that the Catholic Epistles had preceded the history of the Acts. Then in the enumeration of the books of the New Testament, whether by councils or by individual writers, no fixed order obtained. The Gospels, though not always in the same order as we have them, hold the first place. The Apocalypse, if mentioned, for the most part comes last. At times the Acts and Catholic Epistles are mentioned before the Pauline writings ; at times this order is reversed. The council of Carthage (A.D. 397) mentions the sacred books of the New Testament in the following order: the Gospels, the Acts, Paul's Epistles, the Catholic Epistles (James excepted), and the Revelation.

Amongst writers the same diversity obtains. Eusebius (A.D. 315 - 340) mentions the Acts next after the Gospels, and the Pauline Epistles are noticed before mentioning the Catholic Epistles, the order with which by our English Bible we are made familiar. On the other hand, Athanasius (A.D. 326 - 373) and Cyril (A.D. 349 - 386) give the Catholic Epistles a place next after the Acts and before the Pauline Epistles, just the order in those old uncial MSS. the Alexandrian and the Vatican. But Augustine (A.D. 355 - 430) as well as Innocent of Rome (A.D. 402) agree in quite a different arrangement, naming the Acts after all the Epistles and just before the Revelation.* From this it is plain that there never was an arrangement of the books recognised as of Divine or even of canonical authority, though the Acts was unquestionably reckoned by those writers as part of the New Testament canon. * See Wordsworth's Canon of the Scriptures, Appendix A.

04.05. Attacks.

Attacks. Of course, like other books of Scripture, it has been attacked, both in ancient and in modern times. The Ebionites, Severians, Marcionites, and Manichseans quarrelled with it, because it failed to support their special tenets, but were unable to shake the general belief in its genuineness and authenticity. In modern times writers have risen up to question, and more than question, its right to be in the sacred canon as part of inspired Scripture. Yet the Acts remains in the estimation of most as a genuine and inspired history, and really written by Luke. Like a rock in the sea, around which the waves dash themselves only to be broken, whilst the rock remains immovable, so is it with Scripture. It has withstood, and will withstand, all the efforts of men to dislodge it from its position and annul its claim to be a written revelation from above. At times it may have seemed as if its credibility was shaken - like the rock momentarily hidden from view by the spray of the waves which have broken over it. But as that reappears unshaken, whatever has been the violence of the waters, so Scripture will emerge from all siftings and critical examinations as what it really is - the Word of our God. If the attempts of men in early days, soon after the apostolic age, failed to dislodge the Acts from its position as inspired Scripture, attempts in these days of a similar kind will surely fail. Living near the time of the writer, with men still on the earth who had been conversant with the Apostles, or with those who had enjoyed personal acquaintance with them, the early opponents had an advantage to which modern ones can lay no claim. Yet they failed ; and modern attacks on the Acts are witnesses of that. These, then, in their turn will fail, and the book will remain unscathed as long as the Church of God is here below.

04.06. Chronological Data.

Chronological Data.

We have intimated that the history covers about the first thirty years of the Church's existence, and we add that also of the establishment of the form of the kingdom called the kingdom of the heavens, a term with which Matthew's Gospel and the parables contained in it have made us familiar. Yet chronological data is rarely furnished us by Luke. He writes as one who was acquainted with the facts he narrates, introducing a reference to a date here and there, but in nowise as one forming a journal or even a chronicle of the different years. The first distinct reference to a date that we meet with is that of the famine in the days of Claudius Cassar. It lasted a considerable time between A.D. 44-48. Barnabas and Saul, charged with contributions from Christians at Antioch, went up to Jerusalem to convey that token of brotherly fellowship and love. Most probably, having been forewarned by Agabus of its approach, they went up either just previous to its commencement, or in the very early days of that severe visitation. The next date that we can find is that of the death of Herod Agrippa I., which took place A.D. 44. Then we read of the proconsulship of Gallic at the time that Paul was at Corinth. This is set down for A.D. 53. Another, and the last note of time, is the commencement of the procuratorship of Porcius Festus, A.D. 60. Assuming that the outpouring of the Spirit took place at Pentecost in the year 30 A.D., Paul's conversion is set down at A.D. 37. So starting from Pentecost, we have Paul's conversion just seven years after that event. What interesting work had gone on! What surprises were still in store for the saints ! In the next heptad, not only had Samaria received the Word, but Gentiles began to be numbered among the converts, and Antioch, destined to become the chief centre of foreign missionary effort, had been evangelised by earnest men of Cyprus and Cyrene. The first seven years close with the conversion of a persecutor. The second seven years end with the death of Herod Agrippa, who had also played the part of persecutor of the Christians, but in order to ingratiate himself with the Jews. Nine years now roll by, eventful years indeed; for during them the Gospel was planted in Asia Minor, and had reached as far as Corinth, witnessing everywhere to the power of the truth, and of its suitability for Gentiles of every social class, equally with all ranks among the Jews. Seven years more run on, and the Apostle, who had wrought such marvels at Ephesus, is a prisoner of the Romans at Csesarea, kept for the hearing of Caesar. The above are the chief chronological data found in this history, which is a record of God's work on earth by His Word, showing how it spread from Jerusalem and Judaea, first to Samaria, then to Antioch and to Asia Minor, and then to Achaia, the modern Morea, embracing several centres of the heathen world, as Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth, in all of which it gained adherents, winning souls for Christ. Doctrinal disquisitions or treatises on Church truth we shall look for in vain in its pages - the subject of the council at Jerusalem excepted. But we do learn how the Gospel was preached, and what were the great lines of teaching handled by the Apostle Paul. Luke's evident aim was to trace the successive steps of the new movement, carried on under the guidance and personal superintendence of the Holy Ghost, For the labourers in the Word of that day were subject to no human authority in their service, nor were they guided in it by apostolic directions. The work

spread, and manifested itself to be especially of God. Fields opened up, and labourers entered on them, often before the Apostles were aware of the fresh development which was taking place. They heard what had been done, yet for the most part had no hand in directing it. To a detailed study of this interesting history let us now turn. We shall find it embraces acts of Peter (i.-xii.) and acts of Paul (xiii.-xxviii.). These may be said roughly to divide the book. We shall see, too, the opening up of different fields of labour, after attention has been first directed to displays of Divine power in connection with the work in Jerusalem, the book ending with Paul a prisoner at Rome, yet free to communicate to any who came to him truth needful for their everlasting welfare. Hence we might also divide the Acts into three great parts, illustrating respectively the power of God, the word of God, and the grace of God to a failing servant. All this will, we trust, be made apparent as we proceed. We would only here add, that authorities have been consulted, though they are not always mentioned. Meyer as a commentator and Mr. Lewin as a biographer for historical and topographical details have been freely used ; and in quoting the text the Authorised Version has been generally followed, reference being made to the Revised Version where called for.

04.07. SEVEN WEEKS. Act_1:1-26 :

SEVEN WEEKS.Acts 1:1-26: FROM the morrow after the Passover Sabbath seven weeks were to be numbered (Leviticus 23:15); then came the feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, as it is called in the New Testament (Acts 2:1; Acts 20:16 ; 1 Corinthians 16:8), nothing in the Jewish ecclesiastical year of any great moment taking place between. In the year, however, of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection an important event occurred between these feasts, which divided the seven weeks into two unequal periods - viz., forty days and ten days. The Forty Days. - For forty days the Lord was manifested to His disciples as risen from the dead. During those weeks He appeared to them at different times and in different places. On the day of His resurrection five manifestations took place - viz , to Mary Magdalene in the garden, to the women between that and the city, to the two who went to Ernmaus, to Peter, and then to the disciples in the upper room. A week after He appeared again at Jerusalem to the disciples, when Thomas was with them (John 20:26). On a mountain in Galilee He met the disciples by appointment, possibly the five hundred of whom St. Paul writes (Matthew 28:16; 1 Corinthians 15:6). On the shore of the Lake of Galilee He appeared without previous warning, and invited the disciples who had been fishing, but fruitlessly during the night, to come and dine (John 21:1-14). At some time or other He was seen of James (1 Corinthians 15:7). These 14 different appearances, save some of those on the first day, are unnoticed by Luke. But he tells us, what the other writers do not, the general character of the Lord’s communications to His disciples during all that time. His words, writing of these forty days, are as follows : "To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to [or, concerning] the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Though the King had been crucified, vet the kingdom would be established in power; and, what was contrary to all precedents, the crucified One, who had died, would nevertheless return to reign. Deeply interesting must these confidential communications have been. Confidential they may be called ; for no details of them have been committed to writing for our instruction.

Last Words. - The day of His final departure drew near. His last counsels the disciples were now receiving. And being assembled with them, or as the margin gives it, "eating with them," the Lord charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but there to wait for the promise of the Father, "which" - and now Luke quotes the Master’s very Words - "ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptised with water ; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (4, 5). We have noticed the marginal reading; for the earliest versions - the Syriac and the Vulgate - support it. Greek writers, as Chrysostom and Theophylact, accept it; Jerome, too, endorses it; and Meyer, of moderns, adopts it. Without further entering on the question of the meaning of the Greek verb, we may remark that the marginal reading would be quite in character with Peter’s statement to Cornelius and his friends (x. 41), that the disciples ate and drank with the Lord after He rose from the dead. John xxi is the only incontrovertible instance to which we can turn. But Peter’s statement seems to imply that it was not once only that they had eaten with Him after the Resurrection. So it may quite have been that they ate with Him on the occasion to which Luke refers. What seasons

must such as these have been ! Of what grace do they speak ! What freedom, what privilege, allowed the disciples! What interest in them on the Lord’s part! How much might have been recorded had a diary of events been kept ! But such was not to be. And now those opportunities so precious were about for ever to close. The risen but not yet ascended Lord would be in that condition no longer. With just one more question from them, and an answer from Him, their personal intercourse with Him as yet on earth would cease. But we must not anticipate.

Baptism with the Holy Ghost. - Of the baptism with the Spirit as near at hand the Lord now spoke. He had not previously distinctly mentioned it. For it they were to wait in Jerusalem. It would take place for them in the metropolis of Judaism. It was a new and a distinctive Christian blessing. All the disciples would share in it. This baptism John, the son of Zacharias, had first mentioned, and that in connection with the Messiah. "I indeed," he said, when people were musing whether he was the Christ or not - "I indeed baptise you with water; but One, mightier than I, cometh, the latchet of whose shors I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:15-16). A far-reaching view of the Lord’s work the Baptist here takes. For the baptism with fire, as the context in both Matthew 3:1-17 : and Luke 3:1-38 :, where alone it is mentioned, plainly intimates, is connected with the execution of judgment. So it is future. The baptism with the Holy Ghost has taken place, never that we know of to be repeated, though the effects of it continue. Of this baptism John again spoke after he had baptised the Lord (John 1:32-33), having learnt by the fulfilment of the sign given to him, in the descent of the Holy Spirit and His remaining on the Lord, that it was He who would baptise with the Holy Ghost. To this same event the Lord referred in the upper room on the day of His resurrection, when He spoke to the assembled disciples of the power with which they would be endued from on high. Now on the approach of His ascension He openly spoke of their coming baptism. It was near at hand. We have said that this is a distinctive Christian blessing. For we learn from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that by it the Body of Christ is formed. "By [or, in] one Spirit are we all baptised into one Body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free." All real Christians share in this as regards its effects, though all were not present on either occasion when it took place (Acts 2:1-47; Acts 11:15-16). St. Paul was not even converted at the time. Yet he, in common with the Corinthians, came to share in it. So do all real Christians, recipients of the Holy Ghost. This is an important truth ; and the fact that all true believers - 1:e., who share in forgiveness of sins - necessarily have part in it is a very important point. The Last Question. - So far we read of the character of the interview with the disciples during those forty days. Now the time for the last question came. "Lord, wilt [or, dost] Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" His reign in power was in their thoughts. For forty days had He been with them. Was that kingdom, then, near at hand ? Of its advent He had spoken (Luke 19:12-15), and of Jerusalem welcoming her returning King (Matthew 23:39). On things pertaining to the kingdom He had apparently freely discoursed since His resurrection. So now of Israel’s future greatness they inquired. Their question He did not answer. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." An answer this was in character with His words before the cross. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). The distant future was not laid open to them. Of the near future, however, He did speak, and acquainted them with the work to which they were called, In His prayer to His Father He had intimated something of it, as He prayed for those who should believe on Him through their word (John 17:20). On the day He rose He spoke of the going forth of the Gospel of God’s grace, but for that service they were to wait the

promise of the Father (Luke 24:49). At the end of the Gospel of Matthew (xxviii. 19), and that also of Mark (xvi. 15), we learn that nothing less than the world was to be the bounds of the sphere of evangelistic service. Now in Acts 1:8 He tells them of power they would receive by the Holy Ghost coming on them, and then sketched out their widening sphere of labour - Jerusalem, Judsea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. In this order - for Luke in his way is a methodical writer - does the historian narrate the progress of the work. Samaria was evangelised in chap, 8:, after which the work spread, and Gentiles were blessed (x.), and then far and wide the Gospel made its way. The Ascension. The last words had been spoken relative to their work. Then in the act of blessing them, and near to Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, the Lord was parted from them (Luke 24:50-51), and taken up into heaven. They saw Him ascend, but a cloud hid Him from their sight. How far they watched Him going up we know not; but the cloud hid Him from their further view. What, however, they could not see we know. He then ascended far above all heavens, and led captivity captive likewise (Ephesians 4:8-10). Unwitnessed by the world, and unknown to it, He ascended to the right hand of God. But angelic powers were not unaware of it, nor were the principalities and powers of evil unconcerned spectators. His triumph they surely witnessed, and the effect of it they well knew. For He led them captive, and opened up that communication between heaven and earth which never has been closed. And the witnesses of this last to us are the gifts He gives unto men- even instruments for the carrying on of the work of God upon earth till He shall come. A Hope. - God is the God of hope (Romans 15:13). He gives His people a hope. So just at that moment, when naturally the hearts of the little band - the Eleven - might have sunk within them, two men stood by them in white apparel, and spoke words of comfort, seasonable indeed to those who were still gazing upward. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken [or, received] up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). He would return, return in person, and that to earth. And, as we know, on the mountain from which He then ascended His feet shall again stand (Zechariah 14:4). That mountain, consecrated by the impress of His feet on that memorable occasion, will be consecrated afresh, when He shall again stand upon it. The words of those men were enough. They ceased gazing upwards, and returned to the city of Jerusalem, without the Lord. Downcast, shall we say? No. With great joy, as Luke in his Gospel has recorded (xxiv. 52). The hope of His return filled them with joy, in that which naturally we should have viewed as the first hour of their desolation.

Angelic Ministry. Those men were angels. At times in the past God has sent such messengers to communicate with His earthly creatures. Two angels in human form visited Lot, and brought him out of Sodom. The law was ordained by angels, said Stephen (Acts 7:53). With that the Apostle Paul’s statement in Galatians (iii. 19) is in agreement. Often had they appeared on the scene in Israel’s history, ministering at times providentially (1 Kings 19:5), at times communicating something of the Divine will. By this latter service Daniel and Zechariah were especially favoured. In New Testament times Gabriel visited the aged priest Zacharias, and later the Virgin Mary. At the Lord’s birth there appeared first one announcing the glad tidings, and then was heard a multitude praising God (Luke 2:1-52 :). Yet though twice in the Lord’s life He received their ministrations (Matthew 4:11 ; Luke 22:43), they were not used at any time whilst He was on earth as channels for Divine revelation. We can all understand the propriety of that. He died. Again they appeared to minister the information suited for the moment. Those visiting the tomb of the company of the women saw them and heard them, and they carried away the message they were charged by

them to deliver. But during the forty days of the Lord’s presence with His own we read not of angelic ministry. And even on Mary’s second visit to the tomb they retired into the background, and let the Lord discover Himself to her. When He was present, the angels were silent. The Lord ascended. Two angels then immediately appeared, sent to encourage the Eleven by announcing the certainty of the return of Jesus in person. "Shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" On the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost, Third Person of the Godhead, came to dwell upon earth. Angels then again receded, as it were, into the background, ministering still providentially (Acts 5:19; Acts 12:7; Acts 27:23; Hebrews 1:14), but not as vessels to communicate Christian truth. With this agree the act and word of the angel who visited Cornelius. He directed him to send for Peter, who would tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved (Acts 11:14). For neither the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God, nor the present teaching to establish souls in the faith, has been committed to angels. The Holy Ghost is here, and He uses human instruments for that purpose. In the Apocalypse, however, angelic ministry reappears. That book unfolds the future of the earth, and the judgments which must take place. Angels will be executors of those judgments, so in character with that it may be that one speaks therein to John. The Upper Room. The Eleven returned to Jerusalem, and assuredly communicated to the other disciples that which had taken place. Were these latter dispirited? There is no trace of it, though now they must have realised their orphan state (John 14:18); for the Lord had gone, and the Holy Ghost had not yet come. To the upper chamber where they abode the Eleven betook themselves, with the women, and Mary the mother of the Lord, and His brethren, a company apart from their Jewish acquaintances. Here for the last time the Apostles are severally enumerated, though in an order which varies from the lists in the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 10:1-42 :; Mark 3:1-35 :; Luke 6:1-49 :). Only one Judas was now to be reckoned in the apostolic company, called in Matthew and in Mark Thaddeus (Lebbeus should in the former be probably omitted), but in Luke, as well as in this place in the Acts, designated as Judas of James.* "These all," writes our Church historian, " with one accord continued in prayer ** with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren" (Acts 1:14). Such was their occupation, an expression of dependence and of desire. Here, too, for the last time are the women mentioned, and the Virgin likewise, save that Mary the mother of John Mark is introduced into the narrative in chap. 12: Personal service to Christ had characterised the women. That necessarily ceased, though doubtless they were still at work in their proper sphere. But He who had been their great object being no longer here, no more notice is taken of them after this time. Faithful they had been. Faithful they were still, and in prayer with the Apostles they continued. Another class we must remark on: "His brethren." These were distinct from any of the Apostles, and were perhaps brought to confess the Lord by His death and the knowledge of His resurrection. "Neither did His brethren believe on Him," John wrote (vii. 5). That could be said no longer. For those who with His mother had sought once to hinder Him in His work (Mark 3:31) are with her just after His ascension in the company of the Eleven in the upper room, as definitely and openly to be ranked among His disciples.

* According to some, the word brother is to be supplied, as in the A.V.; according to others, son, should be understood, as in the R.V. The Syriac inLuke 6:16and here reads "son." Neither of these is inconsistent with the usage of the language. See Winer, and Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon. We do know of Jude who calls himself, and of course was aware of it, brother of James, the writer of the Epistle which bears his name. If Judas be the son of some James, it is a James wholly unknown to us, and we might in that case have looked for something wherewith to identify him, like Simon

Iscariot, the father of Judas (John 6:71). But that has not been supplied. Lacking that, "brother," rather than "son," seems more probably to be understood. Meyer decides for son. Wordsworth and Alford supply brother. We would just add that the list of the Eleven here given has point, showing the fulfilment of the Lord's words, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John 18:9).

** "And supplication" should be omitted.

Bereft of the Master's company, what could they do ? Was the movement begun during His life now to collapse? Were those gathered by His ministry to disperse, and the company to disappear like snow before the noonday sun? Could they hope, a little band, and a feeble one indeed, looking at themselves, to stand their ground against the opposition of constituted authority, and in the presence of hostile crowds? It was true the Lord had risen from the dead. They had seen Him. But the world had not; and no enthusiasm had been stirred in His favour by the announcement of the soldiers of that which they had witnessed at the tomb. To the natural man their cause was not a promising one. But they had a hope to which the Jews were strangers; and, assured that the God of their fathers had not forsaken them, whilst waiting for the fulfilment of their hope, they continued in prayer ; for work, they knew, was before them, when the time to commence it should arrive.

Matthias. Meantime preparation for that work, as far as they could make it, was undertaken. Judas Iscariot by transgression had fallen, that he might go to his own place (Acts 1:25). Solemn indeed ! Was his fall unforeseen? It was unexpected by the Eleven, we know. But Scripture had foreshadowed it, and predicted too the substitution of another in his place. To this Peter calls attention at the time of their greatest weakness. Many a saint has known the comfort that a word of Scripture has ministered to him in some special time of need. What comfort must these have found, as they learnt, and saw it plainly set forth, that the heartless and selfish conduct of Judas had been foreknown to God! His act of treachery was the fulfilment of the prophetic word. The Holy Ghost had predicted it. David had been the penman to write it. And provision had been made to meet the present circumstances. To Psalms lxix. 25 and 109: 8 the Apostle Peter refers. The first reference speaks of what should be meted out to the persecutor; the second, of succession in his office. In Judas, by his death, the first quotation had a fulfilment. His habitation was desolate. He had died by his own hand (Matthew 27:5). The second prediction was also to be fulfilled.

Peter therefore suggested to the assembled company that the one hundred and ninth Psalm shed light on the situation, and afforded guidance for them in the present circumstances. All agreeing, they prepared to carry out the injunction of the Psalm by nominating two, one of whom was to fill the traitor's place, and with the Eleven bear witness to the truth of the Lord's resurrection. Nominating two, we have said ; not meaning by their own will to fill up the vacancy ; but discerning that two of the disciples seemed fitted for that office, they put them forward as equally qualified as far as man could judge. Prayer then was offered. Lots were cast, to learn which of the two the Lord had chosen. On Matthias the lot fell. He was therefore numbered with the eleven Apostles. Henceforth there were twelve (Acts 1:26; Acts 2:14; Acts 6:2), all of whom had known the Lord before His death, and could witness of His resurrection. It is evident that Paul, called subsequently to the apostolate, could never have answered to that which Peter declared was a requisite on this occasion. The twelfth Apostle he was not; nor was Barnabas either. They could neither of them have been that.

Judas Iscariot. - Peter had spoken of the traitor's end, and gave details then known, but not reported elsewhere. He confirmed the information furnished by Matthew, both that a field was bought with the thirty pieces of silver, and also that Judas died a violent death. There is nothing really inconsistent in the two statements about the purchase of the field. For that piece of ground, bought with the money, though the transaction was carried out by the chief priests, as Matthew declares, might be spoken of in the words of Peter : "This man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity." The money with which it was bought really belonged to Judas. Doubtless, had we full details, we should see that the account of both Apostles is correct in every particular. Both speak of the matter as one of common notoriety. And Matthew, who was present when Peter described the end of Judas, must of course have been quite conversant with that which his brother Apostle had stated. Ignorance or mistake on the part of either we cannot admit. Peter spoke of it a few weeks after the occurrence. Matthew, it may be, wrote his Gospel but a few years after the death of Judas, and when all the circumstances of it could not have been forgotten. Both profess perfect acquaintance with the facts they narrate, and write of them as commonly known. A mistake then, we repeat, we cannot admit, unless it could be demonstrated, which is impossible, that we have all the particulars of this sad history. Till that can be satisfactorily established, becoming modesty should make us believe that it is the lack of full particulars which causes any difficulty in harmonising the two accounts. We would add that there is nothing in Peter's statement which obliges us to believe that Judas killed himself on that spot known afterwards as Aceldama ; and the name given to the field seems to have arisen from the money being the price of blood (Matthew 27:6).*

* Judas went to his own place. The Lord was in Paradise, and the penitent thief with Him. Separation for ever took place between the Lord and Judas. Fellowship with the Lord for ever was to be the portion of that thief. To return to a more interesting theme. Preparation was made by the election of Matthias to fill up the vacancy caused by Judas Iscariot's fall. A work was before them of which as yet they had little idea, either of its magnitude or of its difficulties. Their faith, however, we see, was undaunted, and they looked forward to that which lay before them with stout hearts. Surely God was comforting and encouraging them who in prayer expressed their dependence, yet doubtless their desire likewise for the power to come, which would enable them to go forward on their mission. Like their forefathers in the days of Nehemiah (iv. 2, 3) their opponents (for now they were becoming conscious that they had such) might despise them. "What do these feeble Jews?" those of old said. Feeble though they were, yet they built up the wall of Jerusalem all round in fifty-and-two days. What would that insignificant company do, who meet in the upper room? their enemies might say. There they remain in prayer, but they never come forth to meet us. Utterly incompetent are they to win their way in the world! Did such thoughts pass through their minds? Soon it would be demonstrated that a weapon more effective than any great conqueror had used, and of a more keen edge than a material sword, was to be wielded by that company now apart in that room. By the weapon they would wield trophies would be won, captives, adherents - not by twos or threes, nor by hundreds, but by thousands would they be numbered. And a work would break out in spite of all opposition, which neither the devil nor the ruling powers of earth could possibly put down. Judaism, heathenism, idolatry, and indifference, each and all would feel the power connected with that company, and have to own that they could not successfully overcome it. God would be with them, though the world would be against them. But that little band might truly say, in the words of the prophet Elisha, " They that be with us are more than they that be with them

" (2 Kings 6:16). Let us now see how conquests were brought about.

04.08. THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts 2:1-47.

TEN days were running out since the Lord had ascended. As yet the promised Comforter had not come; and cheered though they had been by the angelic messengers announcing the personal return of Christ in the future, they had no fixed time made known, when the promise of the Father would be received. To prayer they betook themselves, and in that exercise they continued.

Pentecost. - "Not many days hence" was all that the Lord had said. Their waiting, therefore, would not be long. Yet why there was any delay, and when exactly it would terminate, were questions which very probably none of them could then have answered. But we know, and surely they must afterwards have understood, that the date in the ecclesiastical calendar had been fixed for well-nigh fifteen centuries, and fixed as definitely as that of the Lord’s crucifixion. He, the true Paschal Lamb, suffered at the Passover on the 14th of Nisan. Then, as the antitype to the wave sheaf, the first-fruits of the harvest, His resurrection had taken place on the morrow after the Passover Sabbath. And now the full meaning of the introduction at the feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, of the two wave loaves baked with leaven, that new meat offering unto the Lord, was to receive antitypical elucidation, by the presentation to God, through the Gospel about to go forth, of believers from Jews, and also from Gentiles, as first-fruits unto Him (James 1:18). This was to be accomplished through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and not otherwise. So till the day of Pentecost that work, with which we are now made familiar, could not in accordance with the mind of God have its beginning. Yet it could not be delayed for one single day, for that feast lasted just the one day. For seven days they kept the feast of unleavened bread. For eight days they celebrated that of Tabernacles. One day only was appointed for the feast of Pentecost. And as on one day in the year, and one only, the Lord could die - viz., the 14th of Nisan - so on one day in the year, and on one only, as we learn, could the Holy Ghost have come as the promise of the Father. That day was the feast of Pentecost. The day had come, and "they were all together," as perhaps we should read, "in one place." No one on this occasion was absent from the company. Nor were they at this time in the court of the Temple, or elsewhere in any place of public resort, intermingling with devout Jews, who had come to keep the feast. All together they were, quite apart from others, gathered there surely by the leading of the Spirit. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues [or, tongues parting asunder] like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance " (Acts 2:2-4). Such is the brief yet distinct account of the coming of the Holy Ghost. The attitude of the company is stated. They were sitting, not engaged in prayer, or they would have been standing. Suddenly the fulfilment of the Lord’s words took place. A sound was heard; a sight was seen; an effect was manifested. The sound was that of a rushing mighty wind ; the sight was the tongues cloven, and like fire, which sat upon each of them ; the effect was

that they all began to speak with tongues. The tongues the disciples saw, but the multitude which quickly assembled apparently did not. For they do not speak of them. The sound they did hear; for this we believe is the historian's meaning, and is so translated by the Revised Version.* The sound, and not any report about it, is that to which St. Luke draws our attention. That sound had collected a great multitude together of the devout Jews then assembled at Jerusalem from every country under heaven. The Temple court must have been thinned that day of its accustomed crowds, for the centre of attraction was the house in which the disciples were assembled.

* It is questioned what the multitude heard - the sound of the rushing mighty wind, or the report of the wonder taking place in the disciples speaking with tongues. Certainly the former supposition is quite in character with the manner of the Spirit's coming. Meyer, followed by Alford, so takes it.

Cloven Tongues. - Of the cloven tongues on the head of each of the disciples the multitude, as we have remarked, make no mention. Had they seen them, would they not have spoken of them, as well as of the utterances they heard in their several tongues? What did these tongues thus seen portend? Cloven (or, parted), like as of fire, - such is the description. Seen on that occasion, we never read of them being seen again. Cloven (or, divided), they seem to indicate that the recipients of the Spirit would be empowered to speak in more languages than one. And "like as of fire" may foreshadow the effect of the Word of God. The Word discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). And those who persistently refuse obedience to it will find that it will judge them in the last day (John 12:48). The fire is an emblem of judgment. Of the power of the \Vord to act on consciences the three thousand bore testimony ere night closed on that eventful day, as, pricked in their hearts, they cried out in agony of soul, "Brethren, what shall we do? " The Word, reaching the conscience now, does act judicially within. Light shines in, and shows the person what he has never seen and judged before. Self-judgment it works now bringing blessing. Later it will judge the ungodly, rising up as a witness against them.

Filled with the Holy Ghost, each disciple began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. Intercourse between people of different races and of different countries is much impeded by differences in language In the beginning it was not so, nor for some time after the Flood was there any language but one. For all sprang from a common ancestry. All spake the language of the original parent. That this was the case, the inspired record in Genesis affirms. "The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Genesis 11:1). Combination therefore for some settled purpose would be facilitated by that state of things, and men were taking advantage of it to build a city, and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven, adding, "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Possessed with the thought of their wisdom and their power, they began to build, forgetful that they were creatures wholly dependent on the will of the Creator. How far they had carried out their plans and to what height they had raised their tower are facts not recorded. Whatever commencement was made, the tower was never finished. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. He confounded their language.* Their work stopped. It was an act of government on God's part, and that act He has never reversed.

* Canon Kawlinson writes {Ancient Monarchies, vol. 1:, p. 55) ; " The subjects of the early Kings [of Chaldea] are continually designated on the inscriptions by the title of kiprat-arbat, The four nations," or Arba-lisun, The four tongues. In Abraham's time, again, the league of four kings

seems correspondent to a fourfold ethnic division - Cushite, Turanian, Semitic, and Arian, the chief authority and ethnic preponderance being with the Cushites. ... So that it is at least probable that the ’ four tongues’ intended were not mere local dialects, but distinct languages, the representatives respectively of the four great families of human speech." But though God has never reversed it, He can, and in the early days of Christianity He did, override it, empowering servants to speak languages which they had not previously studied. Such was the gift of tongues, now for the first time bestowed. To saints alone was it given. None else could share in it, for it was an effect of receiving the Holy Ghost. He who confounded human speech at Babel, could and did empower some at Jerusalem to speak with tongues they had not previously learnt. Some, we say, because, even in apostolic days, all Christians did not share in this manifestation of the Spirit. In the Acts there are but three occasions on which this power is recorded as having been bestowed - at Pentecost (ii), at Caesarea (x), and at Ephesus (xix); and on each of these occasions every member of the company who received the Holy Ghost participated in that manifestation of the Spirit. At Corinth, where some shared in that power, all, it would seem, did not (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:30; 1 Corinthians 14:5). At Philippi, at Rome, at Thessalonica, and in Galatia we read not of its being bestowed on any of the converts. Paul himself spoke with tongues more than any of the Corinthians. He needed it for his work, and he tells us the purpose of it was to impress and to attract unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22). And as each manifestation of the Spirit had for its object the profit of others, wonderful as was the power of speaking with tongues it was not bestowed on any for mere display or self-glory. So far we find recounted in Acts 2:1-4 the time, manner, and effect of the coming of the Holy Ghost. St. Luke, who alone has told us what took place on the night of the Lord’s birth, is also the one who has put on record what happened on the morning of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. His contributions to Scripture history are most interesting and most valuable. At the Lord’s birth angelic voices were heard. At the Holy Spirit’s coming men’s mouths were opened in a new and wondrous manner. The shepherds heard the angelic choir break forth in praise to God. Devout men at Jerusalem gave unsolicited testimony to the nature of the communications that came from the lips of the different disciples. The Multitude; - We have spoken of that which took place in the house. The historian next relates the effect on the multitude which found their attraction centred on that house and on the company within. The sound drew them to the spot, where they heard the voices of the disciples speaking in tones and accents peculiar to each one. Far from their home as many of them were, in a country where Aramaic was the language of the common people, whilst Greek was pretty well understood as the language of commerce of that day, they heard voices which addressed them in their own mother tongue and spoke of the mighty works of God. For that miraculous gift of speech was to be used in the service and for the glory of God. Devout Jews from every nation under heaven heard, and attested, that utterances came forth from the Galilean company in the language in which they were severally born. Galileans, they said. Yet surely their speech, whatever it was in which each expressed himself, was grammatically as correct, and in meaning as clear, as those devout Jews could themselves have uttered. It was no unmeaning jargon, no babbling, no gibberish, but intelligent language, which some of that multitude could affirm to others was their own vernacular. From the far north some had come - Parthia, Media, Persia, Mesopotamia, had furnished contingents. From the south, Egypt, Libya, and Gyrene were represented. From the northwest had come representatives from the provinces of Asia Minor. The capital of the empire, too, had helped to swell the crowd; whilst from the islands of the Mediterranean, as Crete, from the south-east, as

Arabia, there were those who heard, and rejoiced to hear, in their own language the wonderful works of God.

God was now speaking to them by human instrumentality, through vessels guided of the Holy Ghost. When God speaks, He desires souls should hear and understand. He who can speak direct to the conscience and hold intelligent intercourse with His creatures, whether the untutored savage or the most cultivated of mankind - He showed His desire that men should hear from Him, in the language with which they were severally familiar, what would conduce to their everlasting welfare. By an exercise of His power He had rendered intercourse between nations a matter, in some measure, of difficulty. By power in connection with grace He made provision, that without let or hindrance different nationalities and those speaking diverse tongues should hear in their own language about His Son, and about salvation. Confounded, amazed, and in doubt (or, perplexed), thus does Luke describe the crowd. Confounded, when they heard each man his own language. Amazed, as they remembered that those who addressed them were Galileans. Perplexed, since they could not understand what it meant. Something new, something strange, had undoubtedly happened. What did it portend ? Such was the impression produced on many who were present. But others, very probably native-born Jews, who did not understand the different languages, mocked, saying, "These men [rather, they] are filled with new wine." None disputed the fact that something unusual had happened. Yet no one could satisfactorily account for it.

Peter’s Sermon. - And no wonder. God, however, would not leave them in doubt; so the Apostles stood up (we last read of them sitting), and Peter lifted up his voice. He spoke aloud, and to an audience such as he doubtless had never anticipated. " Ye men of Judsea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words" (Acts 2:14). The first Christian sermon was now to begin, and Peter, who had thrice denied his Master, was permitted to preach it. For, as we can understand, no other person upon earth could have done it, seeing that to him, and to him only, were committed by the Lord Jesus Christ the keys of the kingdom of the heavens (Matthew 16:19). The keys, therefore, entrusted by Christ to him, he used that day for the first time. To the marvellous power given to the disciples, we have seen, people were not indifferent. Mocking on the part of some, earnest inquiry on the part of others, testified to the impressions produced. Neither the mockers, however, nor the devout Jews could offer any reasonable explanation. The Apostles then stood up. All were now to hear what they had to say. And Peter as their mouthpiece expressed himself, addressing especially the home-born Jews. What that movement was not, he first took up. " Full of new wine," the mockers had said, - an easy solution, as they thought, of that strange and startling spectacle which they witnessed. But the charge was readily refuted, and the folly of it demonstrated. The time of day should have made the accusers keep silence - it was but the third hour. Men were not wont to be overcome with wine by nine o’clock in the morning. The disciples were not drunk with wine. They were filled with the Spirit. God then was working, and in power ; and in explanation of what the marvel was, he proceeded to cite Old Testament Scripture.

Joel. - Now of the outpouring of the Spirit, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel had all written. Isaiah (xxxii. 15, 44: 3) and Ezekiel (xxxix. 29) predict it, but in connection with the last days, and as a blessing to be bestowed on Israel. Their prophetic horizon in this matter was bounded by the limits of the nation. Joel is different. His range of vision takes in all flesh, and the blessing in store for such he was empowered to foretell. Now Peter, it will be observed, makes no reference to either Isaiah or

Ezekiel, though his audience were admittedly only of Jewish descent; but turns them all to Joel in explanation of the phenomenon then witnessed. Why was this? We can answer, as we plainly see, that no passage in the whole of the Old Testament save Joel (ii. 28-32) could have fitly been quoted that day. God was about to go beyond the narrow bounds of Judaism and to minister blessing to Gentiles. By some of all flesh then, and not only by some of Israel's race, was saving grace to be known. Hence Peter, divinely guided, knew where to turn in the inspired volume for a quotation applicable to the occasion. Divinely guided whence to quote, he was also divinely taught where to stop. He stopped in the middle of a verse, omitting to add that which will be fulfilled in a future day. It should also be observed, that he was careful in the way he introduced the quotation. "This is that," he said ; not, "Then was fulfilled." Joel, like his fellow-prophets, predicts the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days. His prophecy therefore, in common with the others, awaits its fulfilment. But as the son of Pethuel writes of the pouring out on all flesh, Peter quotes him. And as he describes the effect to be produced on those on whom the Holy Ghost should be poured in a way the other two do not, Joel's prediction therefore, and his alone, could be fitly brought forward to explain what was then witnessed by the multitude, as well as to announce the character of the new dispensation that had just commenced. For again, we remark, " on all flesh " are the words of Joel, for not on Israel only was the Spirit to be outpoured. So Peter quotes that prophet, and passes by the other two.

Pleading what he gives us, we see that he was quoting exactly from neither the original Hebrew nor from the Greek translation called the Septuagint. For he transposes the clauses about the " old men " and the " young men," and adds, in ver. 18, "and they shall prophesy," substituting, too, the word "notable" for "terrible." Further, as we have already stated, he stopped in the middle of a verse. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Joel assigns a reason for that, adding, "for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:32). Peter stops at the general statement of salvation, true for all dispensations, but carefully forbears quoting to the end, which is applicable only to the futiire, when the Lord returns to reign at Jerusalem. Divinely guided indeed was the Apostle. For who on earth at that moment, save the Holy Ghost, knew exactly what was to take place, or the character of the work that must precede the advent of Israel's blessing ? Who of the Apostles had then understood the complete abeyance of the nation's pre-eminence and blessing, to let Christian times run their course ? Naturally he might have finished the verse, for God was at that moment working in Jerusalem ; but, filled with the Holy Ghost, he stopped short of that.

Testimony to Christ. - From Scripture explanation, thus furnished, of that which had perplexed the multitude, we are led on to hear why that manifestation had been vouchsafed. To make this plain, it was needful to announce the exaltation to glory at God's right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Jews had but a few weeks before crucified. For the first time was this truth of tremendous import to Israel openly and fearlessly proclaimed. Peter does it, the rest of the Apostles standing up and concurring. Jesus of Nazareth (or, the Nazarean) had been among them working in power, His mighty works attesting His approval by God. Delivered up in accordance with Divine and predetermined counsel, they by the hands of lawless men, as we should there read, had crucified and slain Him. How bold now, and uncompromising, is Peter, who had once quailed before a woman !

All before him he charged with the death of Him of whom God in His life had openly approved. Further, God had raised Him from the dead, "Having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" Of whom else who had walked upon earth had that ever been affirmed? Yet Scripture ten centuries previously had predicted it. To Psalms 16:8-11 the Apostle referred, and quoted the passage at length. To whom did it refer ? Tho Psalmist speaks throughout in the first person.I, me, my, are, one or other, introduced in every verse. Was David writing of himself ? Impossible. He had died and was buried, and his sepulchre was with them, still tenanted by his dust. Evidently his tomb was then well known. And all were perfectly agreed that he, the first of his dynasty, had not risen from the dead. Yet he wrote of One who would die, and would shortly afterwards be raised; for God would not leave that One's soul in Hades (the place of the unclothed spirits), nor would He suffer His body to see corruption. For centuries that Psalm had been read. Probably every one of the audience was acquainted with it. But to that day none of them could point to any one who had died and say, "Behold the man." Now, David was a prophet, and wrote of One of his house who would succeed him on the throne. And Peter unfolds the application of the passage. The crucified and risen Nazarean was the man - Jesus was the Christ. All knew that He had died. Peter and those with him knew that He was risen, and he openly declared it. He had seen Him. So, with the eleven Apostles who stood up with him. he was a witness of the resurrection of Christ. But more, he knew, and proclaims it, that the risen One had ascended ; and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth that which they then saw and heard. Would any cavil at the thought of a man in heaven? Another Psalm, also ascribed to David by Peter, and in the Book of Psalms as well, had foretold this : "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." David's Lord was to sit at Jehovah's right hand. David's Lord had done that. The proof of it was forthcoming in the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which had that day taken place. The Lord had told the disciples (John 16:7): " If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." He had gone, and in consequence sent the Spirit. Peter thus told them all of facts, unquestionable facts. Was that all? No. What conclusions were to be drawn from them? If what he said, and gave Scripture for it, was true of the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus the Nazarean, God had made that same One whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ. Who with an open mind, and with those Psalms opened up to him, could resist the conclusion thus unequivocally stated ? To this the historian leads on. The multitude, astounded by what they had witnessed, were now pricked in their hearts by the discourse they had heard ; and unable to restrain themselves, said, addressing the twelve Apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do? "Apparently, as far as we have gone, we have the text of Peter's address, and not simply some notes of it. What interest it excited - and well it might - as the people heard the Scriptures of the prophets expounded in this way! Often they may have read those Psalms, and have been told by the scribes that they were prophetic announcements about the Messiah; but never before had they heard, or could they have heard, that in the past few weeks they had received their fulfilment. It was Christian ministry to which they now listened - ministry so different from any with which the scribes could feed them. It was the opening up of the Divine Word, and the application of those two Psalms to the crucified One. "He shall take [or rather, taketh] of Mine, and shall show it unto you," the Lord had said (John 16:15), with reference to the coming and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit had now come, and was showing that day by Peter things concerning the Lord Jesus. On the day of the Resurrection the Lord had opened the understanding of the disciples to

understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), and so ministered both to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and also to the company in the upper room, that the faith of each and all might rest on the written Word. We find Peter on this the first occasion which presented itself to him doing the same thing. And whilst pointing them to Joel to explain the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit, he reminded his hearers of those two Psalms, the 16th and 110th, which in the Hebrew, and in the ancient versions the LXX., the Syriac, and the Vulgate, are ascribed to David. Are we quite in the dark when we write thus ? Modern critics may insist on the post-exilic authorship of the latter. Those versed in Jewish learning in Peter's day apparently had no such thought. The way in which the Apostle quotes them leaves no doubt in the mind that the Jews had received them as from the pen of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. And if we believe that the son of Simon was speaking as filled with the Holy Ghost, which surely with Acts 2:4 before us it would be hazardous to contest, his words are a witness of the testimony of the Spirit to the Davidic authorship of them both, as the words of the Lord in Mark 12:36-37, are decisive of that of the latter of these two. Further, the way of their introduction by Peter, and the use of them by Paul (Acts 13:35 ; Hebrews 1:13; Hebrews 10:13), are assertions, too plain to be ignored, of the Messianic application of them both. Thus the faith of Peter's audience, if his statements were received, would be established on the written Word. The one Psalm predicted the resurrection of Christ; the other had foretold His ascension. Both as to these events had received their fulfilment, Peter and those with him being eye-witnesses of the fulfilment of the former, and that which had just taken place being proof of the fulfilment of the latter.

Exercised Souls. - Had God really espoused the cause of the One they had crucified ? Of His resurrection there was no doubt. The stupid story the soldiers were to tell could deceive no one, and doubtless was credited by no one. And during all the time that the Apostles were bearing testimony in Jerusalem to the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ, we never read of any one who contradicted it, though the ecclesiastical power had the greatest inducement to discredit it. And some of the influential members of the Sanhedrin had special reasons for controverting it. Yet no one did. No one could. The Lord risen then, raised by the glory of the Father, and at Jehovah's right hand on high, it needed no skilful advocate to point out the irresistible conclusion. God was for Him. Who then could prevail against Him? And though He had died, put to death by lawless men, His enemies would in a coming day have to own His supremacy, and be subject to Him, being made the footstool for His feet. Such was Peter's testimony, drawn from the Divine Word. All this dawning on the multitude for the first time, affected them deeply, and their question showed it: "Brethren, what shall we do?"

What a question to ask of Peter, and of the rest of the Apostles ! But when men are in earnest about their souls, they turn to those that they believe can really help them. The high priest, the Pharisees, the scribes, none of them could minister to these anxious ones. To the Apostles they turned, willing to sit at the feet of His disciples whom they called the Nazarean. Galileans they were. But that did not matter. Jewish prejudice against Galilee disappeared like foam on the water before the urgency of that need, which the Holy Ghost had by the words of Peter created in their souls The Answer. - Simple and full was the answer: "Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your * sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). Repentance was called for. The death of

Christ was no light matter. Judgment therefore of themselves, and of their ways, and a turning from them, was imperative. The Lord on the day that He rose commissioned His disciples to preach repentance. Peter here does it.

* " Your sins " we should read. It was a personal matter with each one. But more, Peter insisted on their being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for (or, unto) the remission of sins.

Conscience-work and a public profession of Christ were required, if they would enjoy the blessings he held out to them; and on their receiving the Spirit, they would share in all that believers now possessed. Their children also could share in the same, and Gentiles as well, those afar off; for by this were such designated in opposition to the Jews, who as such were dispensationally nigh (Ephesians 2:17). The prophecy of Joel, and the reference here to those afar off, both intimated, what for a time even afterwards was evidently not really understood, that some from the Gentiles would be called to partake of the richest blessing that could be enjoyed upon earth, and in common with an election from Israel. Then solemnly and earnestly Peter exhorted them to save themselves from that untoward (or, crooked) generation. But here the historian has not reported all that was said. Many other words of a hortatory character uttered by Peter have found no place in inspired Scripture.

Christian Baptism. - On baptism the Apostle laid stress - that baptism with water instituted by the Lord after His death and resurrection. Here for the first time is it mentioned as incumbent on disciples. What it expresses St. Paul has taught us - viz., burial with Christ unto death (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12); hence it had no place, and could have had none, before the cross. It is the avowal of, and the way of entering on the path of, discipleship - the open declaration that, as baptised, people are in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter writes of it as saving those who carry out their Christian profession, as those in the ark were saved through the waters of the flood. It saves, he tells us (not by the external washing, the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer - or, demand * - of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 3:21). Both Apostles agree that it could have had no meaning before the cross. And both teach us that it was incumbent on all who desired to be enrolled as disciples after the cross. So Paul was baptised (Acts 9:18). And writing years after, he classes himself amongst such (Romans 6:4). "We are buried," He said, "with Him by baptism unto death." Peter, who had no need of it, having been a disciple, and openly known as such before the cross, could write as he really did, "Saves you," not "us" (1 Peter 3:21), distinguishing himself from those who had submitted to it. Now the difference between those who wert; disciples before the cross and those acknowledged as such after it is quite borne out by the Lord’s command to the former to baptise others (Matthew 28:19), without one hint being dropped of the need of their being baptised. There was no need at all for it in their case. There was no one who could have done it.

* The word here used by Peter, eperotema seems to mean the question asked ; hence in the A.V. the answer.

Ingathering. - An inward work, then, repentance, and a public profession by baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, were both insisted on, as needful in their case, ere grace in its fulness and the gift of the Holy Ghost would be bestowed on them. For as part of the nation which had crucified the Lord, and many of them certainly dwellers at Jerusalem, they must openly stand forth as disciples of Christ. A test this was indeed - disciples of the crucified One! Which of them, and how many,

would respond to it? About three thousand heard and obeyed, and that same day submitted to the first Christian baptism that had ever taken place. Thus the company of believers began to increase, and now could be called Christians, because they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and so had the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). Not, however, that they had as yet received that name. It was reserved for the population of Antioch to bestow it. But as partakers of the Spirit of Christ, they belonged to Christ, and so were really Christians. What an ingathering had been brought about! "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My [or, the] Father," the Lord had said (John 14:12). These words had that day commenced to be fulfilled. A Picture. - Now follows in a few verses a picture of that time (Acts 2:42-47). As for the converts, "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Earnest desire was manifested for apostolic teaching. And the whole company kept together in fellowship, united by the Spirit, however little as yet they may have been doctrinally instructed about it. We write thus guardedly, because, as will be seen, the picture is more of that which must have been seen from without, than an account of what was understood by those in the assembly. All might observe how they kept together, joining in religious exercises, at their meala remembering the Lord's death, and at other times engaging in prayer. Nor were outsiders unconcerned. Fear came upon all of them, and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles, doubtless keeping up the awe which the miraculous powers of speech displayed at Pentecost had first excited. But what the wonders and signs were the historian has not related. Evidently the demonstrations of the Spirit were many and marked.

Now of the whole company we read. They were not afraid. They kept together; and conscious of their oneness, and perhaps, as has been suggested, expecting the near approach of the Lord's return, they had all things in common, those having possessions and goods disposing of them, to distribute to every one as he had need. Day by day they continued steadfastly with one accord in the Temple. The feast of Pentecost was over, but they were like people keeping high festival still. Daily and steadfastly "in the Temple, and breaking bread at home, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." What had God wrought?" And the Lord added together those that were being saved" - 1:e., a class of people so characterised, sharers in salvation. A question had been asked of the Lord in His life about that class, as the inquirer said, " Lord, are there few that be saved?" (Luke 13:23). Day by day it was now being seen how that class was increasing in numbers.

Praising God, - in this they were engaged. Joy filled their hearts. It was not, however, the joy of those just emancipated from slavery. Their fathers at the Red Sea had known what that was. Nor was it the joy of those who were tasting the fruits of victory. In the days of Joshua the people had experienced that. It was joy of another kind, and springing from another cause. It was the joy of souls now sharing in the love of God, partakers of Divine grace, brought into relationship with God as their Father, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and so in happy spiritual fellowship with one another. A joy this was that none of them had ever known before. A word now, ere closing this chapter, on that which had taken place.

What had taken place? - One had come whom the world could not see, and come to dwell in person on earth, and who had never dwelt here before. The Holy Ghost had come, and has remained on earth ever since. God in the person of the Spirit was really on earth. And He dwelt in a habitation wholly new - the House of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of

the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Of old there had been, and still was, the assembly of the Lord, formed of a nation called out by God to be a witness for Him. In the midst of that nation He dwelt, from Sinai to the Babylonish captivity, and in a sanctuary erected in accordance with Divine revelation. Now afresh God dwelt on earth, but by the Spirit in the midst of a new assembly, called the assembly of the living God, and also the assembly or Church of Christ (Matthew 16:16-18). By the Spirit, we say, not meaning thereby merely a spiritual presence. God in the person of the Holy Ghost was and is really dwelling on earth. The Church or assembly is actually His House. It is also His Temple. And in relation to Christ it is not only His Church or assembly, but also His Body and His Bride. Of all this the world was ignorant, and probably at first believers knew very little about it. Subsequent apostolic revelation has, however, taught us of these things, and given us to understand what an epoch it really was, when the Holy Ghost, for the first time since man was upon earth, formed for Himself a habitation down here, composed of all who professedly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. What, then, must true Christians be to God ? For now began to bo formed that holy Temple, which still grows, composed of living stones, even of all true Christians. We can but just touch on all this here, and only further remark, ere passing on, that, whilst much of what we have just noticed was outside Old Testament revelation, we have the distinction therein between the congregation of the Lord, or, as Stephen called it, the assembly or Church in the wilderness, and the assembly of the living God - we have the distinction, we say, plainly marked for us in Psalms 22:22 by the Holy Spirit’s comment on that verse in Hebrews 2:12. We learn from this latter that the assembly in that verse of the Psalm is the Christian Church or assembly, distinguished from that mentioned in ver. 25 of that same Psalm. The congregation in the former verse is the Church. The great congregation in the latter verse is the congregation of Israel - 1:e., the nation (1 Kings 8:65 ; 2 Chronicles 7:8).

04.09. A MIRACLE AND ATTEMPTED INTIMIDATION.

A MIRACLE AND ATTEMPTED INTIMIDATION.

Acts 3:1-26:—iv. 31.

MANY wonders and signs Luke has told us were done by the Apostles (Acts 2:43). As yet we have had no detailed account of any. He will, however, now proceed to tell us of one, and which evidently was regarded as, and surely was, a most remarkable one. And as we have had depicted the happiness of the company, and its growth, we are shortly to learn of the first attempt to intimidate the leaders of the movement by the arrest of Peter and John. The Ninth Hour. - Frequenting the Temple daily, the Apostles were found in its courts at the time of public prayer. To one of these occasions our attention is now to be directed by the historian, but he fixes not the date of it. On a certain day Peter and John were going up, as we should translate, into the Temple at the hour of prayer. Belonging to what we may call the inner circle of the Apostles, these two are frequently found together. To them was entrusted by the Lord the service of making ready the upper room for the last paschal supper (Luke 22:8). Together they were on the morning of the Resurrection, when Mary made known that the tomb was empty ; and together they ran to the sepulchre, to find that her report was correct (John 20:2-8). Together, too, they went at the request of the rest to visit the new converts in Samaria (Acts 8:1-40 :). Now, on the afternoon to which Luke refers, they were going up to the Temple together. For though that word should be left out of the narrative, it is plain in that they were together that day. It was at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer, about 3 p.m., when the evening burnt offering was offered up in the court, and incense was burnt on the golden altar within.

Hallowed was that hour, and connected with memories of the past. At that time, though far from God’s altar at Jerusalem, Elijah, having repaired the altar of the Lord on Mount Carmel, arranged the bullock for the sacrifice, and supplicated the Lord to consume it by fire from heaven. And as the incense, as we may believe, was perfuming the holy place at Jerusalem, God responded to His servant at Carmel by sending the fire from on high, the token that He was the true God (1 Kings 18:38). At that same hour, centuries later, when Daniel, a captive in Babylon, was in prayer, Gabriel touched him, announcing the welcome news that his prayer was heard, and revealing to him the prophecy of the seventy weeks, the last part of which has yet to come (Daniel 9:21). At that same hour it was that the Lord, of whose coming and death Gabriel had told the prophet, uttered on the cross that solemn cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and then shortly after expired. Now, at that same hour of the day, Peter and John, entering the Temple, were to witness for the crucified One, and to manifest before all there assembled the power of His name. A Miracle. - As they were going up a lame man was being carried, to be laid at the gate of the Temple called Beautiful,* to solicit alms. He lived, it would seem, on the charity of the public, extended to him as they entered the sacred precincts. Forty years old was he now, and daily was he carried and laid down at that gate. Had he ever seen the Lord passing in or out? Certainly, if he had, healing power had not been exercised on his behalf. Every cripple, every sick one, did not

receive benefit from Him. Witness the great multitude of sick folk at the Pool of Bethesda, waiting there on the day that the impotent man was cured. Now, however, the hour in the counsels of God had arrived for this one to be made whole. Seeing Peter and John, he asked an alms. It was his wonted request. It was all he asked, and evidently all he expected (Acts 3:5). A little temporal relief he craved. He was, however, to get healing. He had been indebted to the kindness and support of others to get there, and was actually at the moment being carried, an evidence of his helplessness, when, in answer to his petition for an alms, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none ; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarean walk" (iii. 6). We should here omit "rise up." The omission makes it more graphic. He was to walk.

* It is questioned where this gate was. Of one, especially beautiful, Josephus writes, calling it the Corinthian gate, because covered with Corinthian brass. He writes (Wars of the Jews, V. 5: 3): "There was one gate that was without [the inward court of] the holy house, which was of Corinthian brass, and greatly excelled those that wore only covered over with silver and gold. . . . The magnitudes of the other gates were equal one to another; but that over the Corinthian gate, which opened on the east over-against the gate of the holy house itself, was muclv larger; for its height was fifty cubits; and its doors were forty cubits ; and it was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon them than the other." From his description one would suppose this was the gate.

Lame from his mother’s womb, he had never walked. His feet and ankle bones had never borne the weight of his body. Walk! How could he? Peter showed him that his words were no vain words. For he took him by the right hand, and raised him up, and strength, such as he had never known, he received at once. With the agility of one who had always had the use of his limbs, he leaped up. The weight of his body these limbs, so powerless for forty years, now perfectly sustained. He stood. And the activity proper to man was his in common with others around. He began to walk, as we should translate. No arm even to lean on did he need. No crutch to support him was in requisition. With no tottering gait did he move. Carried as he had been to the precincts of the Temple, he entered the Beautiful gate of it a sound man, walking and leaping and praising God. In open day this occurred. In the most public place in the city, in the presence of a multitude about probably to pass through that Beautiful gate to engage in prayer, the man formerly lame, and well known to be such, passed in. with the crowd, demonstrating to all beholders his new powers, for he walked, and manifesting his]oy, for he was praising God. He held Peter and John, it is true, but not to support himself. His benefactors he deemed them, and so naturally clung to them.

Peter’s Address. - Wonder and amazement filled the people when they saw the man walking, and they ran together unto the Apostles in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly wondering (ver. 11). This porch, or portico, was a relic, it is said, of Solomon’s work, which had escaped destruction till then.* In this same porch the Lord was walking when questioned by the Jews as to whether He was the Christ (John 10:23). In this same place, evidently one of concourse, the Apostles were found later on (Acts 5:12), before they were beaten by order of the Sanhedrin. To the assembled crowd Peter now addressed himself. In the previous chapter his audience of course was a mixed one, composed not only of native but of many foreign Jews speaking various languages, because collected from different countries upon earth. On this occasion, the feast of Pentecost being over, we may conclude that the foreign element, of which there was always some in Jerusalem (vi. 9), was reduced to its normal proportions. "Ye men of Israel," he began, "why

marvel ye at this" (referring probably to that which is stated in ver. 9) ; "or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness [rather, godliness] we had made this man to walk?" (iii. 12). No credit would they take to themselves, nor allow the people for one moment to think of them as something extraordinary. How different was this from Simon Magus, who, exercising Satanic power, gave himself out to be some great one (viii. 9). The natural man loves to exalt himself. The Apostles would give all the glory to God, arid to His servant Christ Jesus. The miracle was undoubted. Peter distinctly admits it. But the power by which it had been accomplished was Divine.

* To this porch Josephus refers. "These," he writes, [eastern] "cloisters belonged to the outer court, and were situated in a deep valley, and had walls that reached four hundred cubits [in length], and were built of square and very white stones, the length of each of which stones was twenty cubits, and their height six cubits. This was the work of King Solomon, who first of all built the entire Temple." (Josephus, Ant., XX. 9: 7). The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, was working still in their midst, but now for the glory of His servant Jesus. Bold indeed is Peter. In the Temple court he affirmed that Jesus, the rejected and crucified One, was Jehovah's servant. Of One so called Isaiah had written (xlii. 1). Of that same One Peter here spoke. Delivered by the people to Pilate (as he reminds them), that Roman governor was desirous to release Him, and was only prevented by the clamorous importunity of the rulers and people. They denied before Pilate their true Messiah. The holy One and the righteous One they denied. They asked for a murderer to be given them. They killed the Prince (or, Originator) of life.** A heavy indictment indeed! Yet the simple truth. And with the facts still fresh in the memory of them all, no one did, no one could, impugn the correctness of the accusation. Man's work had been like Cain's - to put the righteous One to death. God's power, however, had been displayed in raising Him from the dead. And now He had glorified Him ; and in His name, and by faith in His name, that miracle had been wrought, and that man healed.

* "Servant" he calls him. Pais ; not Son, Hyog.

** The Greek word archegos is variously translated, " Prince," " Author," " Originator." It is used in the New Testament here, and elsewhere, only of the Lord (Acts 5:31; Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 12:2). A crime, a murder, had taken place, and the people had consented to it, and had insisted on it. But done as it was by rulers and people through ignorance, Peter assured them that the door for repentance was still open. Great, too, as the crime was, it had been foreseen and predicted. "God before had showed by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ [so Peter said] should suffer." That He had fulfilled. "His Christ," then, it was whom they had crucified. What a crime that was! Was all lost? No, but deferred. And now it rested on the repentance of the people as to when the Messianic blessing, which for ages had been expected, should really be enjoyed. "Repent ye therefore," continued the Apostle to his audience, "and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for [not, preached unto] you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began." We have followed the Revised Version rather than the Authorised Version in citing this passage, because there are several variations in the text consequent on better readings, and one very important mistranslation is by the former corrected, which seems to have originated with the Vulgate. The times of refreshing depend on,

and are a consequence of, the repentance of the people. This the Authorised Version fails to exhibit. The Christ was now on high, and would remain thero, till repentance working in the people, God should send Him back. To that Dent. 30: 1-10. looks forward as well as other Scriptures. To the future they must therefore turn. There was, however, a word for them in the present. He who had been in their midst was really the Prophet like unto Moses, to whom all were to hearken. Present responsibility then rested on them whilst awaiting the future. For if that Prophet had come, and Jesus Christ was that Prophet, it was incumbent on all men to hearken to Him, lest judgment should overtake the rebellious (Acts 3:22-23). Further, they were the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with their fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." Hence to them first God, having raised up His servant [Jesus should be here omitted], sent Him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from their iniquities. A caution may here be needed as to what that raising up refers. It is clearly not the Resurrection that is pointed to, but the Lord's first coming to earth, in accordance with the words just quoted from Deuteronomy 18:18 : "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up," etc. So familiar are we with this history, that we can scarce take in the full effect on the people of that which had been seen or heard. In the very porch where the Jews had challenged the Lord for proofs of His Messiahship, Peter announced that the man had been healed in the name of Jesus the Nazarean. In the precincts of Jehovah's house, who never gave His glory to another, a miracle had been wrought avowedly in the name of Him whom the Sanhedrin had not long before adjudged to be a blasphemer, and worthy of death. The controversy about His claim to be a Divine Person was more than settled, but in a way the Jews never expected. God had glorified His servant the Nazarean, in allowing a miracle to be wrought in His own house in the latter's name. Jesus Christ, the Nazarean, was the only one of whom Peter had spoken to the lame man. If, then, His name, without the mention of the God of Abraham, etc., was powerful in the sacred precincts, the crucified One must be more than a mere man. And God, by what had taken place, clearly owned Him as His fellow. A miracle wrought elsewhere would have been a wonderful event; but wrought only in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the court of Jehovah's house, was evidence which could not be rebutted of the truth of the Lord's claim, when on earth, to be equal with God. No marvel, then, is it, that out of the many wonders and signs done at that early time by the Apostles this one has been detailed at length, and is the only one of that date which Luke has been directed to record. No miracle could there be to show in a plainer way the divinity of Him whom the nation had put to death. An Arrest. That it was a miracle the multitude firmly believed ; and those who had the greatest interest in denying it, the high priest and all with him, found themselves confronted with a fact to which they were unable to shut their eyes. It was established in a manner that defied contradiction, and effectually refuted any suggestion of collusion. The man once lame, and well known to have been such from His birth, was walking, and had entered the Temple on his own legs. Nor was that a mere spasmodic effort, for the power acquired he was still using. He who had entered the Temple would shortly appear before the high priest and the company sitting with him. No one denied it. No one attempted to deny it. They were not able, as the historian states, to say anything against it (iv. 14). Moderns have tried to explain it away. Contemporaries attested, however unwillingly, the truth of it. But measures, it was felt, must be taken to stop the movement. Those interested in checking it now interfered. Peter and John were teaching the people, a duty which belonged specially to the priests. They boldly proclaimed the Lord's resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees felt that one of their pet tenets was touched. So

"the priests, and the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (iv. 1, 2). In the Lord’s life the Pharisees were His great opponents. The Sadducees seem for the most part to have let Him alone. But the truth of His resurrection stirred them up, and in the Acts we find them active against the Apostles (v. 17, 23: 6-8). Resurrection of the dead the Pharisees held. The Sadducees, who denied resurrection, could nevertheless sit in the council with them. But resurrection from the dead, a fact actually accomplished, brought out their antagonism to the truth all the stronger. If apostolic preaching was true, resurrection could no longer be denied. Peter and John then must be arrested. Their liberty indeed might be curtailed. Power could effect that; and it did. Yet was the work to be stopped? Many who had heard them believed; and the men - for of the males only is the number stated - now reached to five thousand. What the whole assembly numbered, when the women were reckoned in, is left unstated.

Before the Council. The two Apostles, kept in ward for the night, for it was evening when they were arrested, were to be brought before the council on the morrow. These two Galilean fishermen were for the first time placed in the position of defendants before the leading people of their nation. Annas, the high priest,* and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, with the rulers, elders, and scribes, were gathered together in Jerusalem. The sight of that assembly might naturally have overawed the prisoners. And perhaps it was intended by such an array to intimidate them. But did it ? Their position, though to them a new one, had been foreseen by the Lord, who had warned them that they would be brought before kings and rulers for His sake. He, too, had encouraged them by the promise of the Holy Ghost to teach them what they should then say. His words were verified as to their standing before rulers. Would His promise also be fulfilled ? We shall see. Before Annas, and before Caiaphas, the Lord had stood, and was formally adjudged by the latter to have been a blasphemer. What must have been the feelings of these men as they looked on the two disciples, and were aware of the miracle wrought in the name of Jesus Christ 1 Had they stamped out the movement? It had taken new life since its Founder’s death. And these two humble men, questioned as to the power and the name in which they had healed the man, Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, now answered without hesitation. The Lord’s promise to His disciples was indeed fulfilled.

* The high-priestly dignity was conferred on different persons by the Roman government. Annas had been deposed, and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, appointed in his place. That Annas had authority morally, though not actually, the Lord’s examination before him (John 18:1-40 :) indicates. He may therefore still have been called high priest (see Luke 3:2), as having once filled the pontifical office. Sure we are that Luke is writing of that which he had searched out. So if we cannot explain the reference here to Annas as high priest, it is because there is something with which we are unacquainted. Considering, too, how many things have heen cleared up in our day previously unexplainable, it is wiser for us to confess our ignorance, and to wait for fuller light, than to charge the historian with ignorance, till we are quite sure that we are better informed than he was. Of John and Alexander nothing definite seems known. Lightfoot identifies the former with Rabbi Johanan Ben Zacoai. Grotius says he was known to rabbinical writers as "John the priest." Alexander has been identified by some as the brother of Philo Judaeus. The names of the two defendants are household words, and their service is imperishably preserved in the inspired writings. The history of John and Alexander, well known at the time, has sunk into almost oblivion.

Great ones of earth are often well-nigh forgotten, when servants of God of their day are remembered and had in honour.

We give the Apostle's reply in the words of the Revised Version: "Ye rulers of the people, and elders, If we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth [or, the Nazarean], whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved " (iv. 8-12).

Such a bold reply was probably anything but expected. It would seem to have taken them very much by surprise. Unlearned and ignorant men they thought these two. Not understanding that they were, as we might say, graduates in a school to which these doctors were strangers, they marvelled at them, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And the man which was healed being present with them, they could say nothing against it. Sadducees as they were, the miraculous cure they could not gainsay, though done in the name of One whom, according to their tenets, they could only regard as a dead and non-existent man. Twice already have we had addresses by Peter. In both, as in this one, the resurrection of the Lord is a prominent feature. In each, too, some Old Testament scripture prophetic of Christ is adduced. So by degrees truth about Him is unfolded ; and we learn in these early chapters of the Acts of different lights in which He was presented. On the day of Pentecost Peter called attention to the predictions by David of his death, resurrection, and ascension, and the consequences deducible - that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. In Solomon's porch Peter told his hearers that He was the Prophet like unto Moses, of whom that lawgiver had written. And now before the council he declared that the Lord was the stone referred to in Psalms 118:1-29 : One marked difference, however, has to be noticed in these addresses. To the people the Apostle offers forgiveness and full blessing if they repented. To the rulers he does not here mention repentance, contenting himself with telling them that in none other name was there salvation, than in the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified. And though on another occasion (Acts 5:31) he tells the rulers that God has exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, thus leaving them without excuse for continuing in their opposition to the truth, there is no pressing on them, as there was on the people, to avail themselves of present grace and salvation. It was indeed for them as for others, if they would; but not in their capacity of rulers. They must come into it simply as penitents.

Deliberation, The council had heard the defence. Deliberation next followed, the Apostles having been first commanded to go outside, till the decision should be communicated. But we, privileged, as it were, to be present at their deliberation, know what passed within the council chamber. The arrest had been evidently a great mistake, for they found that they could do nothing to the Apostles. The judicial power can never afford rashly to take up a case, and then to find it must drop it. Such a course necessarily tends to bring itself into disrepute and discredit before men. Yet what had they done? They had kept two men in ward for a whole night for a good deed done to an impotent man! That was the light in which Peter put it, and against which they could urge nothing. A semblance of authority must, however, be maintained; so they decided to threaten them. But

why threaten people who admittedly had only done a good deed? Foolish indeed did these doctors and rulers appear. The Decision. In solemn form, doubtless, the Apostles were called in to hear the sentence of the court. They charged them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus (iv. 18). Vain attempt on the part of Annas, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and all the kindred of the high priest! Submission to that order on the part of the Apostles, which perhaps they had expected, they learned at once was refused. And now Peter and John together speak (the former only had addressed the council before), and distinctly refuse compliance with their demand, but base refusal on grounds which none could challenge: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (19, 20). Again and still more did the rulers threaten them, but "let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done" .

Thus ended the first conflict with the ecclesiastical power. From it the council did not come off victorious. The Apostles were not intimidated by the high priests' presence, nor did they fear their threats. The rulers, however, feared the populace. What had been gained? The miracle had been the more extensively advertised, and the highest ecclesiastical authority in the land had set its seal to its reality. The enemy was this time completely foiled. The Galilean fishermen, ignorant and unlearned men, as they regarded them, had braved the anger of the council, which confessed itself powerless to punish them. Their own Company. Permitted, as it were, as we have been to be present at the deliberation of the council, we are now permitted to be present in the same way with the apostolic company in the place where they were assembled. The two rejoining the rest, repeated all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them. Did any heart in the company quail? Did any question the propriety of the boldness of the two ? All, we learn, were of one accord, and with one voice they lifted up their hearts unitedly in prayer to God as the Lord, the Adon or Adonai of the Old Testament - Luke probably translating into Greek what they uttered in Aramaic, and so using the term for Lord, Despotes, found in the Septuagint at times * as the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew Adon or Adonai. To Him, the Lord and the Creator, they turned, and quoted the opening clauses of the second Psalm, which they, divinely taught, understood had begun now to receive its fulfilment. The conflict of which it speaks had commenced with the Lord's condemnation and crucifixion. The Psalm is distinctly prophetic. To no king of old could it refer in any measure of fulness. Of the Lord Jesus, and of God's counsels about Him, and the advice to people with reference to Him (12) the Psalm treats. For the conflict then begun will only end in the final victory and supremacy of that Son, Jehovah's Anointed. Those gathered together in prayer recognised then the character of the times, and asked for that which they required. What was that? Shelter from persecution? Power to crush their enemies? No. But that with all boldness they might speak the Word, God stretching forth His hand, not to shield them, but to heal others, and that signs and wonders might be done in the name of His holy servant Jesus, What a picture is presented! The whole company in prayer before God, asking for boldness to speak, and looking up for Him to work in the name of His holy Servant! Were they ignorant of what that might involve? Assuredly not. Bold had been Peter and John before the council. Was it bravado assumed for the occasion? We see here that it was not. And we must be impressed with the intense earnestness of them all, who, whilst realising the gravity of their position, were undismayed by the threats uttered, and by the power that might be called out against them.

* Once only, Proverbs 29:25, is Despotes used in the Septuagint to express Jehovah. The Answer. They had prayed. They were heard, and speedily answered. The place was shaken "where they were assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:1; Acts 4:3). "They were filled with the Spirit" - a term used for the most part of some special act on the part of God, making the vessel full for the time being of the Spirit, and which should be distinguished from the phrase "full of the Spirit." To fresh attempts to mar and to stop the work are we next introduced.

04.10. CORRUPTION AND PERSECUTION.

CORRUPTION AND PERSECUTION.

ACTS IV. 32 - 5: 42.

CHRISTIAN love continued unimpaired. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any one that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). In thought and feeling, as well as in affection, they were fully united, and they continued to give proof of this, in that they still had all things common. Such was the picture which the Christian community presented to an observer. Happiness, confidence, and love reigned among them. The Resurrection. An aggressive work, however, went on at the same time. "With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (33). To His resurrection the earnest attention of those outside was especially called. It was one of the great subjects of early apostolic preaching (i. 22, 2: 24-32, 3: 15, 4: 2-10, 5: 30). Much hangs on it. If the Lord is risen, it is because God has raised Him from the dead, and has thus openly espoused His cause. He is risen, not like Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and others, to return to corruption, but never again to die (Acts 13:34). Death has no more dominion over Him (Romans 6:9). He is alive, then, for ever - the living One (Revelation 1:18). Moreover, He was raised, because it was not possible that He should be holden of death (Acts 2:24). For He was holy and righteous, and His resurrection proclaims that. Decisive proof then of what He was, His resurrection also bears on the future of all who die. For He is become the first-fruits of them that are asleep, and the witness and pledge that all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:20). This truth bears, too, on the fact of a coming judgment, the certainty of which is thereby placed beyond contradiction, the day being appointed, and the risen One being marked out as the future Judge (Acts 17:31). All therefore are concerned in consequences which flow from it. Saints, too, have a special interest in it, because it demonstrates God's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ, and assures them that He, delivered for their offences, was raised for their justification (Romans 4:25). To preach, then, the resurrection of Christ was to convict the Jews of sin in putting Him to death, and to announce the defeat by God of all their plans, stripping off at the same time that cloak of religious zeal in which they had endeavoured to enwrap their conduct. It left them without excuse, whilst it pointed to the ground on which forgiveness of sins was preached - viz., God's acceptance of the sacrifice. "With great power," therefore, we read," gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" - 1:e., the Christian community. A Common Fund. This grace was exemplified in contributions to the common fund. Poverty characterised many of the saints at Jerusalem. More than once alms were brought to them from afar (Acts 11:29-30; Acts 24:17). Want at this time would have been felt by many had these contributions failed. But instead, none among them lacked (iv. 34); and each in need received, and that daily (vi. 1), out of the common fund. Of the formation of this fund we have already read (ii. 45). How it was replenished the historian here informs us. Free offerings, the produce of sales of property, swelled the balance of this Christian exchequer.

Barnabas. Of many who contributed to it we know nothing. But of two different parties we are now to read: that of Barnabas, who gave up all the proceeds of the sale of his land; and that of Ananias and Sapphira his wife, who surreptitiously kept back part of theirs. Barnabas was a Levite. His own name was Joseph; * but he received the surname, or appellation, of Barnabas in consequence of the character of his ministry, as an exhorter. Evidently that was his special gift (xi. 23). And his surname, which means son of exhortation, rather than consolation, distinctly implies it. Here for the first time he appears on the scene, destined afterwards to play for a time no unimportant part in the great work of evangelising the heathen. A Levite, of the island of Cyprus, and therefore a Hellenistic Jew, he, in common with Paul, also one of that class by birth, was called out by name to commence the great missionary work in Asia Minor (xiii. 2). At present all that we learn of him is that he sold his field - for Levites could possess land of their own - and of his own free will he laid the price of it at the Apostles' feet.

* So some authorities render.

Corruption. To the other instance of imparting to the common fund we are now to be directed. The happy and prosperous condition of the assembly could not but attract the attention of one unseen by mortal eye, yet ever ready to devise plans to mar, if possible, the work of God. The happiness of our first parents, and their continued enjoyment of the garden of pleasure, or delight (as the Hebrew word Eden means), was not unnoticed by the devil, and he succeeded - for God allowed it - in breaking in upon the one, and causing the termination of the other. The man became the accuser of the woman, and both were driven out of Paradise, with the hope, however, of the woman's seed to appear, who should bruise the serpent's head. That One had appeared. But crucified by His creatures, who were led on to that by the prince of this world, He had left earth, had ascended to heaven, and had now sent the Holy Ghost from the Father. In consequence there was inaugurated a work on earth such as had never been known before. Power was displayed, and a ministry was in active exercise, which bowed hearts like bulrushes, and steadily increased the number of the adherents of the new faith. To stop that work if possible, or to mar it, if it could not be wholly checked, was the design of Satan. Intimidation had been tried, but without effect. Other means must therefore be resorted to. Nor was the enemy sparing in his attempts. Corruption working from within should be attempted, and persecution from without, and even martyrdom should follow. For the former plan to be carried out - that of corrupting - it was needful to find some within who could be worked on by cupidity, in company with the desire of earning a title before men for large-hearted liberality. For since some had been found who generously and honestly parted with their possessions for the benefit of their poorer brethren, the effort to introduce corruption within the assembly should be masked under the semblance of truthfulness, and of as full a surrender of earthly possessions. Instruments were forthcoming, and quickly utilised, in the persons of Ananias and Sapphira his wife. Probably - for there is nothing to indicate the contrary - they were home-born Jews, natives of the Holy Land. A possession they sold. Its extent or its locality is alike unknown to us. We know it was land (v. 3-8), but its realised value, or the amount kept back, these details Luke has not supplied. The two, the husband and wife, were agreed in this act. And Ananias went to the Apostles and laid at their feet a certain part of the sum they had received, whilst professing to bring thither the whole of it. No human witness appeared against them. "Very likely the purchaser was a Jew, who had no interest in exposing them. The plan was in their eyes skilfully laid; and seemingly it was being successfully carried out. A character they

would earn for liberality as good as that obtained by Joseph the Levite, who was born in Cyprus. Deceit and lying the enemy doubtless hoped would thus get a footing in the assembly; and the leaven working, the Spirit would be grieved, and God must necessarily come in as a Judge, as He had in Eden in the day of the Fall. Such, probably, was the devil's hope. He had succeeded in Eden: would he succeed at Jerusalem? The devil had one object. Ananias and Sapphira, thinking only of themselves, had another. All seemed going on prosperously for him and them, till the man, having brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet, Peter's unexpected attack exposed the whole plot, and confounded the machinations of Satan.

Ananias convicted. Direct and prompt was the Apostle's challenge. "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? After it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (v. 3, 4). Ananias appears to have been the instigator in this matter; his wife, we are told, was privy to it (2). In Eden the serpent approached the woman. On this occasion he first turned to the man. And Peter addressed him in a way evidently unlooked for. In the place of accepting the gift and commending him, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" were the first words of the solemn questions with which he met him. The Apostle, be it observed, speaks to him as professedly a Christian, and holding him responsible for yielding to the temptation (1 Peter 5:8-9). Now the sin was great, far more heinous than he or others might suppose. For in the assembly of Christians, and professedly a member of it, he was in the company of those amongst whom the Holy Ghost dwelt on earth. He had therefore lied to Him in keeping back part of the price of the land when professing to have given up all of it. He might think he had lied only to man. He had really lied to God. And no extenuating circumstances could he plead. For no one demanded that sacrifice of him. No one could force the sale of his property. No one could claim that the price realised should be paid into the relief fund. He was perfectly free to retain the land or to sell it, and when sold he had perfect power over the disposal of its money value. Community of goods, it was thus authoritatively declared, was by no means obligatory. Freedom there was for any to give. Freedom, too, for any to retain their possessions, whether of land or of money, only, whatever was done, was to be done in uprightness. And on this, the first example, we believe, of the contrary, summary and solemn judgment had to be awarded. Ananias, struck dumb, it would seem, for he said not a word, immediately fell down dead, and was carried out for burial. How real and how solemn a truth is that of the Spirit's personal presence in the assembly !

Sapphira. On all present great fear came. Yet for a few hours the matter could not have been noised abroad ; for Sapphira, his wife, came in about three hours after, ignorant of that which had taken place. Taxed by Peter, she stood to that to which Ananias and she had agreed. Judgment was speedily pronounced. "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." Adam and Eve were sentenced on the day of their fall, and from it there lay no appeal. Ananias and Sapphira were sentenced, so far as this world is concerned, on the day of their deceit, and that solemn sentence was immediately carried out. God's governmental dealing was displayed in the sentence passed on Adam and Eve. His governmental dealing was also displayed in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. The entrance of sin into the world brought death in its train. The first attempt to introduce corruption into the assembly was visibly stamped out, as the bodies of the

offenders were carried out for burial. There is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16). Such is here exemplified. A Result. On Christians, and on men in the world, an effect was produced. "Great fear came upon all the Church,* and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them : but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:11-14). All were, for the time at least, solemnised. Hypocrisy received a warning and a check. Who not real would dare to join the company of those who had such power, and had exercised it ? Nevertheless, the work of God went on. This attempt of the enemy to mar it completely failed. The Spirit was working in power as much as ever. Tokens of this in the signs and wonders wrought by the Apostles the crowd could take knowledge of, whilst the Word dealt with souls, so that the number of true believers greatly increased - multitudes, both of men and women, being added to the Christian community. The blessed effect of ministry in the Word - for many we learn became believers (14) - is just mentioned; but no notes of any Apostle’s discourse at this time have been preserved.

* Here for the first time really is the Church, or assembly, mentioned. That which did not exist on earth when the Lord was here is now recognised as having been formed. The assembly of Christ, the Church of the living God, was in existence, and was quite distinct from the congregation of the Lord of the Old Testament Scriptures. We say really mentioned, for the reader may remember that "the Church" should be omitted in 2: 47. Between Matthew 18:1-35 : and Acts 5:1-42 : the term never occurs. Not so, however, is it with the signs and wonders. Of these the historian has given us a sample. Healing power was richly displayed; for the streets became somewhat like the wards of a hospital, seeing that the sick were carried out into them, and laid upon beds and couches, waiting not for medical consultation over their case, but that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them. Healing they looked for. Healing, we understand, they got. God, who had acted in that solemn way in government, striking down those two offenders by death - God was acting in this blessed way, bestowing healing on diseased bodies, and communicating strength to enfeebled frames. Awe had fallen upon all, as they heard of the power of death which had been in exercise through Peter. Gladness now must surely have filled many a heart, as that Apostle’s shadow falling on them, disease and infirmity departed from them. Are we not reminded at this juncture, as well as at a later time, of the Lord’s words in John 14:12 : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father" ? The effect of Peter’s first sermon illustrated this. The beneficial results of his overshadowing sick ones, as well as the handkerchiefs brought from Paul’s body (Acts 19:11-12), confirm it. Nor was blessing confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Multitudes came from the cities round with sick folk, and those under demoniacal thraldom received what was wanted. Every one was healed. Never before, surely, had such sights been witnessed in Jerusalem and in its environs - the streets crowded with sufferers craving relief ; the roads converging on the capital peopled with afflicted ones on their way to get healing. How often since has one suffering much in body been taken many miles, only to learn at the end that there was no cure to be looked for, or even temporary relief to be procured ! At this time it was not relief that was administered; it was healing that was dispensed. The God of all grace was working on hearts. The Father of mercies was displaying His compassion in healing the sick, and delivering those vexed with unclean spirits.

Renewed Efforts. Utterly impossible the ecclesiastical authorities felt that such things should be permitted to go on. And now they had, as they thought, a legal right to interpose, and to put the movement down. The Apostles were acting in open defiance of the command of the Sanhedrin, and were evidently enlisting more than ever the populace on their side by the miracles wrought and the healing dispensed. Constituted authority could not be thus bearded with impunity in the metropolis of Judaism. A blow must be struck, which should be at once bold and effective, that all might see that the authorities were not afraid to touch those whom the people, now more than ever, magnified. So the high priest and all that were with him, which was the sect of the Sadducees, arrested the Twelve and put them all in prison. On the previous occasion the priests and the captain of the Temple - 1:e., the Temple guard - arrested Peter and John, who were in Solomon's porch (iv. 1). They had jurisdiction within its precincts, and so interfered. But now it was the Sanhedrin - at least the Sadducean members of it, with the high priest at their head - which had power over matters ecclesiastical in connection with the members of the nation, - a power conferred on the high priest by Julius Caesar prior to the birth of Christ.*

* The terms of this part of Csesar's decree, as given by Josephus, Ant, XIV. 10: 2, are : "And if at any time hereafter there arise any questions about the Jewish customs, I will that he [I.e., Hyrcanus and his successors] determine the same." This decree, so important to the Jews, was by command of Julius Cassar to "be openly proposed in a table of brass, both in Greek and in Latin."

Divine Interposition. At what hour the arrest took place is not recorded ; but as the council could only legally sit by day, the examination of the Apostles was deferred till the following morning. So to the common prison were they all consigned, the doors of which were not only safely secured, but keepers stood before them likewise. Impossible, their captors considered, that they should escape during the night. Darkness now settled on the city ; but the eye of the Lord was on that public prison, and on His servants therein confined; and ere morning came an angel had opened the doors and had brought them out, and commanded them to go into the Temple and to speak to the people "all the words of this life." At about daybreak they began to carry out their commission without fear of any possible consequences; and when the council was assembling to try them, they were preaching to the people in the Temple, though as yet the council was unaware of that. Sending, however, officers to the prison to summon them, it was discovered that the prison was empty, and the prisoners had escaped. But when and how, none of the guard could say, nor could the officers sent to bring the prisoners suggest. All seemed secure outside the prison; the keepers were there, and the doors were shut. None of the guard had seen them opened, and none of them entertained the slightest suspicion that they were guarding an empty gaol! Angelic power, however, could, and did, open the doors without arousing the keepers. For when God pleases He can cause a deep sleep to fall on men - supernatural slumber, which keeps its subjects in its embrace, till the Almighty permits them to shake it off. It may very probably have been thus in this case.

Before the Council. Returning without the prisoners, the officers had to tell the council that their errand had proved abortive. All seemed, they said, secure without, but the prisoners were not within, nor could they tell whither they had gone - no trace of them was left. It was no ordinary escape from custody, nor was there any proof of treachery in the guard. Perplexity filled the minds of the authorities, and they appeared thoroughly baffled, till word was brought that the Apostles were in the Temple, very actively propagating their doctrine. Sending thither for them, they were

brought, but without violence, the officers fearing the people; and now confronting the council, they heard what the high priest had to say against them. "We straitly charged you" - so we should read - "that ye should not teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us " (v. 28). Disobedience to the ecclesiastical authority was the offence put in the foreground, whilst evidence of a short memory was manifested in the concluding words of the high priest. The attempt to make the Apostles transgressors was specious, but ineffectual. The Pharisaic section of the council evidently laid no stress on that. And as for the charge of " intending to bring this man's blood on us," it was foolish in the extreme. For had not the chief priests and scribes in answer to Pilate cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children" ? (Matthew 27:25). They then and there accepted the responsibility of putting the Lord to death. Weak indeed was this attempt to put the Apostles in the wrong. They knew full well the resolute reply of Peter and John, when before the council on the previous occasion, and the grounds on which they then based their refusal to bow to the command of their judges. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). Threaten they might, as they did; but there was One whom Peter and John feared far more than the council, and hence they had refused compliance with their former demand. And now, in answer to the high priest, Peter, a second time the spokesman, and here for all his colleagues, thus delivered himself: "We ought to obey God rather than men" Did the rulers raise a question of disobedience of the authorities? There was another authority greater than them - even God. If these two are in conflict, God must be obeyed and human authorities be disregarded. That question simply settled, the charge of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine was next taken up. How could they help that, considering what God had done, and was doing by the presence of the Holy Ghost. So Peter proceeded: "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 unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (v. 29-32). The offence was repeated, and the guilt of the rulers in crucifying the Lord was reaffirmed to their face. Their anger was therefore kindled.

Cut to the heart, they now took counsel to slay them. No threats, nor imposing display of authority, could stop the mouths of their prisoners. Death only could close them, and rid them of such persistent accusers. To death they wished to consign them. At this juncture, however, a hindrance was discovered. The council must condemn them. Could the council be persuaded to do it? Could they secure a unanimous verdict against the Apostles, as they had against the Lord ? The two rival factions, at one as to the Lord's condemnation, were not at one on this occasion. And Gamaliel, the spokesman here of the Pharisees, interposed, and turned the Sadducean section from their murderous intent.

Gamaliel. The bitterest enemies of the Lord when in life were the Pharisees. His life, His teaching, condemned their practices, and they resented that. The bitterest enemies to the Apostles in Jerusalem after the Cross were the Sadducees (iv. 1, 5: 17, 23: 6-9). The doctrine of the Resurrection, the truth of it in the Lord's case, controverted their peculiar tenets; so they desired to put the Apostles down, and to silence them in one way or another. With that, however, the Pharisees had no sympathy; and by their spokesman Gamaliel, a man held in reputation among the Jews, advice was now to be tendered, the wisdom of which none of the opposite party could

gainsay. Of Gamaliel we read again later on, learning there that the Apostle Paul had been in his earlier days one of his pupils; or, as he himself describes it, " brought up at the feet of Gamaliel" (xxii. 3). This the Apostle Paul adduced in proof of his former Pharisaic principles, having been zealous towards God, like his opponents, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. No one, when St. Paul mentioned Gamaliel, would have accused the latter of any leaning towards Christianity. Certainly on the present occasion his orthodoxy was by all unquestioned. Further, his learning was acknowledged. His reputation, too, was made. Any counsel from him would naturally meet with respect from the rest of the Sanhedrin. It would have weight with the chief doctors of the day. And if he be the man celebrated in the Talmud as Rabban - 1:e., our master - the son of Simon, a grandson of Hillel, as is generally thought, we can understand the Apostle Paul speaking of him as his former teacher, as well as the prompt acceptance now of his advice, Pharisee though he was, by the Sadducean part of the council.

Something remarkable had clearly taken place since the whole number of the Apostles had been brought out of prison without human instrumentality, and without the slightest suspicion of connivance on the part of the guard before the doors. What power, then, was at work, was a very pertinent question. Caution in their proceedings it was well at that juncture to observe. So at the command of Gamaliel the Apostles were ordered to withdraw, whilst the council deliberated as to their judgment. Gamaliel then spoke in the absence of the prisoners, and, impressed with the startling occurrence of the escape from the prison, he counselled delay in dealing with the movement. It was wise advice, indeed. And he fortified it by reference to facts in history, with which all present were doubtless conversant. Of two men he spoke, self-assumed leaders in revolts, whose efforts to carry out their purposes signally and ignominiously failed. The first was a man named Theudas,* who having raised a faction, and giving himself out to be somebody, got a following of about four hundred men. But he was slain, his deluded followers were dispersed by the secular power, and it all came to nothing. After him arose Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing or enrolment, referred to in Luke 2:1-2. Some followed him. He too perished, and as many as obeyed him were scattered abroad. In both these instances Gamaliel directs attention to this - that the end of the leaders was death, and then their followers were dispersed. Was this new movement to end like those ? It was true a parallel could so far be traced. As with Theudas and Judas, so with the Lord - death had removed Him from earth. Would the parallel become still more complete by the ultimate dispersion of His followers? Time would show. "Let them alone," he said : "if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38-39). Here was the gist of the matter. Was it of God, or was it not ? Time manifested that it was of God. It has never, therefore, been overthrown. But the rulers who fought against the Apostles - where are they? Then were Theudas and Judas of that class which the Lord called thieves and robbers? (John 10:8). Probably they were. So the sheep did not hear them. But now it was different. The Shepherd had come. The sheep heard Him.

* Who this Theudas was is unknown. Josephus mentions a man of this name who stirred up a revolt. But he lived years after the time to which Gamaliel must refer. A great number followed him, - so writes that historian. A small number of adherents the former had, - about four hundred men, Gamaliel said. Evidently they were different persons. The name Theudas was not uncommon. Some have thought to invalidate Luke’s testimony here, by supposing that the man mentioned by

Josephus is the one intended. A little examination leads to the conclusion that the men were quite different, and the historian's veracity remains unimpeached. He is not convicted of an anachronism. To this counsel they unanimously gave heed. The Apostles, called back, were to hear the decision of their judges. Some show of authority must be displayed. Their injunction to Peter and John had been openly disobeyed. Severer measures must on this occasion be taken. So they beat them all, and then dismissed them, charging them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Thus ended the trial and this second conflict with the new movement. Were the Apostles discouraged ? Were they effectually cowed by the stripes ? Their judges could see what effect they had produced; for those beaten departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the Name, as Luke probably wrote. Suffering and shame were taken as an honour, and not regarded as a disgrace, by these men. Would the charge of the rulers be treated with respect and command obedience? "Every day, in the Temple, and at home, they ceased not to teach and preach that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 5:42). Threats did not intimidate them; sufferings did not silence them ; ignominious treatment did not cool their ardour. Verily, their prayer in 4: 29 had received the answer they desired. All boldness characterised them. The Holy Ghost. To a truth met with in this chapter we must call attention. We refer to the remarkable announcement made by Peter of the Holy Ghost as a witness distinct from, and in addition to, the Apostles. "We are witnesses," he said to the council, "of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (v. 32). Of course the Spirit spoke and wrought by the Apostles. But though unseen by human eyes, He was Himself a witness, because, as we here learn, of His personal presence on earth, of that to which the Apostles also had borne their testimony. This was in character with the Lord's announcement, "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 15:26-27). Given only to those who obey God - but to all such, a special blessing therefore in which they alone can share - His presence here concerns every one. No one should be in ignorance of it. He is on earth. He dwells on earth in the Church of God (Ephesians 2:22). As we have already seen, He came, sent from the Father and by the Son at Pentecost, and He will remain dwelling here till the rapture takes place. Hence it is that He joins with the Church - the Bride - in the request to the Lord to come (Revelation 22:17): "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come," etc. As dwelling, too, on earth - a Divine Person, the Third Person of the Godhead - He directs the work down here, guiding the labourers as to their fields of service. Of this we have examples further on. But besides this, His very presence as dwelling on earth is a standing testimony to the sin of the world in rejecting the Lord. (See John 16:7-11.) He is here because the Lord is absent, and will depart before He returns to reign. For though always working on earth in grace since the Fall, He never came to dwell here till Pentecost. He did not therefore, as Scripture calls it, "come" till then. Hence the Apostle John could write in his Gospel (vii. 39), "The Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This term was not may be called almost a technical one, being used to describe a person's absence from earth (Genesis 5:24; Genesis 42:36). Now the Spirit, who had first come at Pentecost, was dwelling here when Peter addressed the council. He dwells here still; and the fact of His presence gave emphasis to the charge brought by that same Apostle against Ananias and Sapphira. They "lied to the Holy Ghost." They "tempted the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts 5:3; Acts 5:9).

Hitherto, however, in the Acts, beyond the recital of His outpouring at Pentecost, and the fact that believers could and did receive the Holy Ghost, we have not read much about Him. His testimony by the Apostles to the Lord Jesus Christ has, until now, chiefly occupied us. But here (v. 32) His presence on earth is asserted, and His being a witness for Christ is afiirmed. This is dispensational truth, and a leading feature of the Christian dispensation. God, be it remembered, in the person of the Holy Ghost, now dwells on earth. As Jehovah, God had dwelt in the midst .of His redeemed people Israel. Leaving them because of their idolatry, the Son of God in due time came, and tabernacled among them in flesh. Now, since the Son has been rejected, the Holy Ghost dwells here, witnessing by His presence to the acceptance on high of the sacrifice of the Lord, having come consequent on His ascension, and sent by the Father and by the Son (John 14:16-17; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-11). Hence from what we have stated, it is evident that this must be the last dispensation ere Divine power deals with the enemies of God. Jehovah as such, the God of Israel, forsook His temple, because of that people's sins. Next the Son was cast out of the world by men. God's last appeal, then, is made by the coming, and the effects of that coming, of the Holy Ghost. Will that be more successful ? Attempts to stop or mar the work the historian has related. Their failure he has also recounted. Other attempts he will bring to the notice of his readers. Baffled they will also be. Yet the world, we have to say, has not been won to God.

04.11. MURMURINGS AND MARTYRDOM.

MURMURINGS AND MARTYRDOM.

Acts 6:7: THE hostility of the ecclesiastical power was now pronounced. No doubt could be entertained that it would strain every nerve to crush the movement. But the great opponent and the determined enemy was one unseen, though ever active. Power from without the Church should still then be exercised against it, and efforts from within to break up the harmony and disintegrate the community were not to be neglected. Of these last we are now first to read.

Murmurings. Community of goods, as we have seen (Acts 5:4), was never enjoined by the Apostles, though it displayed, in a way not to be mistaken, the feeling of oneness among the saints engendered by the baptism of the Spirit. Poverty was from the outset a marked feature of the Church in Jerusalem. To relieve that, daily ministrations were carried on. Through this the enemy now sought to work, and to sow dissension among the converts. A cry was raised that the widows of the Grecian Jews were neglected to the advantage of the native-born Hebrews. Hence there began a murmuring against the Hebrews - 1:e., the native Jews - on the part of the Grecian Jews, called Hellenists, because speaking Greek.*

* "Dost thou know Greek?" - Hellenisti (Acts 21:37) - were the words of the captain to Paul. A Greek-speaking Jew was therefore called Hellenistes - 1:e., one who spoke Greek.

Hellenists. A few remarks on this class may be acceptable to the reader. Here for the first time are they mentioned. In 9: 29 they are mentioned a second time bv the historian, who never again speaks of them by name. In Jerusalem there must have been no inconsiderable number of them. They had several synagogues, of which it is thought by some that five are mentioned (vi. 9): that of the Libertines or Roman freedmen; that of the Cyrenians of North Africa; that of the Alexandrians; then another for those from Cilicia; and a fifth for those of Proconsular Asia. These different synagogues, and the fact that the Hellenists had synagogues of their own in the capital of Judaism, showed that there was some cleavage between them and the natives - whether caused simply by language or not, it is not easy to say. At all events, they had synagogical interests apart, and probably each synagogue cared for its own poor. To these Greek-speaking Jews, Stephen, perhaps one of them, was exceedingly obnoxious. They disputed with him. And later Paul, who certainly had been one of that class, disputed against them, and stirred up at Jerusalem their animosity to such a pitch that they went about to kill him (ix. 29).

Understanding, then, that the Hellenists had synagogues of their own, it might well happen in the Christian assembly that the widows formerly of that class found themselves neglected by those who had been native-born Jews. Was the community, then, to be broken up by this matter? Were strife and jealousy to get a footing, to mar the peace and joy which had so conspicuously reigned? It was a wily plan of the enemy indeed. Natural feeling is soon stirred, unless grace is active. Parties would then be quickly formed, and the once united company of Christians would be hopelessly rent asunder. This threatened danger was averted by apostolic wisdom under the

guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Deacons appointed. For the Apostles at this juncture interposed, and called a public meeting of the disciples. Had they taken the responsibility of distributing to the necessities of saints, doubtless all would have been satisfied, assured of their impartiality. More important work, however, than serving tables devolved on them. So they thus addressed the assembled disciples: "It is not reason [or, fit] that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (vi. 2-4). The advice accepted, seven men with the above-named qualifications were quickly found and unanimously elected. Instruments fitted for the work were at hand, and all residents in Jerusalem.

"Men of honest report," this was one qualification for the service: the testimony and judgment of others were not to be esteemed of no account. "Full of the Holy Ghost" was another qualification: full, not filled, thus marking the general walk of the individual. Full "of wisdom," - this was the third suggested qualification. Seven men, in whom all these were found, were soon selected. Their names were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch. Some, if not the most, of these, if their names are any index, must have been Hellenistic Jews. Of two of the seven - Stephen and Philip - our historian will have more to tell us. The others who here come on the scene do not appear on the face of the narrative again.

Important Points. Two points here call for attention : the one is, by whom these men were chosen; the other is, by whom they were appointed. Those who appointed them did not choose them ; those who chose them could not appoint them. "Deacons" they are commonly called, yet the historian never so designates them. Clearly it was to an office they were appointed - that of serving tables (Acts 6:1-2). But the qualifications needed for their selection mark them out as different from the deacons of later years (1 Timothy 3:8-10). Their service, too, was a special one, and restricted to the assembly in Jerusalem; for elsewhere such a difficulty, as was met by their appointment, could clearly not have arisen.

Appointed to administer the funds furnished by the saints, it was only fitting that the company of believers should select them. Similarly, at a later time, when St. Paul was making collections in different Churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he left it to those assemblies which contributed to choose the delegates by whom their alms should be carried to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:3; 2 Corinthians 8:19). Those who contribute may justly look that they should have a voice in the selection of the channel through which their bounty is to flow. But though selecting the men, the Apostles it was who appointed them to their office; for appointment to office in the Church of God by ordination, whatever the office might be, was vested in the Apostles, or in those to whom they delegated that power, as to Titus (i. 5), and probably, though that is not stated, to Timothy also. To exercise ministry in the Word, it needed no apostolic authorisation. Ministers of the Word are gifts from the ascended Christ to men (Ephesians 4:11-12), and are set in the assembly by God Himself (1 Corinthians 12:28), who has in that chapter given us, as it were, the table of precedence in the assembly of all who are called to minister to those within it.* On the other hand, to fill an office as that of an elder or a deacon, apostolic authority, direct or indirect, was required (Acts 14:23 ; Titus 1:5). So the Apostles told the assembly to select the men "whom

we may appoint over this business." We should mark the "we" here. It spoke of an authority which none of the company save the Apostles could exercise. The seven selected men set before the Twelve, they prayed and laid their hands on them - an act expressive of their recognition of the duties these were called to discharge, and surely of fellowship with them in it. Here we have the first ordination in the Christian Church - an ordination, we would repeat, not to preach, but to discharge the office of serving tables. In prayer and in the ministry of the Word the Apostles would continue. The serving of tables the seven selected men were to undertake.

* This explains the absence of evangelists in the passage. Their sphere is especially outside the assembly, though equally with teachers gifts from the ascended Christ.

Thus was this danger averted. Grace worked in all. The suggestion of the Apostles was readily accepted. The men were chosen by the assembly, and then set apart solemnly for their work. Did it appear a small service ? True, the Apostles declined to undertake it. They, however, set the seven apart by prayer. They turned to God about them, and doubtless looked up for the grace and wisdom they would need in the discharge of their important work. It concerned the welfare of the assembly. It was no trivial matter in the estimation of the Apostles. It was, we may surely say, no small matter in the eyes of God.

Onward now went the movement, like a rolling river, which ever and anon carries away some fresh objects. This attempt to disintegrate the Church completely failed. The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and even the ranks of the priesthood furnished recruits to the increasing host, for a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). Converts from the populace, converts from the priests, and that in no small number - such was the report which the missionary record of that day could have furnished.

Stephen. Hitherto the ministry of Peter is all that we have been furnished with. Another one now comes on the scene, not an Apostle, but one, and the first named of the seven, chosen to serve tables. To minister in temporal things was one thing; but he could labour in the Word as well. And that he did. The service to which he was appointed did not prevent his testimony to the Lord Jesus going forth, and that in a powerful way. But in character with the Gospel work amongst the Jews, the first thing that we have is a notice of the great wonders and miracles which he wrought. Yet though full of grace and power, a vessel chosen, and wonderfully used, we have no detailed account of any wonder or miracle that he was empowered to perform.

Much, how much, could surely have been recounted of the display of the power of the Spirit by the early Christians. How little has been placed on record! It was not the aim of the Church’s first historian, guided as he was by the Holy Ghost, to exalt men, or to hold them forth as prodigies of their day. Besides, as miracles were to draw the attention of those who witnessed them to something new taking place - the introduction of a new dispensation - a full account of the wonders wrought would be out of place in a history designed to instruct succeeding generations, not just in a record of displays of almighty power, but in the character of the work which was going forward to win souls to God and to His Son. Now, since the ministry of the Word in. the power of the Spirit alone does this, we see Divine wisdom displayed in presenting from time to time an outline of that ministry, whilst passing over very many details of the exercise of miraculous power.

Besides, however, working miracles, Stephen was a champion for the faith. Certain of the Hellenistic Jews disputed with him. Some from different synagogues of that portion of the nation, residents, we suppose, in Jerusalem, or at all events visiting there, took part in this. Numbers were on their side. He alone is mentioned as valiantly contending for the truth. But numbers did not overawe him. Alone he could face his opponents, and discomfit them. "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). An awkward antagonist they had met with. For not merely did they not convince him, nor could they silence him; but the wisdom he displayed, and the Holy Spirit by whom he spake, they could not resist. "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist nor to gainsay" (Luke 21:15), had been the Lord's promise. And the evangelist, who has preserved that, here tells us how truly it was fulfilled. One man could confound a multitude. Intellects of no mean order, if we may judge from Saul of Tarsus, might be arrayed against him. But the Holy Ghost was with him, and all his opponents felt themselves completely baffled.

Plots. Something, however, they felt must be done to get rid of such a troublesome disputant. Since arguments could not silence him, nor their dialectical powers confound him, other means must be tried. Men were suborned who declared, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God" (Acts 6:11). It is significant that the honour of Moses is here put in the foreground before that of God. Like straw on water, it shows whence the current flowed. Would a charge in that form have been dictated by the Holy Ghost? The accusation, however, did work in stirring up the populace. A popular cry may be raised without any demand on the part of the multitude for proof of the accusation. It was thus, evidently, in this case. For the people, the elders, and the scribes were aroused by the statements of those despicable people ready to commit perjury to procure Stephen's condemnation. Seizing him, they hurried him before the council.

Definite statements had now to be made. The council could not convict him on such a general charge as these informers had propagated. Witnesses must be forthcoming. And as in the Lord's case, so here - Stephen's enemies could bring forward none but false ones. The charge of blasphemy was now verbally dropped for the more precise statement, "This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth [or, the Nazoreean] shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us"(vi. 13, 14).

Such was the indictment to which Stephen would have to answer. Naturally all eyes were turned to the prisoner. What did they see? One pallid with fear? One trembling for the consequences of his acts, and shrinking from punishment? No! A sight they witnessed to which they were entirely unaccustomed. "Fastening their eyes on him, they saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel." A criminal about to die: was that the one who stood before them? Eather it was one like an angel prepared to go to heaven. The high priest's voice was now heard saying, "Are these things so?" Then in the midst, as we may well believe, of breathless silence, the voice of Stephen was heard addressing the Sanhedrists, the ecclesiastical judges before whom he was arraigned. His Speech. "Brethren and fathers," he began, the usual way of addressing such a company, if treating them with respect (xxii. 1). "Brethren" would include his equals; "fathers" would refer to the seniors in age, and to all in official position of rule. Then starting with the first beginning of the nation's existence, dating it from Abraham, he rehearses its history to the days of Moses, pointing

out that twice over their ancestors made the great mistake of rejecting the instrument which God had designed for their deliverance. First it was Joseph. Next it was Moses. Joseph's brethren sold into Egypt the one who turned out to be their saviour and deliverer. By his own people Moses was refused in the land of Egypt, and in the wilderness they thrust him from them, and turned back in heart to Egypt. But more. They called Aaron to make for them gods. God then gave them up to serve the host of heaven. Of this Amos is a witness, and Stephen cites him for that purpose (Amos 5:25-27). Rejecting then Moses, they also rejected God (Acts 7:2-40). With these facts before them they might well pause, and carefully consider what they were doing, and whither they might be drifting. The mistake committed in connection with Joseph they had repeated in connection with Moses. What were they doing now? They were repeating that mistake. And in rejecting the Saviour in the person of the Lord Jesus they were really turning from God, and will, as we know, be landed by-and-by in an idolatry of a new and unheard-of kind. To pause then, and reflect, became them; and all the more because Moses, for whom they professed such attachment, had distinctly written of a prophet whom "God," said Stephen, would raise up unto them like unto Moses. Was Stephen denying Moses by preaching the Lord Jesus Christ as the one to whom they should hearken? Groundless was such an accusation with Deuteronomy 18:18-19 before them. And if they were to hearken to that prophet in all he should say unto them, he might - could they deny it - bring fresh revelations, which would effect a change as to the observance of the customs on behalf of which they professed such zeal. Then as to the count in the indictment of speaking against "the holy place," did they not remember that the tabernacle had given place to the Temple; and long after the erection of that latter structure God had declared by the prophet Isaiah that heaven, not a material building on earth, was really His dwelling place? "The heaven is My throne, and the earth is the footstool of My feet: what manner of house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest? Did not My hands make all these things'?" (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2).

Well had Stephen met the accusations. No wonder that his opponents could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake, if what we have in his speech was a sample of his manner of reasoning, as doubtless was the case. Stephen dealt with Scripture, and used that sword with effect, taught of the Spirit how to apply it. And now having met the grave charges brought against him, except that referring to the law, he turned and charged all before him with acting like their fathers in the past, and boldly affirmed that the law, for which they professed such zeal, they had not kept. With what consistency, then, could they ground a charge against him with reference to it? We quote his words : "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do alway resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers : who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53). A heavy indictment this. Children of their fathers they prided themselves to be. What answer could they make to this ? Stephen had met them by the Word. They would reply to him by force. But ere carrying out that purpose, to one more testimony on behalf of the Lord Jesus they had to listen : that would leave them without excuse. The Opened Heavens. Cut to the heart, they gnashed on him with their teeth. So writes the historian, narrating what must have been commonly known. Evidently Stephen's judges were in no condition to conduct a calm and dispassionate inquiry. Anger dominated them, and they showed it. He, perfectly calm, and undismayed by the marked token of their hostility, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

The heavens had been opened on two previous occasions. To Ezekiel they were opened, when a captive at the river Chebar (Ezekiel 1:1; Ezekiel 1:26-28), and about to prophesy of the approaching judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. He then saw visions of God, and the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord, even the likeness of a man on the throne. Six centuries later the heavens were again opened, and the Holy Spirit like a dove descended, and rested on the head of the latest One baptised by John in Jordan - the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:10). In a coming day they will again be opened, and the Lord with His train of heavenly saints will come forth to establish the kingdom of God in power upon earth (Eev. 19: 11). On the present occasion, when the heavens were opened to Stephen, no one came forth; but the faithful witness saw in heaven the One for whom he was suffering on earth. God was thereby ministering to His servant, who was shortly to die as a martyr. Thus his faith should be sustained, and his latest testimony be clear and unique. Whether he had ever seen the Lord when on earth we know not. He knew Him, however, as He beheld Him in heaven, and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God " (Acts 7:56). The Son of Man. Of this One Daniel had written, and in vision he had seen Him (Daniel 7:13). David, too, in the Psalms (viii.) had sung of Him. The Lord Jesus also had distinctly applied this designation to Himself, intimating that He was the one of whom the prophet had written (Mark 14:61-62). Stephen now saw Him as the Son of man and in heaven, and there standing in the place of honour - at the right hand of God. Power, then, belongs to the crucified One, and as Son of man He will one day exercise it; and all things must be placed under His feet whom the Jews had crucified and slain. Many, probably, of the members of the council had been present when the Lord Jesus declared of Himself that He was the Son of man (Luke 22:69-71), and had part in judging Him worthy of death for that. Now Stephen tells them to their face that he could see the One who had once stood at their bar standing at the right hand of God. The inference was plain - a child could draw it. Their guilt was undeniable. The weighty charge just brought against them of murdering the Righteous One was but too true (Acts 7:52). Righteous He was. His presence in heaven attested that. No room was left for any argument as to the validity of His claims. The case was settled. The verdict was against the council. What would they now do?

Martyrdom. Like others since their day, to an unanswerable reply they would resort to force. And apparently without giving him any time for reflection, they hurried Stephen off to execution. For, crying with a loud voice, and stopping their ears, they rushed on him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. No sentence, that we read of, was pronounced. In a state of frenzy they had their way. Stephen was stoned,* the witnesses laying down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. By the law the witnesses were to cast the first stone at the criminal (Deuteronomy 17:7). This was not overlooked at that moment.

* The Jews could only condemn to death with the sanction of the Procurator. At this juncture, however, there was none. Pilate had been ordered to Rome to answer charges made against him, and no one was appointed in his place. The procuratorship was vacant. Further, just at this time Tiberius the emperor died. Events thus favouring, the Sanhedrin, taking things into their own hands, put Stephen to death without fear of being called to account for it. Would Stephen quail before death? Would he now renounce the faith he had preached? Would he still confess the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Master? He speaks. But not to his murderers. To One in heaven he addresses himself. To Him who is God he spoke, yet not as the God of Israel. All could hear

what he said, and to whom he spoke. He called to One in heaven by a title, and by that name which witnessed of His humanity - "Lord Jesus." They stoned him. He was calling and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit " (Acts 7:59). To the crucified One he committed himself in that solemn hour. To Him who had not saved Himself from death the dying martyr prayed, and entrusted to His keeping his interests in quiet confidence, - his interests, his future, his spirit. What a testimony! How much was Christ to him! What a confession was his! To Christ he committed himself, when absent from the body. In dying, as in living, he confessed Jesus as Lord. The first Christian of whose death we read has taught us what Christ could be to him in his dying hour. And one who stood by, that young man named Saul, years after, in the prospect of his death, could write: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). What is not Christ to the believer in the hour of the dissolution of his body!

Again, though only once more, Stephen’s voice was heard, and that in accents clear and strong. He had spoken to the Lord about himself. He now speaks to Him about his murderers. Familiar as he doubtless was with the Old Testament, his language was not couched in the vein of a saint under law. On his knees, in the attitude of prayer, and in a voice loud enough for those around to hear, the last words from his lips were words of prayer for those who had hurried him to his end. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Silence, the silence of death, now followed. He fell asleep. Like his Master he prayed for his enemies, and like Him committed himself to One in heaven. In the Lord’s case it was to His Father; in Stephen’s, it was to his Saviour and Lord. With Stephen’s death the message began to be sent after the nobleman, "We will not have this man to reign over us " (Luke 19:14). It formed, therefore, an epoch in the history of the nation. And now the testimony in Jerusalem, as far as the Acts records it, comes to a close. Intimidation (iv.), persecution (v.), and martyrdom had been tried (vii.) to stop, if possible, the preaching of the Gospel; but, as we learn, without success. Threats, beatings, and even death had no terrors for the Christians. The arrows in the quiver seemed exhausted. Nothing more terrible could be devised than death. So, in spite of all that the ecclesiastical authorities could do, the preaching of the Lord Jesus went forward in undiminished power, the witnesses working with unflagging zeal. For Stephen’s death, scattering the company of disciples hitherto resident at Jerusalem, except the Apostles, furnished the occasion for spreading the Gospel more abroad. The disciples "went everywhere preaching the Word" (viii. 4). To this new development of the movement the historian will now turn, beginning with the work in Samaria, and going on to the spread of it among the Gentiles. Who the Lord is. But here one may conveniently pause, and review what has been brought out relative to the Lord Jesus Christ. The theme of prophecy, as He unquestionably was, He had been proclaimed by Peter as Lord and Christ, in accordance with Psalms 16:1-11 : and ex. He had also been introduced as the Servant of Jehovah (Acts 3:13), a character in which Isaiah presents Him; and He had been twice declared to be the Prophet of whom Moses wrote (iii. 22, 7: 37), as well as the rejected corner stone, in accordance with Psalms 118:1-29 : As the Prince (or, Author) of life, Peter preached Him in Solomon’s porch. As the Saviour for Israel he proclaimed Him twice over before the council (Acts 4:12; Acts 5:31). To His personal character, as righteous and holy, that same Apostle, as well as Stephen, bore witness (iii. 14, 7: 52). Moreover, He is the Son of man. of whom Daniel wrote, now in heaven (vii. 56), but who will come back to earth at a future day (iii. 20, 21). One other important testimony to Him has still to be unfolded. For though presented already as the Servant of Jehovah, He was subsequently to be preached to the Jews as

the Son of God. The vessel, however, appointed first to set this forth had yet to be called out by the grace of God.

Criticisms. Before passing on from Stephen's history, we must advert to some objections brought against his speech, indications, it has by some been supposed, of his want of acquaintance with the Old Testament history to which he referred. The late Bishop Christopher Wordsworth enumerates ten objections, with all which he professes to deal, and to refute - whether effectively or not of course the reader must judge. But ten objections advanced against Stephen's speech indicate that the martyr's historical statements are regarded by some as very questionable. Had we verbatim shorthand writer's notes of what he did say, the objections raised against his accuracy would have great weight. But considering that no unical MS. can be traced back earlier than the fourth century, it is evident that there had been time between his day and the date of the earliest uncial of the New Testament for mistakes to have crept in, before even the copies were in existence from which the Vatican and Sinaitic MSS. have been transcribed. So of versions, as the Peshito Syriac, or the Latin and others, made originally at an earlier date than any uncial MS. that we possess, though they may, and often do, confirm the readings of the MSS. which are supposed to be most correct, yet we have no certainty that some mistakes may not have crept into the copies from which those versions were originally made. Hence mistakes, if there be any really in Stephen's speech, may be due, not to his lack of information or want of accuracy, but to some transcriber in very early days. Without affirming the probability of this, we must admit the possibility of it. Of some of these objections rational explanations have been offered. Of others we are not in a position to offer a real solution. If there are mistakes, how they arose we have no means in this nineteenth century of determining. On the other hand, considering how limited is our knowledge of matters to which he refers, it seems wiser, whilst confessing the difficulties, to leave them, in the present state of our knowledge, without attempting their removal; and this seems the more incumbent, because Stephen supplies us with some information the accuracy of which we have no reason to doubt, though, not met with in the Old Testament. He tells us, for instance, that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and was mighty in his words and deeds (Acts 7:22). Of this Exodus has no record. He states also the lawgiver's age when he began to visit his brethren (23). On this also the Old Testament is silent. It may be that, had we more information, we should find that the statements made by Stephen, assuming they are correctly reported, are not the blunders which have been supposed. Till more information is forthcoming, we had better leave the question there. (Or, better still, accept that our scripture is the infallible Word by the Holy Spirit and CANNOT be wrong. Safer to say we do not yet understand certain things than to accuse the Spirit of mistakes! - Editor)

04.12. SAMARIA EVANGELISED.

SAMARIA EVANGELISED.

Acts 8:1-40:

"YE shall be witnesses unto Me in Samaria" (Acts 1:8) were part of the Lord's last words to His disciples. Hitherto, since Pentecost, none had gone out to the people of that province. At Jerusalem all the preaching had been carried on, and to it from the country round the sick had been brought for healing (v. 16). But diffusion, not concentration, was to be characteristic of Christianity. So just as the confusion of tongues at Babel resulted in the dispersion abroad of men upon earth, so the persecution which began on the day of Stephen's death, as Luke really wrote, resulted in the scattering abroad of the disciples. "And there arose" (we quote the Revised Version) "on that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judsea and Samaria, except the Apostles" (viii. 1).

Stephen's Burial. - Who, then, would bury Stephen? The Christians, like the Apostles at the Crucifixion, were unable to come forward to give the martyred one an honourable and the accustomed funeral rites. But, as in the Lord's case, God provided for this, and in a most unlooked-for way. If the Christians could not volunteer, devout men, godly Jews, were willing to perform the last sad offices. They buried him, and made great lamentation over him (viii. 2). There were in Jerusalem pious men, still professedly Jews, very probably Hellenists or foreign Jews, who had no part in that murder, and had no sympathy with those who stoned Stephen. They showed this in the most marked way by burying him, and greatly lamenting him.

Saul. A little is now told us of a young man who made himself most prominent in opposing the truth. He had kept the raiment of the witnesses who stoned the martyr, for he had consented to his death. He must have heard Stephen's prayer for his murderers, and have witnessed, we may conclude, Stephen in his dying moments on his knees for his opponents. Yet nothing he witnessed, nothing he then heard, softened him in the slightest degree. Zeal for religion, unless tempered by grace, may make its votary the most implacable of mortals. Such at this time became Saul. We may call him the Torquemada of his day.* For he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house. and haling men and women, committed them to prison. Nothing like this had taken place before. It was systematic persecution of an inquisitorial character. Private houses were invaded, and the prisons populated with Christians of both sexes. So far we learn from the historian.

* This man, Thomas de Torquemada, was the founder of the Spanish Inquisition in the fifteenth century. During the eighteen years of his ministry in Spain, no less than 10,220 persons were burnt as heretics, 6,860 condemned and burnt in effigy, and 97,321 reconciled by other punishments. Torquemada was allowed to carry out his relentless persecution. Saul was arrested in the midst of his, and converted. But when we read Saul's own account of it, years after his

conversion, the horrors of that time appear in an awful light. "I verily," he said, "thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem : and many also of the saints did I shut up in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme" (Acts 26:9-11). What a time it must have been! No wonder that all were scattered abroad from Jerusalem who could get away, except the Apostles. Imprisonments and deaths were frequent events, and some whose faith gave way were made to blaspheme. Stephen was the first martyr, but evidently not the only one. Many were put to death at that time. It was a great execution indeed. The Apostles were not touched. Probably the previous unsuccessful attempt against them, related in chap, 5:, made the authorities afraid to apprehend them.

Through Judea and Samaria the disciples now went preaching the Word. Of the work in Judea we have little record, save that we learn from the Galatians (i. 22) that there were assemblies in that province, and one perhaps at Lydda, and probably one at Joppa (Acts 9:32-43), before Peter's memorable visit to Caesarea. We know, too, that Philip preached systematically in part of the province between Ashdod and the town just named. To Samaria we are, however, specially directed, which, since the deposition of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, was placed, in common with Judea, under the Eoman governor, who was subject to the imperial officer in Syria. In the Gospels we have notices of Samaria. At Sychar, very early in our Lord's ministry, before indeed the imprisonment of the Baptist, a work went on of which we have some information in connection with and consequent on the Lord's interview with the woman at the well (John 4:1-54 :). In Samaria at a later date the Lord experienced opposition from the inhabitants of a certain village, who declined to receive Him (Luke 9:52), because His face was as though He were going to Jerusalem. Hearty reception and distinct rejection - these had been the Lord's experiences in Samaria.

Philip. Now Philip, one of the seven chosen in chap. 6: to serve tables, but set free doubtless from that service in consequence of the persecution, went down to Samaria from Jerusalem. To what city in that province he went is not distinctly stated. Some have supposed it was the capital. Others have suggested Sychar. Sufficient for us is it to know of the work which went on. "He went down to a city of Samaria, and preached the Christ unto them. And the people [rather, multitudes] with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:5-8). What Jews refused, Samaritans gladly received. Malice filled hearts at Jerusalem. Much joy pervaded the people of that city in Samaria. For Philip preached Christ unto them.

Preaching Christ. We may mark the term - preaching Christ, not simply Jesus; for he could and did preach both. To the eunuch, who was reading the prophetic description of the Lord's humiliation, Philip preached Jesus (viii. 35), opening up to him who it was who thus suffered - Jesus, the Virgin's child. To the Samaritans he preached Christ. Now to preach Christ involves the setting forth the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus. For it is as risen and ascended, as we learn from Peter, that we - 1:e., Christians - know Him as the Christ (36). As risen, we learn of God's acceptance of His sacrifice, and hence of the sure ground on which all stand who believe on

Him. We take our stand on the accepted sacrifice - own that all has been done that He had to do; and justified by His blood, know the blessing of justification by faith, and in consequence - peace with God (Romans 4:24-25; Romans 5:1-9). As ascended, we have a light cast upon the Person who died, and on the value of the sacrifice. He has ascended to God's right hand who died as a man on the cross. He is therefore a Divine Person as well. How great, then, must be the efficacy of His sacrifice who, once on the cross, is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens! So preaching Christ implies a very full Gospel, which sets the one who receives it in the conscious enjoyment of peace with God. Preaching Jesus would not necessarily include all that is involved in preaching Christ. There is a time for each. And evidently Philip, divinely led, knew when to preach the one, and when to preach the other. The fields in that city of Samaria were white for harvest. And whilst Saul was carrying on his dire persecution at Jerusalem, Philip was blessedly engaged in evangelising in Samaria. The devil was stirring up the former. The Spirit of God was guiding and blessing the latter. And now a most marked proof of the power of the Word was displayed by the people, who turned to Philip, and embraced the Gospel, though formerly captivated by a sorcerer named Simon. In one way such an overturn might seem nothing strange. Something new generally attracts the crowd. And displays of miraculous power might well have arrested attention. But the change wrought in this case was permanent. The impression Simon had produced, great as it had been, was after all transient. Philip's preaching made abiding impressions. It was not just a gaping crowd following a miracle-worker. Souls were deeply impressed, for consciences were dealt with. Many became earnest, and not merely enthusiastic.

Simon Magus. Who was that sorcerer? Simon by name, he is commonly called Magus, indicative of his profession - a magician or sorcerer. By his magical arts he had bewitched the people, and had established himself in their estimation as a marvel. He gave himself out for some great one. The people gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, declaring, so we should read, "This man is that power of God which is called Great" (viii. 10). To those captivated by Simon, Philip preached - not, however, himself, but Christ. How different must he have appeared to them all from the sorcerer. Both did wonders. Simon exalted himself, and accepted the adulation of the crowd. Philip preached Another, and enlisted the converts as disciples of Christ. He sank himself, his glory, his greatness, in the excellency of the One whom he preached. Was he dazzled by the power of Simon? Certainly not. He did what amazed Simon, who felt himself in the presence of one greater than himself. Simon wondered, we are told, beholding the signs and great miracles wrought. A power greater than that which he had known was at work, and he was constrained to admit it. It was the power of the Holy Ghost. And the message proclaimed, the historian is careful to state, was good news to those who received it. The effect on the people was decided. Prestige, which had been with the sorcerer, disappeared like snow before the sun. From being bewitched by Simon they turned to be baptised by Philip, who had preached what they now believed was good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. True converts had been made; and even Simon took his place as a convert among them. He too was baptised. What a testimony had been borne to the power of. the truth! People felt it. They owned it. For they were baptised unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. God was triumphing in the place where the enemy had dazzled so many. For turning once for all from Simon, they became disciples in truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. A change indeed had been wrought by the preaching of the Gospel. And the miracles and wonders attested the messenger as one sent by God. Simon, the sorcerer, at the feet of Philip ! The great one, as he loved to proclaim himself, now professedly the disciple of that

newcomer, and doubtless fervent preacher! But Philip was only an evangelist. By that designation he was many years after described (Acts 21:8). Great as he seemed in the eyes of Simon, there were greater than he in the Church of God - even the Apostles of the Lord. Philip, we have said, was an evangelist. And it is interesting to observe that he knew his gift, and kept to it. For throughout this chapter, which gives us what may be called "the Acts of Philip," preaching is the service, and that only, in which he is seen engaging. "He preached Christ"; "He preached the things concerning the kingdom of God," etc.; "He preached Jesus"; "He preached the Gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea" (viii. 5, 12, 35, 40). Neither the gift of teaching nor that of exhorting was bestowed on him. In preaching he laboured, for he was an evangelist, and the only man so designated in the New Testament,* though not the only one* of course who laboured in that line of service. Others, like Paul, might be teachers as well as evangelists. Philip was only an evangelist.

* Timothy was to do the work of an evangelist, but had other important work as well (2 Timothy 4:5). An Apostolic Visit. Tidings of the success of the Gospel in Samaria reached the ears of the Apostles in Jerusalem. Two of their number were accordingly depvited to visit the scene of blessing. These were Peter and John. Philip’s work was found real and stable. The Apostles accredited it. For, in the midst of the converts, and seeing surely the reality of the work, they had not to lay the foundation again, nor to supplement Philip’s Gospel. Their service at that time was to confer on the converts full Christian blessing by the gift of the Holy Ghost. For that they prayed. "As yet," as the historian acquaints us, "He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). Believers they were. Children of God they had become. Saved souls they certainly were. But in the belonging to Christ (Romans 8:9), and in the being members of His body (1 Corinthians 12:13), they had not as yet participated. These spiritual blessings depended on the receiving of the Holy Ghost. For that Peter and John prayed; and then laying their hands on the disciples, they received the Holy Ghost. We see then plainly that people may be believers, and yet be not what Scripture calls sealed (Ephesians 1:13) - 1:e., be partakers of the gift of the Holy Ghost. But God desires not to leave any in that condition.

* The Samaritan worship is dated from Manasseh, the son o£ Joiada, the son of Eliashib, the high priest, whom Nehemiah chased from him, as son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. He obtained leave from Darius Nothus to build a rival temple at Gerizim, about B.C. 409.

Now in three different ways was that gift bestowed in early days.

1st. The Spirit was poured out on the whole company at Pentecost.

2nd. Many saints, doubtless most, after that received the gift of the Spirit by the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2), believing the Gospel of their salvation (Ephesians 1:13).

3rd. Others again - and these Samaritans were in the last class - received the Holy Ghost by the imposition of the hands of Apostles. The history of the Samaritans in the past very probably accounts for this in their case. For though professedly descended from Jacob (John 4:12), they had started, and maintained since the days of Nehemiah,* a rival worship and a rival temple, erected on Mount Gerizim. Their position was really schismatical. It was independency. Hence they must learn that blessing only could reach them from Jerusalem. So not only had Philip left the capital to preach the Gospel to the Samaritans, but Peter and John also came down from it to give

them the Holy Ghost. All their spiritual blessing was received through vessels connected with Jerusalem. Salvation was indeed from the Jews (John 4:22).

Simon detected. The sorcerer evidently looked on with amazement, beholding the power of the Apostles displayed in conferring the Holy Ghost. He well knew how men regarded any one professedly even endowed with supernatural powers. He knew, too, what temporal profit he had himself reaped by dazzling the multitude with his sorceries. If only he could possess that power which Peter and John had exhibited, what gains would he make! In what estimation would he be held ! Hence he offered them money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:18-19). The power to give the Spirit he desired, not the blessing of receiving it. For that he cared not. The answer of Peter was instantaneous, crushing, and decided, negativing the request, and defining Simon's true moral condition. Baptised though he had been, he had no spiritual life in his soul. Conversion he had never known. In the new birth he had never shared. He was yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and on the road to perishing, unless forgiveness of that thought of his heart was accorded to him. Real believers will never perish. Simon was not yet in that class, and so beyond the danger of it. "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter : for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God [rather, the Lord], if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (viii. 20-23). Simon believed, we have read (13). Evidently it was intellectual faith without any real conscience work. His heart was still not right with God. Who, consciously sharing in Divine grace, could have made the request he did ? Was conviction wrought in his soul by Peter's reply? Was his conscience at last really aroused? "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me," was the unhappy man's response. He desired to escape Divine judicial dealing. But that apparently was all. He asked for their prayers, but made no confession of his sin, nor does it appear that he prayed, as told to do, himself. With this he disappears from the pages of inspiration. And any notices of him in ecclesiastical history, mixed up though they may be with fables, confirm the Apostle's expressed judgment of him - that he had no part or lot in the matter. Persistent opposition to the truth is uniformly reported of him, and unceasing hostility and bitterness against Peter seem to have characterised that sorcerer to the end.

Much joy had been known in the city before the converts received the gift of the Holy Ghost. What must they have experienced on the reception of that gift? Freedom of spirit before God they would then have come to know, and the consciousness of their relationship to Him must have been experienced, their very utterance, addressing Him as they must have done as Father, being the expression of it. Short, probably, was the stay of the two Apostles after fulfilling the true purpose of their mission. For having testified and spoken the Word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching, however, by the way in many villages of the Samaritans. How changed were the people of that province and that sect! When the Lord had been going towards Jerusalem, entering a village inhabited by them, He was forced to leave it; for they would not receive Him, because His face was set toward the mother-city - Jerusalem (Luke 9:53). Now Peter and John, who had been with Him at that time, met with no coldness, nor were they rebuffed by any in the Samaritan villages, though they were going up to Jerusalem. Samaria was receiving the Word of God. When

the Spirit really works, prejudices of ages melt away, and what might have been thought insuperable difficulties are found to be no longer in existence. God prepares hearts, and the Word can then fall on them like the soft refreshing benediction of dew on the parched earth. What a field it must have been to cultivate ! But other work was appointed the evangelist Philip. To that he will now betake himself. The Ethiopian Eunuch. Left behind very possibly by the Apostles in that city, the converts of which must have become endeared to him, Philip, whilst they were pursuing their evangelistic service in the province of Samaria, received a call to go to another place. An angel of the Lord spake unto him, and directed him to go on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, "which [or, the same] is desert." He at once obeyed, and went. But why he was taken from the fruitful field of his labours was as yet a secret unknown to him. In the path of obedience he got light cast on his way. Desert though the place he reached was called, he found himself not alone in that locality. A eunuch - a man of great authority under Queen Candace,* and who was over all her treasure - a man therefore in whom the Queen reposed confidence, but more, either a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish faith - was returning from Jerusalem, whither he had gone to worship. Evidently the Temple service, and intercourse there with professed Jews, had not provided all that he was ready to receive. He had got from none of the doctors there the light which would open up the prophetic teaching of the Book of Isaiah. Yet he valued that portion of Divine revelation, and was studying it whilst on his homeward journey. Was he to return to his country as uninformed on that book as he had left it? Circumstances seemed to point to that; for Jerusalem was behind, and he in a desert. Without a teacher, without a helper, he was quietly reading the book, when Philip, directed by the Spirit of God, accosted him with the question, " Understandest thou what thou readest?"

* Of this particular queen nothing seems known. The name Candace is thought to be, like that of Pharaoh, the designation o£ the sovereign, and not a personal proper name. In the time of Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiastes 2:1) Ethiopia continued to be governed by female sovereigns. A stranger to that eunuch thus made bold to address him. Naturally he might have repulsed such an one. Why should that simple man, without retinue or even one attendant to mark rank, presume to intrude on such a high official as he was? He was not travelling alone. Doubtless he had a goodly number with him. But when the Spirit prepares hearts, they are ready to welcome assistance; and the outward appearance of the individual, or the strangeness of such a meeting, raises no objection in the mind of the true inquirer. So the eunuch replied to the question put to him, "How can I, except some man [rather, one] should guide me?" He needed help. He confessed it. And believing Philip could give it, he besought him to come up and sit with him. The servant of Candace and the servant of the Lord were thus together; and the former, who probably was accustomed to be listened to with respect, now sat as a pupil at the feet of the evangelist. The portion of the prophet Isaiah was that with which we are familiar as the fifty-third chapter of the book. How all was ordered of God! A helper was provided for the eunuch, and the passage he was reading afforded an opening for Philip to discourse of the Lord Jesus. To the eunuch, however, the meaning was as yet dark. The light that he would welcome had not illuminated those verses (Isaiah 53:7-8). But now he had only to ask this stranger to get them opened up to him, and to learn of whom the prophet was writing. "Philip," we read, "opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus." What a time that must have been ! The Lord’s rejection when in life was foretold in the first verse (John 12:38). His ways in grace, in healing, etc., were predicted in the fourth verse (Matthew 8:17). His bearing our sins and the blessed result of that to us were stated in the fifth verse (1 Peter 2:24). His spotless innocence was asserted in the ninth

verse (1 Peter 2:22). His burial in Joseph's tomb was announced in that same verse (Matthew 27:57-60). And God's appreciation of Him set forth in the last verse. To what a history in that one short chapter must the eunuch with wonderment and delight have listened! Never before had the Scriptures, we may well believe, seemed to him so full, and their teaching so interesting.

Baptism. The effect was rapid and decided. Going on their way, they reached water, near, it would seem (if the Palestine Exploration Society's map is correct), to the modern Tell Hesy* and the eunuch at once proposed to be baptised with Christian baptism. "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised ?" Anxious to profess himself openly a disciple of the Lord Jesus, he commanded the chariot to stand still; and the two, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and he baptised him (Acts 8:36-38). Philip's mission to him had now ended. He had preached unto him Jesus. He had baptised him at his own desire. Then "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." He disappeared as suddenly, or more so, than he had come. The two who had met in the desert never met again on earth. The eunuch continued his homeward journey without deviating from his path by endeavouring to find out Philip. " He saw him no more " is the sacred writer's statement, who assigns the following as a reason; "for," as we should read (not, and), "he went on his way rejoicing." Philip had done for him all that he had to do. The eunuch had received what he wanted. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship. He had left that city without any knowledge of Christian truth. He met Philip by the way, had Jesus preached to him, and went home a professed disciple of the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord. Of more than this we have no certain knowledge, so must await a coming day to learn what results, if any, attended him in his country on his return, supposing, as we must, that he sought to spread the Christian faith.

* "At Tell Hesy is the only spring for many miles around: a brackish brook trickles down from Tell Nejtleh, where in ancient times it was confined by a massive dam; and at Tell Hesy it is joined by a fine, fresh spring, while the whole of the water is swallowed in the stony wady within a few hundred yards lower, and never reappears " (Palestine Exploration Fund, vol. for 1890, p. 161). But though about the rest of his path here we can say nothing definite, we know that before the foundation of the world he had been given to the Son by His Father, for Divine choice had been exercised in his favour ere Adam walked the earth (Ephesians 1:4). And now as a sheep, one of the flock of the Good Shepherd, he appears on the page of inspired history. "All that which the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me," the Lord had said (John 6:37). This eunuch, given to Him, did come to Him. But, humanly speaking, how unlikely was that to have taken place! He had visited Jerusalem without, as we may well believe, coming across any of the Apostles, or coming under the power of their teaching. He was returning home to Ethiopia, where certainly no Christian teachers or preachers were yet to be found. He was leaving behind him the land in which alone as yet the light of Christian truth was shining. But the Shepherd's eye was on him, and the Spirit directed Philip to speak to him. Then it was discovered that he was one of the sheep for whom the Good Shepherd had given His life; and though as a eunuch he could never of old have been admitted into the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:1), he could be, and was, admitted into the assembly of God and of Christ.

Judaea evangelised. Of Philip we learn a little more. He was found at Azotus, the ancient Ashdod, situated north of Gaza. He had travelled north-west from Tell Hesy, whilst the eunuch continued his journey south-west from that place towards Gaza. From Azotus Philip worked his way northward, preaching the Gospel in all the cities till he reached Csesarea. Samaria and Judaea

had been now evangelised, though there may have been places in each province as yet unvisited. Still the Gospel had been planted in both, and so the fulfilment of the commission entrusted to the disciples (Luke 24:47), and repeated in more detail to the Eleven (Acts 1:8), was being carried out. Further details of the work in these provinces are for the most part withheld, and the historian passes on to the circumstances connected with missionary work among the Gentiles. The record, then, of Philip's evangelistic labours has closed. We read no more of him till the Apostle Paul's visit to Csesarea on his last journey to Jerusalem before his first imprisonment, when he and his company found a halting-place in Philip's house, who had, we may suppose, definitely taken up his abode in that city, the seat of the Roman government of Judaea (xxi. 8-14). It is not unlikely that our historian then met Philip for the first time, and may have heard from the evangelist's mouth the story of his visit to the desert and of his intercourse with the eunuch.

Great things had been done, wonderful things had been witnessed; yet things more wonderful were to be displayed in the conversion of Saul, and in the immense diffusion of Gospel work in heathen lands.

Chapter 50

04.13. SAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY MINISTRY.

SAUL’S CONVERSION AND EARLY MINISTRY.

Acts 9:1-31.

GOD’S grace was to flow out to Gentiles, for the Gospel was to be preached among all nations. Two things, however, were needed for that. The suited and special instrument was to be provided. The kingdom, too, must be opened by the one foreordained for that service. Of the circumstances connected with the call of the first we are now to become acquainted (Acts 9:1-43 :). After that the service of the second in opening the kingdom will be detailed. A Hellenistic Jew was to become the Apostle of the Gentiles; and subsequently, in company with Barnabas, who was also of the same class, was selected as a missionary pioneer to work in Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. To a home-born Jew, of the city of Bethsaida, on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, were entrusted the keys of the kingdom of the heavens. He had used them already to admit Jews into the kingdom on the day of Pentecost. He was shortly to use them afresh, to admit Gentiles in the house of the centurion Cornelius at Czesarea. There seems a fitness in this. Hellenistic Jews might be more suited for evangelising Gentiles, being naturally better acquainted with their ways and modes of thought. A home-born Jew was the fitting instrument to open the door of the kingdom to them, acting in this against Jewish teaching, national feeling, and the habits of a lifetime (Acts 10:28), but guided in what he did by the Holy Ghost. No one could have suspected Peter of partiality towards Gentiles. Hence he acted under Divine guidance, and for the carrying out of the Divine will.

Answered Prayer. And now it was to be seen that the dying martyr’s prayer was not poured forth in vain. The Lord had asked forgiveness for those who crucified Him, and He had brought on the day of His resurrection the assurance that His prayer was answered, as He commissioned His disciples to preach forgiveness in His name, beginning at Jerusalem. A free, full proclamation should go forth, able to embrace in its merciful announcement every one alive at that time, as well as all on the face of the earth whom in subsequent ages these tidings should reach. Stephen, manifesting the Spirit of Christ, had prayed for His murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Now one who had been prominent in the proceedings at his death was to be taken up in Divine grace to obtain mercy, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. And all the longsuffering was to be shown forth in him, a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on the Lord unto life everlasting (1 Timothy 1:13-16).

Saul’s Conversion. The young man prominent at the martyrdom of Stephen by keeping the clothes of those that were stoning him, had risen unto still greater prominence by his relentless persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. And now, having proved himself a zealous and a willing instrument in the attempt to stamp out the truth in the metropolis, he was to be entrusted at his own request with letters from the high priest to the synagogues at Damascus,* that, if he found any of the way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). Such was the purpose of his self-imposed mission.

* Damascus was at this time under Aretas, King of Arabia Nabataea, granted to him, it is supposed, by the Emperor Caligula ; for during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius it had been attached to the province of Syria. "The Jews of the dispersion," writes Lewin (Life of St. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 47), "like oil sprinkled upon a waste of waters, were in daily contact with heathen society without commingling. They had their own religion and their own laws, their own places of worship and their own courts. Their eyes were ever turned towards Jerusalem ; and their allegiance to the high priest was testified, not only by the annual remittance to him of a contribution towards the Temple service, but by making him the referee of all their local disputes. Thus the High Priest and Elders of the Holy City exercised the same sort of spiritual supremacy over the synagogues of the adjacent countries, as the pope and cardinals have since assumed over the Churches in communion with Rome. They promulgated edicts, and had a jurisdiction over their own people to the extent of excommunication, scourging, and imprisonment. When they had reason to put forth this authority, they despatched ambassadors, called apostles, with mandatory letters to the local synagogues.'' In Damascus Jews were very numerous, as is attested by the slaughter of ten thousand of them in the city in one hour's time in the days of Nero (Josephus, Wars, II. 20: 2). Their synagogues, therefore, must have been many.

He went with a company the size of which is wholly unknown to us; nor is there anything in the narrative to determine whether they were journeying on horse or on foot. If any word, however, might cast light on this matter, the statement that the men accompanying him stood speechless (ix. 7), would lead to the supposition that they were journeying on foot, which would be further strengthened by that which follows - that they led Saul by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And since, as Wordsworth notes, Pharisees rarely used horses, it would be quite in keeping with the narrative to suppose that Saul, ardent though he was in his work of exterminating that sect, as he viewed it, which he hated, should have conformed to the general custom, and have travelled on foot. The distance to be covered from city to city is reckoned at about a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty miles. Days therefore, in any case, must have passed, since he issued forth from Jerusalem, ere his eye could light on the buildings of that ancient city in existence since the days of Abraham, and the goal to which he was pressing forward. One tradition has fixed the site of his conversion at a spot close to the city, just a quarter of an hour's walk distant from it. Willibald, who visited Damascus A.D. 721 - 727, places it two miles distant. Porter (Giant Cities of Bashan, p. 350) places it near a village called Kaukab, about ten miles distant, in accordance with a tradition as old as the time of the Crusades. On the top of a ridge separating the valleys of the Abana and Pharpar, " the spot from which the traveller from the south obtains his first view of Damascus," he locates the scene of the conversion.

Damascus was called by its own poets "The Pearl of the East." "The view," writes Porter, "of the city and plain from the brow of Lebanon is unequalled in Syria - probably it is unsurpassed in the world. One gazes upon it enraptured when before him; and when far away, though long years have intervened, memory dwells upon it as upon some bright and joyous vision of childhood's happy days. Forty centuries have passed over the city, yet it retains the freshness of youth. Its palaces look as gorgeous, its houses as gay, its gold-tipped minarets and domes as bright, as if only completed yesterday. Its gardens and orchards and far-reaching groves, rich in foliage and blossoms, wrap the city round like a mantle of green velvet powdered with pearls. Its rivers, better yet than all the waters of Israel, having burst their mountain barriers, send a thousand streams

meandering over its plain, sparkling in the sunlight, and spreading verdure and beauty along their course." * Such is the effect produced by the view of Damascus from a little distance. Had Saul just feasted his eyes on it, enraptured with its beauty? We know not. But another sight he was to behold, far brighter than anything earth could furnish - a sight confined to himself, yet one for ever after deeply impressed on his memory.

* Giant Cities of Bashan, p. 342. For suddenly, about noon - the sun, we may suppose, shining on the city in its meridian splendour - a light shone round about him and his company above the brightness of that sun. All saw the light (Acts 22:9), but the rest saw no one. All heard a voice (ix. 7), but Saul only understood the meaning of it (xxii. 9). It addressed him in the Hebrew tongue. Speechless the rest stood, hearing a sound, but seeing no man. So writes the historian. But Paul, recounting the matter before Festus and Agrippa, states that all had fallen to the earth before he heard the voice speaking to him (xxvi. 14), - an apparent discrepancy which, had we been present, would doubtless have admitted of an easy explanation. And we may offer one drawn from the narrative. Startled by the light, and hearing a voice to them unintelligible, for which they could not account, the company might well have stood speechless, as arrested suddenly in their course: the next moment, prostrate on the ground, the conversation between the Lord Jesus and Saul took place.*

* What they heard was a voice (ix. 7); but its sound conveyed no meaning to them, - just as in John 12:29 the people, who heard the Father’s voice, thought it was thunder. So Acts 9:7; Acts 22:9 are not contradictory. To Saul the sound was not only audible, but intelligible. "Saul, Saul!" He was addressed by name. One unknown to him was calling to him out of heaven. He had thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, or the Nazarean (xxvi. 9). He was acting in all that with a good conscience. Did Heaven approve of his zeal? Was he, like Abraham, to hear words in approbation of his conduct? The critical moment to decide that had now come. The question of Heaven’s approval, or the reverse, was to be settled once and for ever, by words which must have come like a thunderbolt. "Why persecutest thou Me?" Who thus spoke to him? Who would suppose that Saul could be guilty of such folly as to persecute One in heaven? A question from Saul, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and an immediate reply, "I am Jesus, the Nazarean, whom thou persecutest" (xxii. 8), left no doubt in his mind as to the sinfulness of his course. The Lord Jesus indeed was in heaven, and Saul was prostrate before Him on the ground. Light above the brightness of the sun had shone round Saul and his company. Light now shone into Saul’s soul. His past course and his purposes stood out as in bold relief, but in a blackness which nothing that he could say could lessen. As a convicted persecutor of the Lord Jesus, he lay stretched on the ground. Moreover, he had seen Him. He had heard Him (Acts 9:17; Acts 9:27; Acts 22:14-15; Acts 26:14; 1 Corinthians 9:1). And, as we learn from the Apostle’s address before Festus and Agrippa, he was told, whilst still on the ground, of the commission with which he was to be entrusted (Acts 26:16-18). An Apostle by calling (Romans 1:1), he received his commission direct from the Lord, and from Him in glory. In the first account of his conversion, that given us by St. Luke (Acts ix), the commission is unnoticed, and we should really omit from the record the following words : "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord what wilt Thou have me to do] And the Lord said unto him." The passage should simply run : " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; but arise, and go," etc. Possibly some copyist inserted those clauses from the two accounts given of his conversion by the Apostle himself - the one when

on the stairs of the castle at Jerusalem (xxii.), the other when before the Roman governor and officials of the province at Csesarea (xxvi.). That the Lord did say, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," St. Paul declared at Caesarea. (So why all this speculation about "copyists"? - Editor) That he asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" we know from his address to the multitude of Jews, when making his defence unto them from the stairs leading up to the castle of Antonia. And each has its place suitably where it is found. The Gentiles at Csesarea would understand the simile of kicking against the ox-goad, for it is said to be a Greek proverb. The Jews at Jerusalem ought to have understood how natural was the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" when the Lord had personally appeared to him. And they ought to have felt how morally impossible it was for Paul, thus arrested in his course, to do aught else than to obey the One who had spoken to him out of heaven. On the ground, and in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and with the charge of persecuting Him twice affirmed, Saul had no excuse to offer, nor anything to urge in mitigation of punishment. To have been struck off the earth into everlasting perdition would not have been contrary to the principles of righteousness. He had been arrested, as we might say, flagrante delicto - 1:e., in the commission of the crime. Instead, however, of receiving his deserts, he was to learn, as assuredly he had never learnt, what Divine grace could do, and what it is to be oneself a subject of that grace, as he now heard from the lips of the Lord Jesus, in whose presence he really was, of the mercy and of the grace in store for him, - of the mercy, seeing that he was not to receive the due reward of his deeds; of the grace, in that he was to be entrusted with preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And the words, "But arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (ix. 6), coupled with the further communication, whilst still on the ground, as related in 26: 1G-18, gave him die first but how full an intimation of the great favour in store for him.

What must it have been to him to hear that soul-comforting command, "Arise, and go into the city," etc. The penalty of immediate death, with everlasting perdition to follow, was not to be meted out to him. Little wonder, then, is it that he could write in after-years, with this event of his life vividly in remembrance, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all the longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:15-16), We have said "all the longsuffering," as being more exact than the rendering of the Authorised Version. Do any ask what was all the longsuffering? The Apostle’s course at this time, as summed up by himself in three significant words, explains it: "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious" (1 Timothy 1:13). Significant words, we say. For the first is one of the sins characteristic of the last days (2 Timothy 3:2). The second is what specially characterised the Jews in apostolic times (1 Thessalonians 2:15). The last, " injurious," is met with in the New Testament as a sin of the heathen world (Romans 1:30), being translated in the Authorised Version "despiteful," and in the Revised Version "insolent." None of the heathen in that chapter of Romans are charged with blaspheming. No one in 2 Timothy 3:1-17 :, where the characteristic marks of the last days are given, is called "injurious." But all three together characterised Saul. Clearly, then, could he write of the Lord Jesus showing forth in him "all the longsuffering."

Obeying the command to rise up, he had strength to walk, but could not see, having been blinded by the dazzling glory of the light from heaven. So led by his companions by the hand he entered

the city. They had seen the light, but were not blinded. He only had seen the Lord Jesus on that occasion. Starting forth as he had done on his journey like an inquisitor, and thinking doubtless that the Christians at Damascus would fall an easy prey, as so many in Jerusalem had done, he entered the city as a captive really, and led by the hand till he reached the house of Judas, who lived in the long street which then and still traverses the city from east to west, and was then and is yet called "Straight" He entered with the letters from the high priest authenticating his commission. He never delivered them, for that commission was superseded by another just received, and one with which he could not refuse compliance. And the sheep apparently so helpless, and which had never struck one blow in their own defence, Saul found had a defender, a guardian, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was really in heaven.

Divine Guidance. Blind, and fasting for three days and three nights, he remained in the house of his host. Of visitors, of condoling friends surrounding him, we read not a word. To One, however, he could and did open out. Saul, the persecutor, prayed to God in heaven. Nor was it one solitary petition, poured forth in the agony of his soul, or wrung from him by great mental torture. "He prayeth," we learn. Blind as he was, and without food, he was engaged in prayer. What his feelings were during that never-to-be-forgotten time neither the historian nor the Apostle himself has thought fit to place on record. But what is of deep interest and profit to us all is circumstantially detailed. We learn how the Lord was working with him on the one hand, and with Ananias on the other. Saul was prepared for the visit of Ananias. Ananias was charged by the Lord to visit the captive in the house of Judas. We have seen in chap. 8: how the Spirit provided for the instruction of the eunuch. We shall see in chap. 10: how Cornelius was prepared for the visit of Peter, and how Peter was told of the journey he should undertake. So was it with Ananias and with Saul. How interesting and instructive is this - interesting, as it unfolds a little of the inner working of the movement; instructive, as it teaches us how hearts were prepared and steps guided in those days. Something analogous to this is at times, when called for, experienced still.

Ananias. The Lord’s eye was on Saul. Nor was that all. He gave him the hope of shortly regaining his eyesight. For the very man by whose instrumentality it was to be restored he had seen coming in, and his name, too, was revealed, though hitherto a perfect stranger to this stricken one. And now to that servant the Lord spoke in a vision, addressing him by name, as He had personally addressed Saul. Yet how great the difference! To Saul it was One previously unknown to him who spoke. To Ananias it was One with whom that disciple was well acquainted. "Ananias," said the Lord. "Behold, I am here, Lord," was the ready response. "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen* a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hands on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts 9:10-12). Who besides the Lord then knew that Saul was praying? Which of the Christians in Damascus had heard of his conversion? Seemingly none. His purpose in visiting the city was well known, as also his previous conduct at Jerusalem. But probably of the manner of his entrance into Damascus, led by the hand, and seeing nothing (rather than, no man), had not been mooted abroad. His sympathisers in his mission would not be the first to proclaim it. Had he become a disciple of Christ? Could it be said of him, as of his namesake of old, "Is Saul also among the prophet?" Ananias at first could not credit it. He answered therefore, reminding the Lord of Saul’s past career and of his avowed purpose in visiting Damascus. Permitted to express himself fully, the Lord replied, and told him that the former persecutor was a chosen vessel to bear

His name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. Let the reader remark that Gentiles are first named, constituting as they did Paul’s special sphere of ministry (Romans 11:13). His conversion, too, would be attested as real by the sufferings for Christ’s sake that he should thereafter endure.

* "In a vision" 5: 12, should be omitted. The street called Straight still exists, it is said. "The old city is oval in shape." Its greatest diameter is marked by the Straight St, which is an English mile in length" (Porter, Giant Cities of Bashan p. 349).

What freedom of intercourse was permitted between the Lord in heaven and His servants on earth! Ananias spoke freely of that which he had heard about Saul. Peter at Joppa as freely expressed himself, when told to "rise, slay, and eat" (Acts 10:14). And Paul in 22: 19, 20 without reserve showed surprise at the Lord’s command for him to leave Jerusalem, because the Jews would not receive his testimony to Christ. Wisdom and knowledge are with Him. His servants, submissive to His will, in each case carried out the wishes of the Master, though at first in opposition to their thoughts. Peter went without hesitation with the three men, bound for Csesarea. Paul left Jerusalem. And Ananias visited Saul of Tarsus in the house of Judas, in the street called Straight.

What a meeting that was! Saul, who but lately would have arrested Ananias and have carried him bound to Jerusalem, was visited by this disciple of Christ, that through him he might receive the restoration of his eyesight. Scales, as it were, fell from his eyes. The power of vision was restored. And now he willingly hearkened like a docile child to Ananias, when told to arise, and be baptised, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). Without delay, he was baptised, and called upon the name of the Lord, and so washed away his sins. We need here scarcely remind the reader that the rite of baptism does not procure forgiveness of our sins before God. Nothing but the blood of Christ can do that (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14 ; Hebrews 9:22). Saul, however, by what he did, taking his place outwardly as a disciple by baptism, and calling on the name of the Lord, thus openly confessing Him, thoroughly broke with the past and condemned his whole course. Had he not called on the name of the Lord, would his sins have been washed away! That result was closely connected with his open acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ in that double way.

Saul was the first of those numbered among the Apostles of whose baptism we read. Aleady a quickened soul before Ananias visited him, he was to be enrolled amongst the disciples of Christ in the appointed way for all who should believe on Him subsequent to His death. As baptised, Saul was now buried with Christ (Romans 6:4), and thus was professedly in His company who had really died. Further, as Ananias told him, he was to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and so be fitted for the special service to which he was called. What passed between the two, beyond the few words recorded in Acts 9:17, supplemented as they are by the Apostle’s account of the interview in 22: 13-16, we shall never know on earth. Yet that interview, we may be sure, must have been one of intense interest to both. Ananias for the first time saw and conversed in peace with the formerly notorious persecutor of the Church of God. Saul, when his sight returned, saw before him one of that hitherto hated sect on the extermination of which he had been bent. And with the facts and the experience of the past few days fresh in his recollection, we may well suppose that he spoke of his remarkable conversion, and of the grace of which he was so striking an example, opening up his

mind to Ananias, with whom, as a disciple of their now common Master, he was henceforth to be openly associated. A change indeed had passed over him. What he had seen and heard had wrought a mighty revolution within. He was converted.

Here, ere pursuing the history, we must pause to notice two points : the Lord's question to Saul, and the Lord's announcement to Ananias, foretelling Saul's future service. The Body of Christ. "Why persecutest thou Me?" was the question. But Saul had never seen Him. How could he on earth persecute One in heaven? A truth, a revelation, was contained in that question. It was the first inkling of the existence of the Body of Christ, and came, as was fitting, from the Head Himself. Me, He said - not My people, My saints, but Myself. For now was to be known that all believers on the Lord Jesus, recipients of the Holy Ghost, are members of His Body. To Saul this revelation was first vouchsafed (Ephesians 3:3). And in his writings, and in them alone, do we learn about it. The Church is Christ's Body (Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 5:30; Col. I 24), which is formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). It grows, it increases, by the different members performing each their proper functions (Ephesians 4:16 ; Colossians 2:19); and it is built up (or, edified) by the ministry of the Word, through the individuals given as gifts from Christ to men (Ephesians 4:11-12). And those once Gentiles, with those once Jews, but all believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, together compose it. This was part of the mystery made known to the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:6). Saints of the Old Testament were viewed as the Apple of Jehovah's eye (Deuteronomy 32:10). Saints of the New Testament, composing the Church, are all members of the Body of Christ. Christ, then, was persecuted because His members were persecuted, just as an injury to any part of one's own body is an injury to oneself. Over His members the Head in heaven had now thrown His shield. And Saul learnt, and all should learn, that the persecution of Christians, helpless as they may be, is no light thing in the Lord's eyes. They are part of His Body.

Saul's Special Service. Saul had profited (or, advanced) in the Jews' religion above many his equals (or, of his own age) in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Galatians 1:14). No one would have credited him with any predilection for Gentiles. His zeal for the Law and for Jewish traditions was unquestionable. Yet he was the vessel chosen to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles and kings, as well as the people of Israel. He had thus the widest field of service appointed him. Old Simeon had sung of the revelation of Gentiles - 1:e., the bringing them out of obscurity - as part of the fruit of the Lord's incarnation (Luke 2:32). The Lord had told His disciples of other sheep which He had, not of the Jewish fold, and them also He should bring, that there should be one flock and one Shepherd (John 10:16). The man especially selected to forward the work had now near Damascus been converted. Later on the Apostles at Jerusalem recognised Saul's special call, in company with Barnabas, to that field of labour (Galatians 2:7-9). And he writes of himself as an Apostle of Gentiles (Romans 11:13). To his own countrymen he could and did preach; but service to them is mentioned last in the Lord's word to Ananias (Acts 9:15), though Saul always first addressed himself where possible to those of his own nation. To work amongst the Gentiles was he delivered (or, taken out) from both Jews and Gentiles, and to the last mentioned he was specially sent, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive remission of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:17-18) The great champion for the faith now stands out before us.

Preparation for Service. Enrolled by baptism as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and strengthened by food after the long time of abstinence, a season of quiet and retirement would come very opportune. This was provided by a short sojourn in Arabia. At this point the chronological arrangement of his history has been questioned. He certainly visited Arabia before he went up to Jerusalem, and as certainly returned to Damascus after the sojourn in retirement in Arabia. Viewing the account he gives us of this chapter in his life, we would place it just after his conversion, and before any public ministry, or even intercourse with the disciples in Damascus. For we read, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus" (Galatians 1:15-17). His Gospel was not received from man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). Alone, then, with God, he was prepared for his remarkable service, and from the Lord Himself he received by revelation the Gospel which he preached. Now silence on the part of Luke as to this visit to Arabia need excite no surprise. He must have been aware of it as an historical fact; for the Apostle had, several years before the Acts was compiled, notified this to the Galatians. But as it furnished no record of evangelistic labours, though a prelude to them, the historian may well have passed it over.

Earliest Labours. Returning, as we believe, from Arabia, Saul consorted with the disciples in Damascus, and that apparently before he preached in the synogogues (Acts 9:19).* Now this would be quite in character with his private interview with the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem fourteen years later, when, in company with Barnabas, he communicated privately to them of reputation the Gospel which he preached. The active and notorious persecutor as he had been, intercourse with the disciples, to convince them of his conversion, and it may be to communicate to them the Gospel he was about to preach, would have been but consistent conduct. Soon, however, he was to stand forth openly and manfully for Christ. In Damascus, where his vigilance as an inquisitor was to have been displayed, there his first attempts in preaching the Gospel were made. Attempts shall we call them? Evidently from the outset of his new career the Jews felt they had an antagonist to cope with of no mean order. All his energies, hitherto directed to the stamping out, if possible, of the truth, were now put forth, under the guidance and in the power of the Spirit, to preach that faith amongst the confessors of which he had once made such havoc. A powerful champion he must indeed have been - a Goliath in spiritual power, whom no one in Israel could overthrow or even answer.

* Reading this verse aright, it runs, "And [not, then] was Saul certain days," etc. The fact is stated, but the time is left indefinite. The Son of God. Taught of the Spirit and guided by the Spirit, he preached in the synagogues of Damascus. How many there were we know not. There were clearly several. And Saul in his zeal visited them, seeking out his countrymen where they could best be found. All might hear and learn that a preacher had appeared such as people in Damascus had never before listened to. Power, not eloquence, characterised him (2 Corinthians 10:10). And he preached that which, as far as we know, had never been proclaimed by an Apostle before - that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 9:20), as well as proving that He is the Christ (22). Peter had proclaimed Him as Lord and Christ at Pentecost (ii.); subsequently he had preached Him as the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:1-22 :, as the Servant, as the chief corner stone, as a Prince and

Saviour, as well as the Prince of life (iii., 4:, 5:). Saul now preached Him as the Son of God. The very thing for which the Sanhedrin condemned the Lord to death, Saul at Damascus averred was the simple truth. Moreover, that which no other Apostle could say, he could there affirm. He had seen the crucified One in heavenly glory, and had heard words from His mouth. He could therefore present himself to the audience in the different synagogues as the messenger, the Apostle of the Lord Jesus who is in glory. God, he tells us, had revealed His Son in him (Ga i 16). As Son of God he therefore proclaimed Him, though as yet only to Jews.

Opposition. The Apostle of the Gentiles was indeed in Damascus, but the kingdom of heaven was to be opened to them by Peter. Till that took place the work went on amongst Jews and proselytes. And now Saul's powerful preaching was of that positive kind which affected his hearers. Amazement at first took possession of them. All knew his course in Jerusalem, and the intent for which he had started for Damascus. All had to witness of the marked and mighty change wrought in him. But as his preaching proceeded amazement gave place in some to intense hostility; so, after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him, and they watched the city gates day and night for that purpose. All their enmity went out against him; none else were molested nor their lives threatened. But he, the renegade as they must have viewed him, and the pungent preacher, whose teaching that Jesus was the Christ they could not successfully controvert, must be silenced in some way or another. His life must be taken, if nothing could stop him. In some, we have said, intense hostility was engendered. Others who had listened had profited by his labour, and were now ranked as "his disciples" as we should read (Acts 9:25). These rallied round him, and by them being let down in a basket from a window on the wall at night he defeated the vigilance of his enemies. How soon he had to learn something of the great things he was to suffer for Christ's sake! "If they have persecuted me, they .will also persecute you," had been the Lord's words to the Eleven (John 15:20). Saul early proved their truth, yet surely his feelings must have differed in measure from those of the Eleven in like circumstances. He could not forget what he had been, nor the sorrow and the havoc he had caused by persecutions, which on earth could never be repaired. Leaving Damascus like a fugitive, thus escaping apprehension at the hands of the Ethnarch,* the governor under Aretas (2 Corinthians 11:32-33), he made, his way to Jerusalem, desirous, as he tells vis, to visit Peter, of whom he must often have heard, but as yet knew him not. Three years, we learn (Galatians 1:18), had passed since he had issued forth from the metropolis, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. What eventful years to him! Now he re-entered the city very likely alone, but a Christian and an ardent champion for the faith. He returned with the mission on which he started unfulfilled, but he returned with a far grander mission. He had sought letters from the high priest. He received them. He returned with a mandate from One in glory. To discover Christians in Damascus, and to bring them bound to Jerusalem, had been his mandate, the range of his commission being confined to that city. To open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God - these were the purposes for which he was now commissioned. And world-wide was to be his sphere. Was he, then, returning as a discredited messenger, or Apostle.** He was coming back an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned, as no one else ever was, directly from the Lord Himself in glory, though at first an object of suspicion to the disciples in Jerusalem. For it would seem as if no word of his conversion had reached the ears of the Apostles. Of his labours, too, in Damascus they seem to have been in profound ignorance, till Barnabas, taking him by the hand, made them acquainted with his conversion, and with the proofs of it in his evangelistic labours and

controversial encounters; for he had seen the Lord who had spoken to him, and he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus (Acts 9:27).

* Who was the Ethnarch? According to Lewin (vol. 1:, p72), he was the chief officer of the Jews in the city, to whom Aretas, King of Arabia, had delegated supreme power over that people. According to others, he was Procurator under Aretas, but not a Jew. The conduct of the Jews, watching the gates day and night, would favour the first supposition. Were the guards (2 Corinthians 11:32) the Jews mentioned in the Acts?

** Messengers from the high priest on ecclesiastical matters were called Apostles, readers may remember. Note, p. 119. The testimony of Barnabas was enough. Satisfied, then, as to the reality of his conversion, Saul was admitted freely to the company of the Christians in the city. He who had once entered houses as an inquisitor was now received as a brother in the faith. But between him and Barnabas there was thus early formed a special tie ; and the latter evidently was conscious of the teaching powers of the former, and highly valued them (xi. 25, 26). Only a short stay did he make - just a fortnight abiding with Peter. It was, however, a time of active service. For he preached boldly in the name of the Lord, as well as disputed against the Hellenists - 1:e., the Grecian Jews - just the class against whom Stephen had witnessed. But as with Stephen, so with Saul : when argument availed not, force was to be used. So they went about to kill him. This coming to the cognisance of the disciples, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. What love did they manifest - his past hostility all forgiven! Many years later he must have travelled probably the same road to Csesarea, to escape again death at the hand of the Jews. On this first occasion he was escorted by disciples; on the second he was carried by Roman troops, and as their prisoner. How he went from Caesarea to Tarsus is not told us. That he reached it, his native city, we learn from Acts 11:25. Judging, however, from Galatians 1:21, he traversed Syria to reach Cilicia. Much more might we have learnt had it been profitable for us to know it. The fortnight with Peter (Galatians 1:18), full surely of interest, these two making acquaintance whose labours figure so largely in the Acts, might have furnished a chronicler with much to record. Had Luke been a chronicler he might have dilated on it. But, the penman of the Holy Spirit, he presents rather the features of the great movement of his day, than details, interesting as they might have been. A Pause. Of a breathing-time in the midst of conflict we next learn. "The Church [not, Churches] had rest [or, peace] throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied" (Acts 9:31). The efforts of the ecclesiastical power seemed exhausted. Of such we hear no more for a long time. And now, with Saul away from Jerusalem, the enmity of the Jews became somewhat dormant. Rest or peace the Church knew, and progress was made in the work. Here for the first time do we read of Christian work having gone on in Galilee. The Church, first planted in the metropolis of Judaism, and amongst the most bigoted and determined opponents of the faith in the land, had nevertheless spread throughout it from south to north, and had already penetrated into Syria. Companies of believers were therefore already found in different towns and villages, each an assembly in itself (Galatians 1:22); yet the whole collectively formed but one assembly, or Church, as the historian carefully records, writing, as we have remarked above, "Then had the Church," etc. For in two aspects can the Church be viewed as wholly on earth, - in a local aspect, comprising then only the professing Christians in any given place ; and also in a general aspect, embracing all believers here below irrespective of their different localities. In a still

wider aspect is it also viewed - viz., as embracing the whole number of Christians who will compose the Body of Christ. In this last aspect it can never, of course, be fully seen on earth. Kest enjoyed, increase followed. Outward persecution ceasing, by the enemy for a time laying aside that weapon, the Spirit of God, however, did not pause in His work. For the assembly, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied. Persecution had failed to uproot the Church. Now, of the conditions under which it multiplied we are informed. Christian life was active in its members. The truth worked on them and in them. Ministry in the power and under the guidance of the Spirit was in exercise, and increase was the happy result. And surely there must have been then exhibited, what should still be displayed, the fruits of real ministry in the edifying of the assembly, and the increase of the whole by each member of the Body performing its appointed function (Ephesians 4:11-13; Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19). A Crisis. A crisis had been reached, and peace and increase took the place of harassing persecution and scattering of the disciples. Critical times there have been in the history of the movement. The first was experienced on the day of the Lord’s crucifixion. All hopes formed by the disciples of the redemption of Israel, by Him whom they had regarded as the Messiah, were dashed to the ground. But God raised Him from the dead, and their hopes revived, accompanied, through the coming of the Holy Ghost, with an intelligence about matters to which they had been hitherto strangers. A second crisis in the history of the movement arrived. The Christians, like defenceless sheep, seemed at the mercy of the persecutor, now bent on stamping out, if possible, the truth committed to them to maintain. But had God given His saints over to destruction? Just when the persecutor must have thought himself sure of his prey in Damascus, the Lord converted him, and the great opponent on earth became a most gifted and earnest champion for the faith. Later on another crisis was reached, when in a different way the work was imperilled. Judaising principles were at work. Peter was led away ; and even Barnabas, who had hitherto stood firm, was drawn aside by dissimulation. The true Gospel of the grace of God hung in the balance. Was it to be surrendered altogether or not? The steadfastness of one man - Paul - preserved the faith then, and for succeeding generations; so that the truth, of the Gospel continued (Galatians 2:1-21 :). Critical times those were. Critical times, too, have since the Apostles’ days been known. But as then, so still, God has come in, and preserved that which was in danger of being surrendered. To one other instance will we just advert. At one time it seemed as if the error of Arius concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus were prevailing, but the faithfulness of Athanasius, notwithstanding the defection of some who had once stood firm, never wavered, and thus the truth was preserved. To quote the words of Hooker, "The whole world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against it; half a hundred of years spent in doubtful trial which of the two in the end would prevail - the side which had all, or else the part which had no friend but God and death ; the one a defender of his innocency, the other a finisher of all his troubles" (Eccles. Polity, V. 42: 5). By Athanasius under God the truth then attacked was preserved to the Church of God. Critical times do arrive. But the watchfulness of our God is unceasing. Such crises show the determination of the enemy on the one hand, but the faithfulness of God and the presence and power of the Spirit on the other. Let us be faithful to the teaching of the Word, for the truth will assuredly prevail, and what may seem to be a losing fight will turn out to be a winning one. The lull in the storm noted affords us a moment to survey what had been achieved. In Jerusalem the work began by the preaching of Peter. In Galilee, Judasa, Samaria, it was carried on. Assemblies in different places existed. To Syria and Cilicia it was spreading, and a convert had returned to Ethiopia with a knowledge of Christ and of the

Gospel of God. The movement was taking root wherever it had spread. But would it hold its own when brought against Gentile culture and civilisation? Would it change the current of many a life in heathen lands, and, face to face with that great centre of idolatry at Ephesus, have to record a march of triumph unparalleled in the history of Judaism? We shall see. Meanwhile we may note that neither fanaticism nor religious zeal could arrest its course. It rolled on like a mighty river, which mocks at puny efforts to stem its tide or divert its current.

Chapter 51

04.14. THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS OPENED TO GENTILES.

THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS OPENED TO GENTILES.

Acts 9:32—xi. 18. FROM the movements of Saul we are now turned to those of Peter in connection with that remarkable journey, which resulted in the opening of the kingdom of the heavens to Gentiles. This was service specially delegated to him by the Lord. And, foretold in Matthew (xvi. 19), he now carried it out under the special direction of the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:19-20; Acts 11:12), God having made choice by him, as he subsequently stated (xv. 7), that the Gentiles should first hear from his mouth the Gospel of sovereign grace. The time for the development of this purpose was now at hand, though as yet no one on earth was aware of it.

Peter's New Journey. We have read (viii.) of Peter and John visiting and evangelising in Samaria. We are now to read of Peter itinerating alone in Judaea, the spread of the work doubtless necessitating such a service. Itinerancy was commenced by the Lord (Mark 1:39; Luke 8:1; Luke 13:22), and was carried on by the Apostles Peter and Paul. We mention them only, because the labours of the others, a little of John's excepted, are to us wholly unknown; for the history of the Acts was not intended to be a chronicle of all that went on, nor indeed to furnish the biography of any of the early Christians. We know from chapter 8: 1 that the Apostles had remained at Jerusalem, when the disciples were scattered abroad at the persecution which arose about Stephen. But what the rest did, or where any of them were, when Saul as a Christian and Peter's guest returned to Jerusalem, save indeed James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19), we have now no means of ascertaining. Very probably none of them finally left Jerusalem for distant fields of labour till Gentiles had been admitted into the kingdom at Caesarea. The spread of the work in the Holy Land, consequent on the dispersion of the disciples, may have provided till then sufficient scope for the energies and service of them all. And we may be sure that none of them were idle: all were workers.

Incidents of the Journey. Peter now went forth alone. Why we know not. But all can understand how fitting that was, since in the striking event of this journey he was the only Apostle who could have part. Ere, however, accomplishing that great purpose, the power of the name of Christ was to be remarkably manifested, and the power of prayer was to be proved. The former was displayed in the healing of Aeneas; the latter was seen in the raising of Tabitha from the dead.

Lydda. - At Lydda Peter halted. This town was situated in the plain of Ono, which debouches on that of Sharon, and is on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa. Christianity had reached it before the Apostle's visit, for he went down, we are told, to the saints there. Aeneas a paralysed man, and bedridden for eight years, was in the place, but whether he was already a Christian is not definitely stated. "Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole [or, healeth thee]: arise, and make thy bed." Such was the apostolic utterance, giving all the glory, ascribing all the power to the crucified One. Restored thus to health and strength, like the palsied man in Mark 2:1-28 :, without passing through any period of convalescence, all could witness that vitality reanimated his enfeebled frame. But, differing from that case in the Gospel, Aeneas was healed by Peter in the name of

Christ, whereas in the house at Capernaum the Lord healed the man by virtue of His own power. He was the Master; Peter was the servant. At Lydda the name of Christ was all-powerful, as before in Capernaum the word of Christ had been sufficient. In that name in the Temple court the lame man had been healed (Acts iiL). By virtue of that same name the paralysed limbs of Aeneas now received strength, so that he could walk and make his bed. The God of Israel was still dispensing blessings to individuals among His ancient people, though only in the name of the rejected but exalted Saviour. The fame of this miracle quickly spread. All that dwelt in Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and (rather, who) turned to the Lord. Seeing what had taken place, they turned to the Lord, Aeneas could rejoice in his regained liberty of motion. The countryside, as one might say, as well as the townspeople, reaped blessing likewise. Conversions were very numerous.

Joppa. Nine miles farther on, and lying on the sea-coast, was Joppa, now Jaffa, the seaport of Jerusalem in old days (2 Chronicles 2:16), the seaport for her still. Here dwelt a certain disciple named Tabitha, an Aramaic word signifying a gazelle, the Greek equivalent of which is Dorcas. She had been a woman active in good works and alms-deeds, spending time, strength, and substance in making garments for the poor. But death had claimed her: her active life was apparently over. A calamity had befallen the recipients of her charity. Weeping and wailing now occupied them; but neither the one nor the other, nor both together, could induce the iron hand of death to relax its grasp. The chamber of death might resound with lamentations - the dead one heard them not. Death heeded them not; nothing short of the intervention of Divine power could restore Tabitha to life. But to none save Apostles do we read of such power having been by the Lord entrusted (Matthew 10:8). No such power was given to the Seventy (Luke 10:1-42 :), nor does the Lord in Mark 16:1-20 : endow disciples with it. Christians, then, in Joppa could not raise the dead. Who on earth could ?

Peter’s visit to Lydda had become well known, and his presence there seemed timely. So to him they turned, sending two men to ask him to visit them without delay. He went with the messengers. Entering the chamber of death, and now alone with the corpse and with God (for he put out all the widows present, who were showing him the garments Dorcas had made), he fell on his knees in prayer. The Lord could command the dead to rise: He did so at Nain. Peter owned he had no such inherent power. Like Elijah (1 Kings 17:22), and like Elisha (2 Kings 4:33), however, he prayed, and restoration to life was the result. "Tabitha, arise," were his words. Tabitha opened her eyes and sat up. Life and power had returned to the body; and the Apostle had the joy of presenting her alive to the weeping widows and sorrowing disciples. Peter’s next stage was to land him at Csesarea.

Miracles. Most striking miracles have been wrought, which in their order may remind us of the Lord’s history in the seventh chapter of Luke. There disease was first removed, then death had to relax its grasp, life being restored to the widow of Nain’s son. After that forgiveness of sins was accorded to the woman in Simon’s house and openly proclaimed ; so Peter had healed the sick and raised the dead, and next was to preach full forgiveness of sins to all who believed the Lord Jesus. But for that he must proceed to Caesarea. A word, however, here as to miracles before passing on. Such are signs that God is working, and at times are characteristic marks of the commencement of a new dispensation. With miracles the Mosaic dispensation was inaugurated, a dispensation of law, not of grace; so the character of those wrought by Moses in Egypt were for the most part judicial, thus in keeping with law, which deals with people in accordance with their

works. But the character of the miracles with which the present dispensation was ushered in, as far as we read of them, was for the most part that of grace, meeting the needs of people, and removing sorrow and suffering. And since the exercise of such powers attests that God is working, we can understand why the Apostles and early Christians, as Stephen and Philip, were empowered to do them - a striking testimony, as done in the name of the Lord Jesus and by His servants, of the guilt of the Jews in rejecting Him on the one hand, and of the grace of God in ministering to people on the other.

Whilst, however, a dispensation may be inaugurated by such exhibitions of Divine power, it by no means follows that they will continue in exercise throughout it, though for a definite testimony they may be again exhibited. So we read of John that he did no miracle (John 10:41). He lived at the close of the Mosaic dispensation, as we do towards the close of the Christian. Between Moses, however, and John miracles had a marked place in the histories of Elijah and of Elisha. Theirs was the time of Israel’s apostasy. God then worked by those two prophets to show Himself to be the one true, living, self-existing God. So in a coming day, when apostasy under the beast and his minister, the false prophet, will be rife, miraculous powers will be wielded by the two witnesses then raised up on behalf of the truth in Jerusalem (Revelation 11:6).

Cornelius. To return. The Lord Jesus by His death, as John tells us in his Gospel (xi. 52), would gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. The carrying out of this purpose was now to commence through the call of Gentiles, for among them there were sheep of Christ (John 10:16). Of these Cornelius, a Roman centurion of the Italian band,* with others of his household and his acquaintance, were part. Already born of God, for he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway"; yet, notwithstanding those evident tokens of his spiritual life, he had no recognised place at the children’s table. For, like the Syrophoenician woman, he did not by natural birth belong to the favoured nation. Now, however, it was to be known, and definitely understood, that the middle wall of partition, raised up by God, had by Divine command been broken down for all who should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in the present dispensation. For Christ by His death has "abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, making peace, and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:15)

* "The Italian band consisted of Italians, not of natives of the country, like many other Roman troops in Syria. Such a Roman auxiliary corps was appropriately stationed at the place where the Procurator had his residence, for the maintenance of tranquillity (Meyer). Julius, the centurion to whose custody Paul was committed to sail for Home, was of the Augustan band (Acts 27:1).

Two Visions. But for this to be brought about Peter and Cornelius must meet, and the latter be evangelised by the former. A Jew and a Gentile to meet ! Who could arrange that ? Who could persuade Peter to consent to it? God must do it. By a vision Cornelius learnt that he was to send for Peter. By a vision Peter learnt that with unquestioning heart he was to go with the messengers from Cornelius. An angel appeared to Cornelius when engaged in prayer at the ninth hour, that hour so long consecrated to the offering of the evening sacrifice on the altar, and known at Jerusalem as the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). God, the centurion learnt, known to Israel as Jehovah of Hosts, had observed and cared for the Gentile soldier. Grace had really reached him in the

bestowal of spiritual life, though he was neither an Israelite nor a proselyte to the Jewish religion. His prayers had been heard, his alms to the Jews (x. 2) had been carefully noted, and both had gone up for a memorial before God (4). Never before had a heavenly visitant appeared in that house. So Cornelius was at first affrighted, and asked, "What is it, Lord?" The purpose of the visit was soon declared, for short, though distinct, was the communication made. " Thy prayers and thine alms are come [or, gone] up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside" (4-6).* Here the communication as given by Luke really stopped - the words "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" being generally viewed as an interpolation, as well as the words "who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee." But there was an addition to the record of the historian, which is supplied by Peter in 11: 14, furnished to him, as he states, by Cornelius - "who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." This elucidates a very important subject, to which we must refer later on. With soldierlike obedience Cornelius prepared to carry out the instructions just received. He would send for Peter that very day. Simon surnamed Peter lodged with one Simon a tanner, whose house was by the seaside. Saul was to be found by Ananias in the street of Damascus called Straight, and in the house of one Judas, who doubtless was not a Christian. Peter’s address at this time was the house of a Christian, Simon the tanner, by the seaside. Ananias had no difficulty in finding Saul. The messengers of Cornelius as readily found the house and the man to whom they were sent. The Shepherd knows the sheep. The Holy Ghost can direct as to the locality and the house in which they will be found. Strangers some may be to those on earth immediately around them. If saints, they are, however, under the watchful eye of One in heaven - a comfort for any in such a position on earth.

* The tanner, on account of his trade, dwelt by the sea, and probably apart from the city, to which his house belonged (Meyer).

Csesarea. The dwelling-place of Cornelius, not mentioned in Old Testament history, owed its existence almost to Herod the Great. It was the headquarters of the Roman governor of Judaea. Magnificently adorned by the king with palaces and large edifices, it was also noted, and that especially, for the haven which he constructed at great cost, and capable of containing large ships. Thus commerce was brought to it; and, as we learn from notices in the Acts, Paul disembarked at it on his second missionary journey (xviii. 22), and embarked at that port for his voyage as a prisoner to Rome (xxvii. 2). Several times mentioned in the Acts, it is never once noticed in the Gospels. And now that city, built at such a cost, we learn is a desolate ruin. "Like the vast fragments of St. Andrews in Scotland," to quote Dean Stanley, its ruins "run out into the waves of the Mediterranean Sea, which dashes over the prostrate columns and huge masses of masonry; but unlike St. Andrews - unlike in this respect to most Eastern ruins - no sign of human habitation is to be found within the circuit of its deserted walls. No village or even hovel remains on the site of what was once the capital of Palestine."* Like an exotic, its roots had not struck deep enough into the soil to secure it enduring vitality, though for a time it continued, being the seat of a Christian bishopric, filled in the fourth century by the Church historian Eusebius, and in later times was a post of the Crusaders. At the time of which we are reading, Christianity must already have found a home within its walls, for Philip the Evangelist had gone there (viii. 40), and perhaps to live (xxi. 8). But though Philip was the appointed instrument to evangelise the eunuch, he was not the one foreordained to minister to Cornelius the salvation he had to receive. Peter only could do that.

Philip and the centurion were as yet, we must suppose, strangers to each other. So to Joppa the messengers had to journey.

* Stanley’s Sinai and Palestine, p. 261. The Second Vision. The thirty miles that measured the distance between the two towns was well-nigh covered, when Peter, all unconscious of the special work that lay before him, had gone up to the roof of Simon’s house to pray. It was about the sixth hour, the hour of noon. The third, the sixth, and the ninth hours were hours of prayer with the Jews. Hungry, and whilst waiting for food to be prepared, he fell into a trance (or, an ecstasy came upon him), a state similar to that in which Paul was in the Temple (xxii. 17) when the Lord appeared to him. The Spirit of God was now about to teach His servant the special service that lay before him. A sheet, as it were, Peter saw let down from heaven by its four corners, containing all manner of four-footed beasts * and creeping things and fowls of the air - clean and unclean beasts, as he would regard them, all mixed together. A strange sight for one brought up in the strict rules of Judaism! But, stranger still, a voice came to him from heaven, saying, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." Impossible, thought the Apostle, to do that. And with that freedom of spirit which we have noticed in Ananias, he remonstrated with the One who addressed him: "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean" (i.e., not only not sanctified for his use, but unclean as well). Again the voice was heard, " What God hath cleansed, that call [or, make] not thou common." Thrice was that done, and immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven (x. 11-16). The vision was ended, the state of ecstasy passed. Now arose the question, What did that vision mean ? Peter’s natural hunger had not been appeased. What, then, was the lesson intended? Alone on the housetop, to whom could he unburden his mind ? Wondering about it, for the application of the vision he had not long to wait. The Spirit spoke to him plainly, and informed him of the coming of the men to seek him. They were already at the gate inquiring for Peter. With them the Holy Ghost told him he was to go, nothing doubting; for "I," he said, "ave sent them" (19, 20). God the Holy Ghost was dwelling on earth, and was directing in the progress of the work, opening up now a new, a vast, and a hitherto unsuspected field of labour. He spoke as ordering in this work.

* Luke omits really "wild beasts." Peter in his recital (xi. 6) mentions them. To Csesarea. In obedience to the Spirit’s word Peter went down, met the men, introduced himself as the one for whom they were asking, and inquired their errand. Now he heard of Cornelius in Csesarea having been warned by an angel to send for him, to hear words of him (22). Cornelius had been prepared to welcome Peter, and that by name. Peter too was now prepared to go to Cornelius to minister to him. That night passed with the messengers from Cornelius resting after their journey under Simon’s roof. On the following day the Apostle set off with them, accompanied by six of the disciples of Joppa. Would a Jew obey the summons of a Gentile? Would Peter enter under his roof? Some might have questioned that. Cornelius, however, did not. Not a shadow of a doubt existed in his mind, and he had reckoned on an immediate response. Nor was he mistaken: Peter appeared as soon as he could well have been there - the fourth day from the visit of the angel - and found a hearty and full reception. The centurion’s kinsfolk and near friends were assembled to meet him. What a sight it must have been! Many had come together, and were there present in the sight of Gorl to hear all things that were commanded Peter of the Lord (as we should here read), not God (33). To the Apostle this scene, and likewise the company, must have been of singular interest. For the first time he had crossed the threshold of a Gentile’s habitation, and for the first

time in the world’s history were Gentiles gathered together to hear the Gospel of Divine grace. And if it was a strange thing to Peter, it was equally so to Cornelius, who fell down at the Apostle’s feet and worshipped him. Great condescension he felt it was on the part of Peter to enter under his roof. The Apostle, however, raised him up, and set Cornelius at rest with the words, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." Then talking with him, they entered the house. The Address. One thing was manifest, and that Peter gave expression to. "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him" (x. 34, 35). So Peter declared. With this beginning - a relief, probably, to his mind in the new circumstances in which he was placed - he proceeded to recount, but briefly, what they, it would seem, knew of the Lord’s ministry in life, and of His death on the cross; and went on to that which might be new to some, that God had raised Him from the dead. Of the Lord he had spoken: He had gone about doing good and healing all that were possessed of the devil, for God was with Him. Of the Jews he also spoke: they had crucified Him. What a contrast - the One all goodness, the others manifesting in their treatment of Him the intense hatred of the natural heart to God and to His grace! Of God too he spoke: He had raised up Christ from the dead, thus espousing His cause whom men had put to death. Of all this - the life, the death, the resurrection - Peter and others were witnesses. And further, Peter came that day with a message entrusted to him and to all the Eleven, which concerned every one upon earth. The crucified One is the appointed Judge of quick and dead. All will have to do with Him in the future. A new chapter in history therefore opens up. Whilst the Lord Jesus was upon earth, to tlie lost sheep of the house of Israel had He alone been sent.No message of peace did He before the cross send by His Apostles to Gentiles (Matthew 10:5-6; Matthew 15:24). He came then as the Messiah to Israel; but He is coming some day as the Judge of quick and dead. Was there, then, to be no message to any beyond the elect nation? Who can face the thought of standing before the judgment seat, if conscious in the slightest degree of having sinned, unless grace is known and the person is assured of it? Condemnation, and that final, is all that else could be looked for. Here, then, the message* of forgiveness comes in most suitably, a welcome rift in the dark cloud which must otherwise envelop the sinner’s future. A rift, shall we only say? Much more. The dark cloud rolls away never to come back. So Peter went on to declare that "unto Him" - the coming Judge - "give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Few and simple were the words treating of grace and salvation. Much more, doubtless, Peter had intended to state (see 11: 15); but the work was done. God’s provision for the sinner was no after-thought, though the time for its far-reaching application had only just come. It was the Divine purpose, the Divine wish, to grant forgiveness of sins to every one who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. To a company of utter strangers was that here declared. Strangers they were personally to Peter; but strangers also from the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12), they heard the glad tidings, and at once drank them in. Never before, and never since, have we heard of the whole company attending a preaching of grace brought into liberty of soul by crediting the Gospel of salvation. But it was so here, and public attestation was vouchsafed through the Holy Ghost falling on every one, as evidenced by their speaking with tongues and magnifying God (Acts 10:44-46); and witnesses sufficient in number, and by no means prejudiced in favour of Gentiles, were there to accredit the fact, that "on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Let us mark the terms here vised to express it. The Holy Ghost fell on them (44). He was poured out on them (45). They received the Holy Ghost (47). It was the gift of the Spirit (xi. 17). It was a

baptism of the Spirit (xi. 16). In nothing did these Gentiles come short of that which had been bestowed at Pentecost. And now for the second and the last time in the Christian dispensation was the Spirit poured out; and for the second and the last time do we read of a baptism of the Spirit taking place. People often loosely talk of such an event as taking place, or to be desired, in our day. But that never has occurred again, nor have we the slightest intimation that it ever will. A fresh pouring-out the prophets distinctly predict (Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28). A baptism of the Spirit was a truth outside the range of their vision. Are we then worse off than the early Christians as to the gift of the Spirit and its consequence? No; for though miraculous powers may be withheld, all other blessings connected with it can be still enjoyed. Each one, as he receives the Gospel of his salvation, comes into the effect of the baptism of the Spirit, becoming thereby a member of the Body of Christ. Paul, as we saw, was not converted at Pentecost nor present at Caesarea; yet he shared in this baptism. So then do all believers now (1 Corinthians 12:13), and should own it and the consequences flowing from it.

Cornelius, then, and his company received the gift of the Holy Ghost direct from on high, without the laying on of apostolic hands, as had recently taken place in Samaria. From this time the Body of Christ was fully formed, composed of believers from Gentiles as well as from Jews. And this Body exists still on earth.

Christian Baptism. Baptised with the Spirit, an act which embraced the whole company, and which is never spoken of with reference to individuals; each individual had to be baptised with water as well. The former could not supplant or render needless the latter : profession of discipleship to Christ who had died had to be made. Each one had to be buried with Christ in order to be reckoned outwardly on Christian ground. Perfectly distinct, as we see here, are these two baptisms. Christian baptism with water communicates no spiritual blessing to the one who submits to it. It does not give life, nor is it a figure of it; for we are buried by it unto death, which is a very different thing (Romans 6:3-4). Moreover, in confirmation of what we have said, every spiritual blessing belonged to Cornelius and to his company before they submitted to Christian baptism. Spiritual life, forgiveness of sins, salvation, justification, the being in Christ, and the being members of the Body of Christ, all these blessings were theirs already who had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gift necessarily brings the recipient into the fullest Christian blessing. Still baptism by water, the being baptised unto Christ, was requisite, for in this way only could they take their places as His disciples and be professedly in His company, - buried with Him thereby. So at Peter’s command to that rite they submitted. Gentiles had become members of the Body of Christ, and formed part of the Church of God, and each and all of them in that house took also openly their places as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Receiving the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Spirit they shared in. Now, the bestowal of that Christian blessing on this occasion sheds light for us on that which is ordinarily required to receive it. We say ordinarily, because here apostolic hands were not laid on them, as on those in Samaria (Acts 8:1-40 :), and subsequently on some believers at Ephesus (xix. G). Peter had just spoken of the forgiveness of sins by faith in Christ. Each member of the company that he addressed believed that, and they each and all at once received the Holy Ghost. They had believed that which Paul, writing to the Ephesians, calls "the Gospel of salvation" (Ephesians 1:13). What that Gospel is Peter in this address at Caesarea makes clear to us. Forgiveness of sins was preached - that was all. Then, taking the Apostle at once, and simply at his word, God without one minute’s delay gave

to them the Holy Ghost; their speaking with tongues, as we have said, being the outward manifestation of it. Now, this was and is the normal way of receiving that blessing. The Galatians thus received the Spirit (Galatians 3:2), the Ephesian saints likewise (Ephesians 1:13). And Peter in the Acts (v. 32) has already taught us that saints in general thus came to share in it. We know, then, what line of truth is needed to bring souls into that liberty, which is enjoyed when they are partakers of the gift of the Spirit. It is the preaching of plenary forgiveness by faith in Christ Jesus.

Salvation. Further, that Gospel received ensures salvation. What does this mean? As saved a person is delivered from something which had threatened him. A saved man is a delivered man. That Israel learnt, and rejoiced in, when standing that eventful morning on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. On the previous day they seemed in a terrible strait. The sea was before them. The army of Pharaoh, with his chariots and horses, was coming up behind them. To turn to the right or to the left was impossible, for they "were entangled in the land, the wilderness had shut them in." So said Pharaoh (Exodus 14:3). To go forward was to court death by drowning. To remain where they were was, humanly speaking, to await certain destruction at the hands of the Egyptian cavalry and chariots. In this predicament came that word by Moses to the affrighted people, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." They did see that; for going forward to the sea, and passing through its bed as on dry land, the waters which they thought must surely engulf them were forced by Almighty power to be a wall on their right hand and on their left. No flank movement of the enemy was therefore possible : to follow behind the Israelites was the only course. Then Israel saw their enemies dead on the sea-shore, overwhelmed by the returning waves. They were saved. Neither had the sea engulfed them, nor had their enemies destroyed them. They were delivered, so could sing, " The Lord [or, Jah] is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation " (Exodus 15:2).

Now, for us there is soul salvation, as Cornelius and his company that day learnt. Life the centurion had already possessed - eternal life really. But salvation he had never known. Deliverance from the just consequences of his sins he had not previously enjoyed. So we see in him illustrated the salvation of the soul, of which Peter writes (1 Peter 1:9), before receiving full salvation of the person, which will come at a future day (1 Peter 1:5). Soul salvation, then, apart from final deliverance in the last time, is New Testament doctrine, and in its fulness and freeness is Christian doctrine. Prophets of old, we are taught by the same Apostle, learnt that they ministered really to coming generations, writing of that which was not in their own day to be enjoyed. At Pentecost the time had come for the salvation of the soul to be known by the believer. We say at Pentecost, because during the Lord’s life on earth that blessing, like forgiveness of sins, was not preached nor generally dispensed. A woman in the Pharisee’s house learnt that her sins were forgiven (Luke 7:48). To the house of the publican Zaccheus salvation came when the Lord entered under his roof (Luke 19:9). But these were exceptional cases, like drops of rain the prelude to a great shower. Now, however, consequent on the death and resurrection of the Lord, a great change was introduced: forgiveness of sins was to be preached and by consequence soul salvation was to be enjoyed. So the Apostle Paul could write of this dispensation as "the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Then, addressing the company in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, he declared, "To you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts 13:26). And when the Jews at Rome refused the truth, he told them, "This salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it " (xxviii. 28). It was present salvation; so he could say to Timothy, "Who hath saved us, and

called us with an holy calling" (2 Timothy 1:9). To the Ephesians he could write, " By grace "are ye saved through faith," for they had received the Gospel of their salvation (Ephesians 2:8). Deliverance from the consequences of their sins they enjoyed, and knew it. So was it with Cornelius when he had heard the words whereby he could be saved. So is it with every one who rests on the Divine testimony of forgiveness of sins through the precious blood of Christ. To have spiritual life is one thing, to be saved is another. Not that God will stop short of perfecting His work in the soul; but He desires that the individual should believe the message of forgiveness and know that he is saved.

Every One. We have spoken of Cornelius's history as illustrating the normal way of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. We have pointed out also that it explains to us how salvation comes to be enjoyed. Another point also comes out in bold relief - viz., the universal application of some statements which might otherwise have been confined to the elect nation. The Gospel of John has made us familiar with expressions in the course of the Lord's teaching such as "hosoever," "every one," "he that," etc. (John 3:15-16; John 5:24; John 6:40; John 6:45; John 6:51; John 8:12; John 10:9). Were these only to be applied to individuals of the family of Jacob, or have they for their legitimate scope the widest application on earth, being limited only by the bounds of the human race? As long as the Lord was on earth the disciples were confined in their ministry to the house of Israel. Now, however, by the call of Gentiles, as seen in the history of Cornelius and his company, we learn that the offer of the Gospel, and the blessings attendant on its reception, can be shared in by any one of the human race to whom the message comes. "Whosoever " means whosoever. "Every man," "he that," etc., are to be taken in their widest application; the Lord Jesus, we now understand, using language which foretold how far-reaching were the thoughts of God and His purposes of grace. "Whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins," so Peter had said. At Caesarea these Gentiles took up the words in their fulness, and it became manifest that the grace of salvation could be of world-wide application. So for the first time such terms as we have referred to came to be interpreted without restriction of nationality. Looking back on Peter's address at Pentecost (Acts ii! 39), we see he used language of the fulness of the meaning of which he had then no idea. Now it was made abundantly clear that the " far off," of whom he had spoken at Jerusalem, were illustrated by the company which he had addressed in Caesarea that day.

Peter's Defence. And now, taught by the vision that he had on the housetop at Joppa to call no man common or, simply because of his nationality, unclean, Peter for the first time in his life abode with those who had been Gentiles, and that for some days. The middle wall of partition was for him broken down. As yet, however, and for several years to come, there were those at Jerusalem of the Christian community who knew not the liberty inaugurated by Christianity. Returning to Jerusalem, accompanied by six disciples from Joppa who had gone with him to Csesarea, Peter was challenged as to the Tightness of his conduct at the latter place. For tidings of that which had taken place at Csesarea had reached the ears of the Apostles and brethren at Jerusalem. " They that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest unto men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them " (xi. 2, 3). He had not maintained that social separation which all of them had hitherto, and rightly, upheld. But the question was raised in no hostile spirit, so conviction on the part of the questioners as to the rightness of his course was not difficult to be produced. Rehearsing the matter in order, to four points their attention was directed - proofs that it was all

God’s doing and not man’s.

First, Peter going up to the housetop to pray fell into a trance, and had a vision. God spoke to him, and he spoke to the Lord.

Second, The Spirit, when that vision was ended, and all had been finally drawn up into heaven, bade him go with the messengers who were inquiring for him, nothing doubting, for He had sent them.

Third, To Cornelius an angel had been sent telling him to send for Peter, from whom he would hear words by which he and all his house should be saved.

Fourth, As Peter was addressing the company under the roof of Cornelius the Holy Ghost fell on them all, and Peter recognised it as a baptism of the Spirit. With the effect on himself and on those brethren who accompanied him to Caesarea his hearers were then made acquainted. Impossible, he felt, it was to withstand God. That was enough. Objectors were silenced because convinced; and glorifying God took the place of contending with Peter. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (xi. 18) indicated how fully they were satisfied. A distinct epoch in the Church’s history was now to be marked. From henceforth Gentiles were to be evangelised in common with the race of Israel; for, as the Lord had told the gathered company in the upper room on the day of His resurrection, repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The kingdom of heaven opened now to Gentiles, the work on earth could spread far and wide. To the way that work began to progress we are to be introduced by the historian.

Variations. Ere, however, turning from this history of Cornelius, which is of lasting interest, we would remark on the different accounts that we have of the two visions - that to Cornelius and that to Peter. Of the former we have substantially three accounts; of the latter there are two. Of course, when the historian wrote this book, the facts of the two visions must have been well and probably widely known as contemporary history. Mistakes, then, if there were any, might have been readily checked. No one, however, has done that. So we may safely conclude that the facts stated, allowing for the corrections arising from textual criticism, are veritable facts.

Now as to the first vision. The historian represents Cornelius as affrighted when he first saw the angel (Acts 10:4). Cornelius, in recounting what happened, wholly omits that which we should naturally have expected him to notice. Nor does he tell Peter of his salutation to the angel - "What is it, Lord?" though he did describe the appearance of the heavenly messenger as a man in bright apparel. This last point Luke has passed over. Another thing which the historian has not noticed Cornelius supplies. We learn that he was in prayer when the angel appeared. Further, the centurion has preserved for us more particularly the actual words of the angel - "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (x. 31). Now, the mention of his occupation at that moment gives more point to the angel’s announcement that his prayer was heard. Turning to Peter’s reference to this vision when at Jerusalem, he supplies what neither Luke nor Cornelius have stated - viz., the purpose to be effected by his visit to Csesarea - "who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (xi. 14). For the reader should be reminded that both the last clause of ver. 6, "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do," as well as the last clause of ver. 32, "who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee," should be

omitted. Of the two accounts of Peter’s vision, one is by Luke, the other by himself, which he gave to the Christians at Jerusalem. Luke tells us that Peter was hungry at the time. This explains the point of the command, "Kill and eat." Peter, however, though telling his hearers of the command, omits all notice of his hunger. Naturally he might have mentioned what he felt at the time, just as Cornelius might have told of his feelings when he saw the angel. Both have left them to be stated by the historian. Again, the words of the Spirit announcing the coming of the centurion’s messengers are only found in the history as narrated by Luke.

Now, these variations are very marked. How shall we account for them? Would any seek to explain them on a double document hypothesis, or, as to Cornelius, on a triple document hypothesis, and suppose some anonymous compiler blended the two or the three records into one? Would that stand as sound criticism? It would not. That Luke wrote the Acts is, we believe, unquestionable. That he was contemporary with the centurion and with Peter no one can dispute. That he may have had the story of each from his own mouth no one can relegate to the region of impossibilities. We see, then, how varied may be different accounts of the same event, without any need to call in question the genuineness of the record or the authenticity of the narrative. If that be so in these cases, why may it not be equally so in others ?

Chapter 52

04.15. THE GOSPEL AT ANTIOCII, AND PETER'S DELIVERANCE AT JERUSALEM.

THE GOSPEL AT ANTIOCII, AND PETER’S DELIVERANCE AT JERUSALEM.

Acts 11:19—xii. 25. THE door of the kingdom opened to Gentiles at Caesarea, we are now to learn how the work began to spread among them. And here we mark, as in all the progress of the Gospel in the Acts, the guiding hand of God apart from apostolic direction or the superintendence of any committee of Christians. Consequent on the persecutions which arose about Stephen, Philip, as we have already seen, went down to Samaria, and found ready access to hearts, and could speak in consequence of a reaping time indeed among the Samaritans. Subsequently directed by the Spirit, he left that field of work to evangelise the eunuch in the desert, who carried home for his own joy, and doubtless for that of others, the good news of God’s grace through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, as we have also seen, Peter distinctly commanded by the Holy Ghost, went to Caesarea, and there opened the kingdom of the heavens to Gentiles. In the initiation of these different stages of the work apostolic guidance had no part. The Apostles heard of the work in Samaria after it had greatly progressed. They heard too of Peter’s visit to Cornelius after that centurion had received the Holy Ghost. And now, as we shall see, they hear of the work among Gentiles at Antioch only after a great number of Greeks have believed and turned to the Lord. It was the same throughout. The missionary journey to the heathen of the Apostles Barnabas and Paul was undertaken by distinct revelation from the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2). And the extension of the work into Europe was brought about through a vision vouchsafed to Paul at Troas (xvi. 9). The Holy Ghost guided, and opened up new fields of labour.

Varied Agencies. And now another thing may be noted. God has various agencies for the carrying on of His work. We have read of some already, as Peter, John, Stephen, and Philip. But many, whose names have found no place in the records of men, were used of God to spread abroad the truth. Already has Luke told us of disciples being scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria after Stephen’s death. Stephen’s voice could be hushed in death : his testimony, powerful and faithful as it was, had been suddenly terminated by his judicial murder - for murder it was, though professedly carried out in accordance with the Mosaic Law. But the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. So not only did the scattered ones betake themselves to Judaea and Samaria, but some travelled north and west, as far as Phoenice, Cyprus, and Antioch. To reach Cyprus, however, they must of course have taken ship. Yet from what port they embarked - whether from Caesarea, Tyre, or Seleucia, or elsewhere - is a fact now buried in oblivion, as well as the name of the vessel which first bore on the bosom of the Great Sea an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. The voyage of the Mayflower with the Pilgrim Fathers to their new home in the West will never be forgotten whilst the republic of the United States continues to exist. The voyage of many a missionary in modern times has not passed unnoticed. In this case it was otherwise, though never before, since the days of the Ark, had any vessel carried, on an open sea, so precious a freight as a messenger of the Prince of peace. What an

object of interest that ship must have been to the whole angelic host! But who sent those workers in the Gospel? Or who directed the steps of the first Christian visitors to Antioch in Syria ? We can readily answer these questions. It was God the Holy Ghost, who is the director of the mission work upon earth.

Hellenists. Of Phoenicia and of Cyprus we shall hear again (xiii., 21:). Interest now is concentrated on Antioch. To native-born Jews had the Gospel been first entrusted. Hellenists, or Grecians, came subsequently to the front, as Stephen, Paul, and Barnabas. And now of Hellenists we are to read, men of Cyprus and of Cyrene, who, having reached Antioch, did not confine their labours to Jews and proselytes, but began to speak of the grace of God to Greeks, not Grecians, as we should read in Acts 11:20. That these labourers had heard of Peter’s visit to Cornelius is possible, though not very probable; and certainly that was no necessary prelude to their work in the ancient capital of the Seleucidse. For since the Holy Ghost was really dwelling and directing on earth, He could guide those earnest men at Antioch to work amongst the Greeks subsequent to the reception of Cornelius, without previous intercourse between those towns about it. Such was probably the case. Those simple and true-hearted men, divinely led, could not restrain themselves. Greeks must hear the message of that salvation in which they rejoiced. And speaking Greek, as they probably did, there was no linguistic barrier to their intercourse with Greeks. They spoke, writes the historian, thus conveying the impression that it was familiar intercourse, and not set preaching, by which they worked. And their hearts being full of the Gospel message, they announced the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. Like a match set to a pile of brushwood, ready to blaze at once, the words of these pioneers in the work ware evidently received with avidity. "The hand of the Lord," we read, " was with them, and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (xi. 21). The Word. Connected with this most interesting movement, it should be remarked that we have no mention of miraculous agency being employed. Hitherto we have seen, in the work among the Jews and in Samaria, that miraculous powers have had a prominent, and at times the first place (ii. 4, 3: 6-10, 5: 12, 6: 8, 8: 6). Among the Gentiles they had generally a subordinate place, at times even being absent. The Word of God in this latter service came to the front. Its power and suitability were thus attested, and the work, it was seen, could progress without miraculous agency being summoned to its aid. It was so at Antioch in Syria, and at Antioch in Pisidia. It was the same, as far as we know, at Thessalonica, and at Athens. This for our day is an important fact, as miracles have long ceased. But the Word abides, and the Holy Ghost is here. So that which powerfully wrought on Greeks at Antioch, and on Cornelius and his company at Caesarea, can work still. The Holy Ghost, we would repeat, and emphasize it, is still here. The power, therefore, is present, if we are in a condition fitted to make use of it.

Antioch. A few words about Antioch, now Antaki, founded B.C. 300 by Seleucus Nicator, and called after his father Antiochus. It was at this time under a Roman governor, who held his court in the ancient palace of the Seleucidae, and was reckoned the third city in the Empire, Alexandria being the second. Near by was "one of the most lovely spots on the face of the earth - the celebrated Daphne, where was the Temple of Apollo and Diana, embosomed in a grove of myrtles and cypresses, ten miles in circumference. The Antiochians every year made a triumphant procession thither, with all the pomp and pageantry of a garish superstition." * Into this city, inhabited by no small number of Jews, for their synagogues were numerous, and amid a dense population, Christianity got a footing, and quickly gained a considerable number of adherents.

Simple, earnest men spoke, and Greeks listened. They spoke of the truth they hnd received, announcing the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. Neither the inveterate opponents of Christianity - the Jews - nor idolaters interested in upholding the worship of Apollo and Diana, then appeared to hinder the work, which evidently spread most rapidly, till, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost, this city became the centre, the metropolis, as it were, of Christian missions to the heathen For from it the Apostle Paul went forth on each of his three missionary journeys (xiii. 1-4, 15: 35-41, 18: 22, 23), and returned to it at the close of the two first (xiv. 26, 18: 22), and doubtless would have conformed to his custom at the close of the third had not his free movement been arrested by imprisonment at Jerusalem.

* Lewin’s Life and Epistles of St. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 93.

Two remarks may here be made.

1st. Considering the population of the place, the number of Jews dwelling there, and the Temple of Apollo so close to it, surprise may be expressed that we never read in the Acts of any molestation of the Christians, either in the prosecution of their work of spreading the truth, or in the enjoyment of the exercise of their religion. Christianity nourished in the city, and its adherents continued to enjoy a freedom denied in apostolic days to many an one who dwelt elsewhere.

2nd. But where are now any abiding fruits of apostolic labours in Antioch? The place at which Paul and Barnabas preached in the city was professedly remembered, and pointed out down to the close of the sixth century. In Antioch, too, Chrysostom was born, and there for a time he preached, till called to the see of Constantinople. Further, the city was the ssat of one of the four great patriarchates of the early Church. But now the Christians, we are told, have no Church within its walls, so low in Christian life and testimony has that once favoured city come.

Exhorting. What interesting and eventful times were these of which we read! But the way God was working, and the surprises the Apostles surely had, must have called forth many a thanksgiving and ascription of praise. Labourers had multiplied instead of being diminished. Saul had been added to that band, and the work burst forth at times, in places, and in ways little indeed expectad. And now, after the result of Peter’s visit to Caesarea, there followed the extensive work in the city of Antioch. What next, some might have exclaimed. Hitherto to territory within the bounds of the Holy Land the spread of the truth had been almost confined. Samaria was part of Israel’s territory. Antioch was outside of it, being situated beyond the entering in of Hamath, which was the northern boundary of the land of promise. When Samaria was evangelised, Peter and John went down at the request of the apostolic company, examined the work, and bestowed on the converts the Holy Ghost. On the present occasion, however, no Apostle left Jerusalem to examine and to report on the movement at Antioch. We do not up to this time read of any of the Twelve labouring outside the land of Canaan. But who could be indifferent to the tidings which now reached Jerusalem? Not the Apostles, certainly; so they sent Barnabas as far as Antioch, to learn the real truth of the report that had come from that northern city. "A good man," we read, "and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (xi. 24), he seemed just the suited person. Besides, as we have already remarked, he was a Hellenist. Suited indeed he proved to be; for he found scope for his energies on his arrival, and his ministry was evidently much owned. It was not, however, that of a distinctively evangelistic character. Barnabas, as his surname really implies, was an exhorter (iv. 36). Early characterised by that line of ministry, and so surnamed because of it, we see him at Antioch labouring in that

special way among the saints. "He exhorted them all," as he took notice of the grace of God, "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (xi. 23). His ministry proved both well timed and prolific in results. "For much people was added unto the Lord" (24). Christ as Lord was confessed by the converts. What Peter had declared at Pentecost, disciples at Antioch acknowledged - viz., that God had made the crucified One both Lord and Christ. His Lordship they owned - a dignity peculiar to Himself ; for there is but "one Lord - Jesus the Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Believers in Judaea were disciples of the Lord (Acts 9:1). Much people at Antioch were added to the Lord. What Barnabas had witnessed at Jerusalem (v. 14) he could see going on through Christian ministry at Antioch. And in him we see exemplified a distinction in gift: evangelists had been at work in that city; an exhorter was now present. Evangelists worked amongst the unconverted ; an exhorter found his chief sphere inside the assembly. Gifts of ministry are various. By degrees we see them in the Acts distinguished.

Tarsus. Exhortation, however, is not enough to build up souls in the faith, helpful and needful as it is in its place. He who really exhorts is a prophet in the sense of 1 Corinthians 14:3. Such an one brings the mind of God through the written Word to bear on souls. Believers, however, need teaching as well. Now, Barnabas evidently felt that this last was not his special line of service. Would he, then, keep the converts at Antioch under his influence, shut up to his ministry? No. Their advancement and establishment in the faith he desired. And knowing where to find one qualified to teach, he departed to Tarsus in Cilicia to seek Saul. Between Antioch and Tarsus there was a ready means of communication, the former city being on the highway from Asia Minor, through Tarsus to Phoenicia, Palestine, and Egypt. If Barnabas proceeded by land, he must have passed through Alexandretta, then called Alexandria, which was near the great highway from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Falling into that road a little south of Alexandria, and proceeding along it to Tarsus, he would have skirted the shores of the Issicus Sinus, now called the Gulf of Iskenderun. Or, if so minded, he may have gone by water from the seaport of Antioch direct to that of Tarsus. Whichever method of travelling he adopted, whether the land journey or the sea voyage, he reached the goal to which he was bound, the metropolis of Cilicia. A few words here about the city before proceeding with the narrative. Tarsus, now called Tarsoos, was a town boasting of several centuries of existence. It was said to have bean founded by Sardanapalus, and was afterwards colonised by Argives. By Mark Antony after the battle of Philippi it was declared free, and by Augustus after the battle of Actium it was dignified with the title of metropolis. It had a famous school of philosophy, and ranked as one of the three great universities of the Pagan world, and from its philosophers the Imperial family in Home selected tutors for their children.* Barnabas found Saul in his native city, to which he had retired after his first and short visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:30), subsequent to his conversion, and had no difficulty, it would seem, in inducing him to leave that place of learning, where doubtless he had in his youth been made acquainted with heathen literature**, to help on the work in the capital of Syria, on the Orontes.

* Lewin’s Life and Epistles of tit. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 7.

** In Acts 17:2 S St. Paul quotes from Aratus, a poet of Cilicia, who lived about 270 B.C. The same words are found in the writings of Cleanthes, of Assos in Mysia, who was born B.C. 300. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 the Apostle quotes Mcnauder, an Athenian poet born B.C. 312. In Titus 1:12 he quotes from Epimenides, a Cretan poet who lived about 6OO B.C.

Teaching. And now a third kind of ministry was displayed in that city, as the historian tells us that with Saul present they taught much people. Evangelising had been commenced and carried on by men of Cyprus and Cyrene. Exhortation had found a place and produced much fruit after Barnabas had first reached Antioch. Now teaching was commenced, and great blessing resulted. "They taught," we read, "much people" (xi. 26). Thus these different gifts were displayed, each and all needful ere souls could be fully established in the faith, yet quite distinct in their character, though exercised at times, as might be the case, by the same person. At Antioch, however, it was otherwise. The first Christian visitors evangelised ; then the eminent exhorter appeared; and lastly the time for teaching had arrived, when Saul reached it from Tarsus.

We do well to mark these differences. All labourers in the Word are not evangelists. All are not calculated to be exhorters. All certainly are not teachers. Bach labourer will do well to learn what his special gift is, or gifts are, and to keep to them. In this way the work will make better progress, and be often deeper in souls, being carried on more in accordance with the Divine mind. Is there not a waking up in some measure among Christians to this in the recognition of "missioners" in different ecclesiastical systems - a confession, so far, of the difference of gifts, and the need of leaving room for their exercise? Still, if we are to conform to the practice of apostolic times, more is needed in that direction, and nothing will be sufficient short of the recognition of the freedom of ministry, remembering that the gifts of Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers are from the ascended Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13) to men; and that no one was ever ordained to teach or to preach by the Apostles. Ordination there was for appointment to office in the assembly, but never for the exercise of ministry in the Word*

* Would any reader think 2 Timothy 2:2 militates against this? If he marks that the Apostle there dwells on what had been heard that Timothy was to hand on, it will be plain that it is the handing on of tracking of which the Apostle treats, and not of ordination. We can hear truth, but we cannot hear ordination. A man may receive the latter, as elders did. The Apostle’s word heard explains what he means, and should be sufficient to guard the passage from misapplication.

Christians. For a whole year teaching now went on without lot or hindrance, as far as we are informed, and the disciples in this city first received a new appellation, being called Christians. Nazareans the Jews had styled and continued to style them (Acts 24:5). Brethren, they designated themselves. Christians, the men of Antioch surnamed them. "Nazareans " told its tale of all that the Jews could say - viz., that the people whom they thoroughly detested were followers of one brought up at Nazareth. Of anything about the Lord beyond His life and death they knew nothing; His parents belonged to Nazareth, so they called Him a Nazarean, and His followers were named Nazareans. The disciples, however, had come to know of and to enjoy a fellowship together as children of the same Father : hence they called themselves Brethren (i. 15,* 9: 30, 12: 17).

* The better reading. And now the men of Antioch, hearing those who had visited their city speak of the Christ, of whom doubtless those earnest labourers loved to discourse, surnamed all confessors of the Lord Jesus - Christians. But never in the New Testament do believers so term themselves : Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16, the only other places where the term occurs, show what others called them, and they knew it. Greeks at Antioch, then, thus first named them - a testimony to the truth which the converts proclaimed, and of Him of whom they evidently spoke. Christ was in their hearts. Christ was on their lips. Christians they were therefore surnamed. Happy times were

these ! Much people were now being taught by Barnabas and Saul. Evidently the work deepened and spread.

Agabus.- At this juncture another person appeared on the scene, of whom we shall hear again later on (Acts 21:10). He was a prophet, named Agabus - a prophet in the common acceptation of the term, 1:e. one who foretells future events. At what precise moment he visited Antioch is not stated. The historian leaves it undetermined. "In these days," he writes, leading us to conclude that whilst Saul and Barnabas were happily engaged in teaching, Agabus and othors appeared in the city. His service at this time was twofold. He foretold the famine which was to be severely felt by the Christians in Judaea. He also by that prediction furnished the opportunity for the saints at Antioch to show their sympathy for, and real oneness with, their brethren in Judaea. And this we learn they were not slow to do ; for the movement among them was general, and, as far as we, can see, spontaneous. The approaching famine foretold, relief was organised, and each one according to his ability determined to send it to the brethren who dwelt in Judtea, which we read they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

True Oneness. Most interesting is this little trait of the converts at Antioch. We have seen how the disciples in very early days at Jerusalem had all things in common. But all of them were then of one nation, Jews. In this case it was different. It was Gentiles, as many of them had been, who now determined to minister to those who had been Jews. This marked a development in the practical understanding of Christian teaching. The middle wall of partition (Ephesians 2:14) was indeed broken down, and they were conscious of it, and showed it. A oneness now existed between the saints at Antioch and those in Jerusalem. Children they were of one Father. Each and all too shared in the gift of the Holy Ghost, so they were in Christ, and were members also of the Body of Christ. And this visit of Agabus and his prediction furnished them with an opportunity, of which they were most ready to avail themselves, of practically showing the new association into which through grace they had been brought. Contributions from Antioch for the support of the Temple were forwarded from time to time by the Archon, or chief ruler there among the Jews, to the High Priest at Jerusalem; and such were furnished for the maintenance of the worship, in which with those at Jerusalem they had a common interest. This, of which we now read, was something very different. Those who had been Gentiles were now about to minister to those who had been Jews. A new, a welcome sight! Had those at Jerusalem made a collection for starving saints, converts from heathendom, we should have said it was a beautiful exhibition of love. It was, however, just the reverse. Aud it emphasized the fact how really those at Antioch recognised their oneness in the faith with the poor suffering ones in Judaea. A Greek would naturally have regarded a Jew with scorn. These Greeks, however, as they were naturally, viewed the Christians at Jerusalem with true brotherly interest, and manifested in this substantial way their real brotherly love. What joy it must have afforded Barnabas and Saul to carry up these tokens of it, the fruit of Christian ministry which had been in exercise in that city! A Note Of Time. - Here let us mark the first note of time given us in the Acts. The famine predicted by Agabus came to pass in the reign of Claudius. Profane history tells us that it took place in the fourth year of his reign, which was A.D. 44. Ascending the throne on the death of Caligula, Jan. 41, Judaea and neighbouring countries were visited by a severe famine in A.D. 44, which pressed heavily on those in the land, so much so that Helena, the queen dowager of Adiabene, then residing at Jerusalem, sent to Alexandria for corn, figs, etc., wherewith to mitigate the suffering. She ministered to the Jews. The Antiochian

Christians ministered to the saints in Judaea.

Fixing thus the date of the famine, we know when Barnabas and Saul must have visited Jerusalem; so that all that we have hitherto read in the Acts, and probably the deeds of Herod the king narrated in the following chapter, took place not later than A.D. 44. If, then, we accept the date of the Crucifixion as A.D. 3O, there were just fourteen years between that event and the famine to which Luke now refers. How much had gone on of deep interest to every Christian! How many stirring events had taken place within the cognisance of the Apostles and early converts! But now the hitherto unbroken company of the Twelve, since the election of Matthias in the place of Judas, was to be attacked, and one from amongst them to die so early a martyr's death, - James the brother of John was to be killed by the sword by order of King Herod.

Herod Agrippa. A change had recently taken place in the government of Judaea and Samaria. After the death of Herod the Great, who ruled over the whole land, his son Archelaus was appointed by the Emperor Augustus ruler over Judaea, Idumsea and Samaria, with the title of Ethnarch. To Herod Antipas, his brother, were assigned Galilee and Persea with the title of Tetrarch. And to Philip, the other brother, was given the tetrarchy of Trachonitis, Auranitis, Batansea, and part of what was called the house of Zenon, or Zenodorus. Herod Antipas fixed his capital at Tiberias. Philip had for his, Caesarea Philippi.* Archelaus, after ruling about ten years, was deprived of his province for his severities, and a Roman governor under the Syrian Prefect administered its affairs. Herod Antipas was banished in A.D. 39. Philip died in his government A.D. 34. Under Claudius a fresh change took place; for Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, and grandson therefore of Herod the Great, who had previously received from the Emperor Caligula the tetrarchies of his two uncles, Antipas and Philip, received in addition, as soon as Claudius was settled on the Imperial throne, part of the territory formerly assigned to Archelaus - viz., the provinces of Judaea and Samaria, with the title of king. Thus for a brief space a king again reigned in Judaea in the person of Herod Agrippa, who lived chiefly at Jerusalem. A strict observer of the law, but receiving his kingdom from the Emperor, he doubtless sought to win favour with the Jews by laying hands on Apostles to put them to death. It was evidently a political, and, as the king thought, a politic, move on his part.

* Lewin's Life of St. Paul, vol. 1:, pp. 16, 17, 102-104

Hitherto all attempts to stop the movement in Jerusalem have proceeded from the ecclesiastical authorities. But since the persecution which arose about Stephen subsided, the Sanhedrin seems to have let the matter alone. Now the civil power wielded by Agrippa entered the lists, and began to conduct a crusade against the followers of the Lord Jesus. Would it be successful where the others had failed? At first it seemed to triumph; for James the brother of John was executed, and no sign from heaven attested its abhorrence of the deed. The company of the Apostles Herod Agrippa had now diminished by one. The Christians could not by human means successfully enter into conflict with the king. The sword of the executioner had taken the life of James. Was the charm which seemed for so long to have surrounded the Apostles now broken? Could Peter be got rid of in a similar way? What a triumph would that afford Agrippa! What pleasure would it give the Jews! Peter, therefore, was apprehended, and apparently without difficulty, and kept in custody till tbe Paschal feast should be over. And, very probably, Agrippa, aware of the marvellous deliverance of the Apostles when the whole company had been incarcerated, pending their

appearance before the ecclesiastical authorities, sought to guard against any surprise of that kind by consigning his prisoner to the custody of four quaternions of soldiers, charged to have always two soldiers present, to whom Peter was to be chained. Movement, therefore, without the cognisance of his guards was impossible. Escape seemed hopeless. No popular stir in his favour could be looked for. No indignation meetings could be held. The weak, powerless Christians, what could they do? So Agrippa may have thought. But there was another question to be solved : What would God do ?

Peter’s Deliverance. Day after day had passed, the feast was nearly over, but Peter was still a prisoner, chained to the soldiers. A few hours more, and he would be brought forth to the people, and his execution would follow. How near seemed the success of Agrippa’s plans! The monarch could retire to rest with no thought about his prisoner, save that he had him securely within his grasp, so that escape was impossible. But two essential elements in the situation the king had left out of his calculations. The one was the power of God, the other the power of prayer. "Prayer was made " for Peter, we read, " without ceasing [or, earnestly] of the Church " (xii. 5). The king might be sleeping. The Christians were praying. Which would prevail - the power of man, or the prayer of faith ? Peter’s last night apparently had come. What was he doing? Was he restless, anxiously thinking of the morrow? He was quietly sleeping between two soldiers, having left, we may be sure, his case in the hands of the Lord. And now He, who never slumbers nor sleeps, began to work, during the silent hours of night. For God to work at such a time was nothing new. Of old, at night He smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. At night, too, the Lord was born. Ere the light of day gilded the mountain tops the Lord came forth from the tomb in resurrection might. At night, too, it was that the train of events began to be unfolded which issued in Joseph’s deliverance from the dungeon. At night, too, that turn of events began which culminated in the downfall of Haman and the deliverance of the Jews in the kingdom of Ahasuerus from the slaughter which had threatened them. Fruitful indeed had been the hours of night in events of the greatest importance. Again was that proved, when Peter was aroused from sleep by an angel. A light shone in the prison. A ministering angel stood by him. He spoke to him and told him what to do. Rising up in obedience to the word of command, his fetters fell off. His movements were free. The guards continued sleeping, whilst he put on his sandals and his garment. Past both the first and second ward, or guard, without challenge, Peter and the angel then went out through the great iron gate, which swung back on its hinges of its own accord to let them pass. All was quiet within the prison, all still as death. Slumber - very likely supernatural slumber, of which at times we read (Genesis 2:21; Genesis 15:121 Samuel 26:12) - had fallen on the guards, from whicli neither the movements of their prisoner nor the light which had shined around aroused them. Wholly unconscious of the miraculous interposition, the guards slept on.

Mary’s House. Peter had followed his guide almost in a dreamy state, for he "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision" (Acts 12:9). When, however, he was clear of the prison, having passed down one street, the angel left him. His mission was ended. And the Apostle, now come to himself, and conscious of his freedom, could say, "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (11). Then bending his steps to Mary’s house, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together praying, he knocked at the door to announce in person the answer to their prayers. But who could be disturbing them at that hour of

the night? A damsel named Rhoda went to learn. The sound of the voice she well knew: Peter was at the gate. Joy filled her heart. She ran back to announce the welcome but unexpected intelligence. Impossible to be true, the company thought, forgetful that it is a real thing to pray, and for God to answer prayer. Peter's continued knocking, and the damsel's asseverations, made it impossible for the company to refuse to investigate the matter. So the door was opened, and Peter certainly stood before them, delivered from prison and from his impending doom. Explanations on his part quickly followed, and with an injunction to tell James and the brethren, he departed and went to another place. Short was the interview, but most satisfactory. Then - prayer had been answered : Peter was free. After this, save his appearance at the council in chap, 15:, and the account of the part he took in it, his very name drops out of the history of the Acts. His special service in connection with the Gospel had been carried out. He had opened the kingdom of the heavens to both Jews (ii.) and Gentiles (x.): and although he laboured, and travelled in service after that (1 Corinthians 9:5 ; Galatians 2:11 ; 1 Peter 5:13), he finds no further place in the pages of the Church's first historian, who will now devote himself for a time to tracing out the extension of the work among the Gentiles. The Prison, and the Court. Day dawned, light streamed into the prison; but where was the prisoner? The guards woke up to find that Peter was not there, though tne chains, which had bound him to them, were still fastened to his two custodians. They might call to the other guards, but none of them had seen Peter escaping, though he had passed by them. None had connived at his disappearance. Where was he ? Would they examine the great iron gate ? That was firmly fastened ; no one had tampered with it. No trace of the prisoner, however, could they find. No explanation but one of his escape could be really entertained. Supernatural power must have been in exercise, for of haste in his departing there was no evidence. His sandals, his girdle, his upper garment, all had disappeared. But again they might ask, Where was he? There was no small stir among the soldiers. The prisoner, however, they found not. The king was informed of his mysterious disappearance. He sought for his prisoner, and surely he had all the Jewish authorities, with many of the population probably, on his side. But all in vain : he could not be found. The Lord evidently sheltered him. The guards therefore must die, technically guilty of remissness, though really innocent of any crime worthy of death or of bonds. Herod, thus defeated, left Jerusalem for Caesarea.

Herod's End. Where Peter went has not been disclosed. Herod's end, however, both sacred and profane history have put on record. He died in great suffering of a loathsome disease, smitten by an angel after receiving the adulation of a crowd that his voice was that of a god and not of a man. Angelic agency had delivered Peter. Angelic agency rid the world of this new persecutor of the Church. He was eaten up of worms. Short-lived had been his triumph over the Christians. Short-lived had been his greatness as a ruler. He could boast of an extent of territory which no one of his family since his grandfather had enjoyed. He could rejoice in the favour of the Emperor Claudius. Of wealth, too, he had abundance, yet he died miserably poor if he died without Christ. Imperial favour and friendship, and kingly power on earth, what are they worth, if worms attack the body, and the individual passes away unsaved ? The last persecution at Jerusalem had ended. With what result? "The Word of God grew and multiplied" (xii. 24). So had it ever been. After the detention of Peter and John, and their release, we read: "With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" (iv. 33). The whole apostolic company were next arrested and threatened; but "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem gaeatly; and a great company of the priests

were obedient to the faith" (vi. 7). Stephen was martyred, and the disciples thereby "scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word" (viii. 4). Threats, imprisonments, martyrdoms, did not arrest the movement. And certainly Herod’s awful end would not embolden any further attempts against the Apostles. Persecution at Jerusalem then, as far as we know, ceased ; and Barnabas and Saul could return unmolested to Antioch, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark. The ministry of love on the part of the Christians at Antioch to the poor saints at Jerusalem was discharged. Now we are to read of fresh conquests of the Gospel, and that in new countries, and amongst both barbarians and educated heathen.

Guidance. We may here pause for a moment to survey the work. Samaria evangelised, Gentiles admitted into the kingdom, Greeks converted at Antioch: such is the record in brief, besides the work in Judaea and in Jerusalem, and all carried out without apostolic direction or human authority. The Holy Ghost opened out, as we have said, fields of labour independently of human direction. What He did then we may count on Him to do still. It is wise to let Him work as He will, and then, like the Apostles, gladly to acknowledge what He had done. The exercise of ministry in the Word never was subject to apostolic direction in early days. Should it be subordinated to men, however godly and earnest, now ? We ask the question. The reader can surely answer it.

Peter’s Ministry. We have said that Peter now vanishes from the pages of the Acts, saving his appearance at the council in Jerusalem (xv.). A few words, then, on his ministry may not be out of place. In certain things in his preaching he stands out alone. At Pentecost by his word three thousand were converted. At Caesarea the whole company addressed received blessing. He preached, too, in the Temple court, and proclaimed, one may suppose, in sight of the brazen altar plenary forgiveness, and that apart from Jewish rites, and the blood of bulls and of goats. Then, like Paul, he could open up the prophetic word (Psalms 16:1-11 :, ex., 118:; Deuteronomy 18:1-22 :), and point out that the Lord Jesus was the real subject of it. Addressing Jews, he quotes in full Old Testament Scriptures. Addressing Gentiles, he only refers to them. A fitness in this we can all see. He knew his audience, and ministered accordingly. Then as to miracles. He healed the sick, and raised the dead. In this, too, Paul can be compared with him; whilst both he at Jerusalem, and Paul at Ephesus, must have appeared as men to be wondered at. By his shadow sick ones were cured. From Paul’s body healing virtue by napkins was conveyed. Yet all this did not shelter either the one or the other from imprisonment, nor finally, in each case, from a martyr’s death.

04.16. ST. PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. DIVINE COMMAND.

ST. PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. DIVINE COMMAND.

ACTS XIII. 1-43.

"YE shall be My witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These were the last recorded words of the Lord ’ere He commenced His ascent to heaven. Of the commencement of their fulfilment the historian will now treat. Barnabas and Saul had returned to Antioch. The Church in that city flourished. Ministers were not lacking, nor are their names withheld. Saul, last named in the list, will however now soon come to the front.

Prophets. Of different gifts we have already spoken. Here the historian draws a distinction, we presume, between a prophet and a teacher, as he mentions both, perhaps regarding Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius more in the light of prophets, and Manaen and Saul more as teachers. Both gifts are greatly to be valued. A prophet of course is one who has the mind of God, and can communicate it, whether foretelling the future or not. So Abraham is the first person called in the Old Testament a prophet, though he never, that we read of, predicted any event (Genesis 20:7). In the New Testament two prophetic ministries are mentioned and distinguished (1 Corinthians 14:1-40 :). In the one we have a vessel of revelation, of which Agabus is an illustration. In the other we have a minister, who brings to bear on the heart and conscience of the hearer the mind of God. Such an one ministers the truth of God, but without revealing anything new. The effect of this latter kind of ministry 1 Corinthians teaches us. As regards unbelievers, or unlearned people, strangers to the assembly, "If all prophesy," one such coming in "is convinced of all, he is judged of all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). The result of such a prophetic ministry in saints is to be, "that all may learn, and all may be comforted [or, encouraged]" (31). But should there be a prophet present, to whom some fresh revelation was communicated, if another was ministering he was to be at once silent, that the vessel of revelation might give forth that which lie had received (30); for God the Holy Ghost never reveals anything out of season.

Now both these kinds of prophesying were displayed at Antioch, besides the exercise in ministry of teaching, which is not necessarily prophesying. For instance, opening out Church truth, or setting forth dispensational instruction, would be teaching, yet not that character of service defined in 1 Corinthians 14:3 as prophesying. We have said both these kinds of prophesying were displayed, for we learn there was a revelation vouchsafed, when the disciples were gathered together, concerning Barnabas and Saul.

Antioch was then rich in ministerial gifts: Of the five mentioned by name, two of them, if not three, are not noticed elsewhere. Barnabas heads the list, followed by Simeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene. Of Simeon we know nothing more, nor of Lucius of Cyrene, unless he be the same as Paul’s kinsman mentioned in Romans 16:21, which is not very probable. Some have identified him

with Luke, which seems clearly to be a mistake. Manaen too is introduced in no other place in the New Testament. Here we learn that he was foster-brother of Herod the Tetrarch, and son, or perhaps grandson, of a certain Manaen, an Essene, who was highly respected by Herod the Great. How different the path of the brothers! Herod had been ruling for years in his Tetrarchy, but had recently been banished to Lugdunum, the modern Lyons,* in Gaul. The other through grace became an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, called to reign with Him before whose judgment-seat Herod Antipas must one day stand to receive his doom as the murderer of John the Baptist. To turn to the revelation now vouchsafed. The Revelation. Often have we met in the Old Testament with fresh revelations introduced by "Thus saith the Lord." Now it was very different. The same Divine Person was speaking - the Spirit of God - but He spoke from Himself. "Separate Me **Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "Separate Me," "I have called them." Sovereign action these words attest. Already have we been made acquainted in this book with the personal presence and action of the Spirit (v. 3, 9, 32; 8: 29; 10: 19; 11: 12); but no more marked announcement of His sovereign guidance could there be, than this revelation vouchsafed when they were ministering to the Lord and fasting. Obedient to the Divine communication, they prepared to carry it out. For when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (or perhaps better, comp. 4: 21, 5: 40, 17: 9, they let them go). But they went on their mission, Luke adds, "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." Their call to this new work and their apostolic mission they derived from the Holy Ghost. Let go to their work by the disciples, they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. The terms used here in the inspired record are worthy of notice, and would confirm the translation "let go" rather than "sent away" in ver. 3.

* It is questioned whether it was Lyons, or another town, Lugdunum Convenarium, now called St. Bertrand de Comminges, situated at the foot of the Pyrenees (Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 1:, 2nd ed., p. 1347).

** Some would translate "Separate Me now," which gives precision and force to the command, implying that it was for a special purpose and to be obeyed at the time (Alford).

Laying on of Hands. A very solemn occasion all acknowledged it to be. Prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands marked it. "They laid their hands on them," we read. Was that ordination, as has often been assumed? To what did they ordain them? Not to minister in the Word. Both had for years been doing that with much profit to their hearers, and with marked approval on the part of God. Was it ordination to Apostleship? How could these, not themselves of apostolic rank, ordain any for the Apostolate? Besides, Saul received his call for that office directly from the Lord, and on the day of his conversion. See the words of the Lord to him, quoted in Acts 26:17, "To whom I send thee," confirmed by the Divine communication to him in the Temple at Jerusalem (xxii. 21). Did the Apostle Paul consider the laying on of the hands of others ordination to his special office? Surely we may believe he did not. Else why, when vindicating his claim to be an Apostle, did he not refer to this time and this act (1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:5; 2 Corinthians 12:12)? What then are we to understand by the laying on of hands on this occasion? In Old Testament times we meet with this act (Hebrews 6:2), both in connection with sacrificial victims and with people. On animals brought to the altar the offerer laid his hand: in the case of the burnt offering or peace-offering, in token of being identified with the value of the sacrifice; in the case of the sin-offering, as an acknowledgment that it stood in his place, his guilt being transferred to it. Then on persons hands were laid in recognition of the part or lot appointed them. We see that on the

occasion of the setting apart of the Levites for their service. The elders, by God's appointment, laid their hands on them, the acknowledgment that they were selected to serve Him instead of the first-born of the twelve tribes, on whom He had a claim (Numb. 8: 10). Again, when the blasphemer (Leviticus 24:14) was to be put to death, the witnesses laid their hands on his head. They had fellowship in the execution of the sentence. Further, when Joshua was to be recognised as the leader of the people, subsequent to the death of Moses, the latter laid his hands on him (Numb, 27: 18); and on that occasion a gift was thereby conferred (Deuteronomy 34:9), for it was a superior laying his hands on one not equal to him in spiritual rank.

Coming to the New Testament, we meet with the same practice, but confined to persons; for the one perfect Sacrifice had been already offered up, and accepted. On persons hands were laid by Apostles, as by Peter and John in Samaria (Acts 8:1-40 :), and by Paul when at Ephesus (xix.). On these occasions a gift was bestowed, that of the Holy Ghost. Such was the power delegated to Apostles, but to them only, as Simon Magus understood. Philip could preach with power, and work miracles that astonished the sorcerer. But the Apostles were evidently superior to the evangelist, since by the imposition of their hands the gift of the Spirit was conferred. So in the case of Timothy, he received a gift for his special service of apostolic delegate by the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Timothy 1:6). Now in his case we see illustrated the difference between imposition of hands by an Apostle and that same act on the part of elders. For on the occasion just referred to, the elders laid their hands on Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14), marked out by prophecy for his work, just as Barnabas and Saul were for theirs, but no gift was communicated to Timothy through them, nor any office thereby conferred. Through the Apostle he received a gift, whilst the elders in laying on their hands recognised his call to the work. The language of the Apostle is clear. We quote the passages: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14); "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by [or, through] the putting on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). The with and the through mark the distinction most clearly. So in Acts 13:3 the laying on of hands by the others there mentioned imparted no gift, nor clothed Barnabas and Saul with any authority. It merely expressed the recognition by the rest of the service to which these two were called, and full fellowship with them in their mission. And this Acts 14:26, compared with 13: 4, will confirm. They were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, but they were recommended to the grace of God for the work by their brethren at Antioch. An Attendant. Small was the band, just three that we read of - Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark, who had gone with them from Jerusalem to Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were sent by the Holy Ghost; John was their attendant, and a relation of Barnabas. What special duties devolved on him we know not. He soon, however, left them. Had Cyprus any attraction for him at the time as the cousin of Barnabas? We cannot say. All we know is that, shortly after they left Cyprus, Mark left them, and returned to Jerusalem, which was his own home, manifesting, as Paul truly felt, a disqualification for missionary work (xv. 38).

Seleucia. Without delay they went forth, embarking at Seleucia, the port of Antioch, then a flourishing place with good harbour accommodation, now a ruin and its two basins choked with sand. Of the importance and accommodation of the harbour an idea may be gained, as we learn that the inner basin "covered an area of about forty-seven acres, as large as the export and import basins of our East and West India docks put together." * Cyprus. - To Cyprus they first went, the native country of Barnabas, and an island much inhabited by Jews; for at Salamis, the city at

which they landed, there were several synagogues, Luke informing us that "they preached in the synagogues of the Jews" (xiii. 5). What results there were of their labours, or the length of time that they devoted to that city and neighbourhood, we have no means of correctly ascertaining. Their mission was chiefly to the heathen, though "to the Jew first" was their practice when presenting the Gospel in a new town or district. Through the whole island, as we should rend, they went from east to west, a journey by land, between Salamis and Paphos, of about the same distance that they had traversed by sea from Seleucia to Salamis - one hundred miles. Doubtless they visited towns and places on the route, and evangelised as they went.

* See Lewin’s Life of St. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 118, who gives a plan of the port.

Paphos. But the historian hastens on to tell us of their visit to Paphos, now Bajfa, and of the encounter there between an apostate Jew, a sorcerer, and a false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus, and the Apostle of the Gentiles. Like Simon Magus at Samaria, Bar-Jesus had got a footing in Paphos before the visit, of Barnabas and Saul. And no less a person than the Roman proconsul,* whose name was Sergius Paulus, had given ear to him. The proconsul was a man of understanding, and Paphos was the capital of the island. So there he resided, and Bar-Jesus was with him. The governor now desired to hear from the two missionaries the Word of God. Hence began the conflict. Elymas,* the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation, well knew that his influence would be on the wane, if the proconsul listened to the new-comers. So he withstood them, seeking to turn aside Sergius Paulus from the faith.

* The governor of the island was at this time a, proconsul, not a proprietor, being appointed to his office by the Senate, and not by the Emperor. Luke’s designation of him marks, as has been pointed out, his correctness as an historian. "In the time of Augustus (B.C. 27) the various provinces of the Empire were by arrangement divided between the Emperor and the Senate. Those in need of military force were from policy retained by the Emperor for himself, and were under the rule of Prefects appointed by him, called Proprietors. The countries of a more peaceful character were assigned to the Senate, and the governors from time to time nominated by them were called Proconsuls. Cyprus had at first been allotted to the Emperor, and was an Imperial province: but, before Luke wrote, the Emperor and Senate had made an exchange. (Lewin’s Life, of St. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 125). The exchange took place B.C. 22. See Lewin’s Fasti, Sacri. Other proconsular provinces mentioned in the Acts are Achaia (xviii. 12) and that of Asia (xix. 38). Syria, to which Palestine was subordinate, was under a Prefect.Which would come off victorious - the sorcerer, that apostate Jew, or the propagators of the new faith, the servants of the Lord Jesus? Prestige of course was with the former. Was he, however, so sure of his ground? Was he really convinced that he could hold his own against Barnabas and Saul? All his efforts were doubtless put forth to deter the governor from giving heed to the truth by them proclaimed. But in vain. For Saul, now coming to the front, in the power of the Spirit dealt with him. Fixing his eyes on him, and filled with the Holy Ghost, Paul, as he is hereafter to be called, addressed him in most solemn language. "O full of all subtilty and all mischief [or, villainy], thou son [not, child] of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (9, 10). Never before, we can well believe, had Bar-Jesus been so addressed. Many perhaps stood in awe of him, afraid of the power which he wielded. Now he met one who was not afraid to encounter him, and to unmask him before all. "Thou son of the devil!" No one in Scripture is designated a child or a son of the devil till he has shown determined and persistent opposition

* Elymas may probably be a title which he arrogated to himself, an Oriental term, to which the Greek Magog, a Magian (originally used of the wise men of Persia), came to be applied to designate a wizard, or sorcerer. See Matthew 2:1 for its use in a good sense to the truth. The Jews, after they had wilfully refused the light, were told by the Lord that they were of their father the devil (John 8:44). And the same writer who has recorded that tells us, that by their ways the children of the devil are manifested (1 John 3:10). So Bar-Jesus, in resisting the truth, and seeking to hinder the proconsul from receiving it, showed himself to be a son of the devil. One of God's ancient people, a Jew, into what depths of evil had he sunk ! But now it should be seen with whom was the power of God, and who were His true servants. The sentence was passed, and in the presence of the assembled company it took immediate effect. "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season" (Acts 13:11). A mist and a darkness at once fell on him, and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. There was no doubt, there could be none, as to what had taken place. The man who sought to keep the proconsul from the light was now himself enshrouded in darkness. He who would have led, if he could, the governor to resist the truth, was in the presence of all a suppliant for some one who would lead him by the hand! The victory was complete. And the proconsul, "when he saw what was done, believed being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." The Word had in this most solemn way been confirmed by the sign following (Mark 16:20).

Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding, as he is described, had really desired to know the truth. He received it. The sorcerer was discomfited. He became a blind man. What would the Apostles now do? Surely, had temporal gain been their object, they might have remained at Paphos, and have received homage from all. They prepared, however, to leave the island, to which, as far as we know, Paul never returned, though twice subsequently he must have sighted it (Acts 21:3; Acts 27:4). One convert they left behind. But how many more there were as the fruit of that mission we cannot say. That there were more we may be pretty sure, and perhaps Luke's remark, in ver. 13, " Paul and his company," intends us to understand that more passed over to the continent of Asia with him than only Barnabas and Mark. But two left behind were illustrations, the one of Divine grace, the other of Divine governmental dealing. Sergius Paulus received blessing for eternity. Elymas was to be blind for a season. Judgment was tempered with mercy. Whether spiritual light ever illuminated that man's soul, neither Luke nor any one else of a later date has recorded. Certainly there was no expression from him even approaching what there was from Simon Magus, when deprecating Peter's stern and withering rebuke. Simon asked for the Apostles' prayers. Bar-Jesus appears to have asked for nothing. The first recorded miracle by the Apostle Paul was then judicial in character. Doubtless, like the death of Ananias and Sapphira, it made a deep impression. The former lied to the Holy Ghost. Bar-Jesus perverted the right ways of the Lord.

Paul. For Barnabas and Saul the proconsul had called. Till this time they have always been mentioned in this order. Henceforth a change is noticeable. The latter will often, though not always, be named first (xiii. 43, 46, 50, 15: 2, 22, 35), the exceptions to this order being 14: 14, 15: 12, 25. And now as Paul, and no longer as Saul, is the citizen of Tarsus to be designated. Why this change of name is a matter of conjecture. Some have thought that he took it out of compliment to the distinguished convert Sergius Paulus, a very unlikely supposition. Against this it has been urged, and it has weight, that Luke calls him Paul before the proconsul was convinced of the truth of Christianity. And to this one would add, that the historian in no way intimates that the appellation

Paul was now for the first time bestowed. His manner of introducing it would confirm such an impression. "Saul, who is also Paul," are his words. The ordinary reader would conclude that Saul already bore the name of Paul. We believe this was the case ; and since it was nothing strange for one, a Jew, to bear also a Roman name, the citizen of Tarsus may quite well have been called Paul ’ere he set foot in Cyprus. So now working among Greeks and Gentiles, since his Hebrew name might to Greek ears convey anything but an honourable title, Saul meaning in Greek conceited or affected, he was quite satisfied to bear his Roman name, which, if it suggested that he was little of stature, yet spoke to Gentiles of nothing that could excite a prejudice against him. Henceforth then he is called, and he adopted as his name, Paul, not Saul.

Recrossing to the continent, he never again laboured in an island till after his first imprisonment in Rome. Then he visited Crete with Titus (Titus 1:5). In the provinces of Asia Minor, and in those of Macedonia and Achaia and Illyria, he found his sphere of work. So from Paphos they sailed to Perga, the metropolis of Pamphylia, situated on the river Cestus, and about seven miles from the sea. Nothing noteworthy in connection with Perga is mentioned, save that Mark there left them, and returned to Jerusalem. "He went not," said Luke some time after, "with them to the work" (Acts 15:38). Pushing on north to Antioch in Pisidia, the time to evangelise Perga having evidently not yet come (xiv. 25), they reached the latter city, the capital of the province, and where was a synagogue of the Jews.

Antioch. Founded, we learn, by the Magnetians, but resettled by Seleucus Nicator, it was called by him Antioch after his father Antiochus, a name which it never last, though the Romans subsequently planted a colony there and called it Caesarea. It lay on the road between Ephesus and the Euphrates. In the time of which we are reading it was a flourishing city with a mixed population." The Roman colonists spoke Latin, and accordingly many of the inscriptions and coins of the place are in that language; but the Greek settlers ever retained their own tongue, which was intelligible to all; and the lower classes (the native population) still expressed themselves in Pisidian. But besides these nationalities, there was here, as elsewhere, a large admixture of Jews, who were numerous enough to maintain a synagogue." * This extract will give the reader some idea of the nature of the audience which assembled in the synagogue on the second Sabbath of the Apostles’ stay in the place - Romans, Greeks, Pisidians, and Jews all gathered together to hear the address from Paul, which the congregation on the previous Sabbath had asked to have repeated (xiii. 42, 44).

* Lewin’s Life of St. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 138. A Gospel Address. What was it which had so interested the congregation? Luke will tell us. Invited by the rulers of the synagogue to address the assembled company, the appointed portions having been already read from the law and from the prophets, Paul rose up and began (xiii. 17-41), addressing both Jews and proselytes, the latter described as "ye that fear God" (16). All doubtless were attentive, and must have listened most earnestly as the stranger proceeded in his discourse, which was, we know, so different from any hitherto heard within the walls of that synagogue. What the portions were which had been read from the Old Testament, we have no means of definitely fixing; for the Apostle made no distinct reference to them. It has been suggested, and we give it for what it is worth, that the portion from the law called in the Jewish lectionary parashah was Deuteronomy 1:1-46; Deuteronomy 3:22, whilst that from the prophets called haphtarah was Isaiah 1:1-31 :**We will not, however, linger in the region of uncertainty, but pass on to that which we know, the address which flowed forth on

that occasion from the Apostle of the Gentiles.

** Could this suggestion be relied on, it would help to the fixing of the time of year in which they began the work at Antioch. For the Parashah of Deuteronomy 1:1-46 : is the forty-fourth section of the law, which, if it is read in order from the Jewish New Year in the autumn, would bring it to just ten weeks before another New Year when Paul stood up and preached.

He spoke of God, the God of their fathers, of His interposition on the nation's behalf when in Egypt, of His caring for them all through the wilderness wanderings, and of His bringing them into the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Further, he reminded them of the care and thoughtfulness of their God after they were settled in that land, in raising up deliverers, rulers, and prophets, till he came down in his recital in the stream of time to David their king. Then, leaping over the intervening centuries, he announced the fulfilment of the promise to David, in that of his seed God had raised up to Israel a Saviour, Jesus. And he fixed the time of this act on the part of God by stating how John had first preached, before the Saviour's coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. God had been faithful then to His word in the past. His promise to Abraham had been fulfilled in bringing Israel out of Egypt, and into the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:13-16). And God had been faithful to His promise to David in raising up of his seed (2 Samuel 7:12) in the person of Jesus. Of John the Baptist Paul had spoken. Evidently his audience were acquainted with his history and ministry in the land. Now of Jesus John had spoken as the one of whom he was the immediate forerunner. So turning pointedly to his audience, the Apostle assured them that the tidings he had to communicate were not mere facts of history, but those which concerned all before him most closely. "Brethren, children [or rather, sons] of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to us [rather than, to you] is the word of this salvation sent forth " (Acts 13:26). The rulers of the synagogue had looked for a word of exhortation. All heard a word of salvation. Present salvation it was, full and free, for all who would receive it. Now salvation in the future Israel expected, and that rightly, but only when their Messiah should appear in person and in power. All knew that event, the theme of prophecy, awaited its fulfilment. Was salvation, however, wholly future? Paul would tell them it was not. There was then, and there is now, a present salvation, even that of the soul. This is true and distinctive Christian teaching. Of this Peter assures converts that it was theirs already (1 Peter 1:9). But salvation, whether of the soul, or of the whole person, or of the nation of Israel, is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the receiving Him: In none other is there salvation; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Yet the Lord Jesus had been crucified. So of the treatment of Him, and of His rejection by the Jews at Jerusalem, the Apostle proceeds to tell them (xiii. 27-29). In ignorance about Him, and also of their own Scriptures, though the latter were read in their ears every Sabbath day, they had fulfilled them in condemning Him. Then, innocent though He was, they had successfully urged Pilate to crucify Him. He died, therefore, and was buried. The hope of Israel entered into death. Was all lost by His death? God raised Him from the dead, and many witnesses there were still living, who had for many days after His resurrection both seen Him and talked with Him. His resurrection was therefore an undoubted fact, and vouched for by witnesses of unimpeachable character, so that none should discredit it.

Moreover, by His resurrection Scripture would be fulfilled. So now standing forth as an evangelist, the like of which those people had never heard, Paul proceeded: "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto

our [rather than, us their] children, in that He has raised up [not, again] Jesus." Of the Lord's incarnation he here speaks, not of His resurrection. This the Scripture quoted - the second Psalm - makes plain : "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." Now all had an interest, if they only knew it, in the incarnation. But more, the Lord was risen, as Paul had already declared. Could Scripture also be quoted bearing on that? It could. And the resurrection shed light on a word in Isa. Iv. 3, and showed how the mercies of David, promised long ago, could be made sure. In David's seed as risen from the dead, to return no more to corruption, they could be made good. Was resurrection from the dead a new thought to any there. Had not David written of one - God's Holy One - who should not see corruption? How was that to be fulfilled? Not by preservation from death, but by the resurrection on the third day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Clear was it that David in that sixteenth Psalm, from which the Apostle had just quoted, did not refer to himself, for he died, was buried, and saw corruption. Of another then he wrote, even of Him whom God raised from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ. A Proclamation. The mercies of David made sure, pardon of sins, which Israel will enjoy in the future, can be known (Isa. Iv. 7). And this as a present blessing the Apostle now proceeds to announce. "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified * by the law of Moses " (Acts 13:38-39). We get here Paul's Gospel, though not all the Gospel that he could set forth, but a fuller Gospel than any hitherto proclaimed in the Acts. For he not only preached forgiveness of sins, but announced justification likewise. This last is peculiar to him. What a proclamation it was which he here made known ! Forgiveness of sins, and justification from all things, from which by the law they could not be justified. Forgiveness of sins ! That could be enjoyed then and there, apart from the presentation of any sin-ofFering on the altar at Jerusalem, the only altar on which a Jew could lawfully offer a sacrifice for a sin. We say for a sin, for that was all that the law afforded, yet not for every sin. Many indeed were the sins - all presumptuous sins - for which the law could make no pro%'ision (Numb. 15: 30); but in this proclamation of forgiveness, all sins, however heinous, were included. No need to visit the brazen altar - far off as it was, being at Jerusalem - to get forgiveness such as the law could offer. At Antioch in Pisidia, as they sat on their seats, more than the law could provide for they could have. Forgiveness of sins could be enjoyed, and justification from all things of which there might be need as well. By virtue of the perfect sacrifice of Christ these blessings could be personally and immediately entered into.

* There are three prepositions in the Greek New Testament used in connection with the verb to justify, and all three occur in two verses in Galatiaus (ii. 16, 17). We are said to be justified by, or on the principle of (eK), faith, in contrast to works. Justification flows from faith, not from works. Then are we said to be justified instrumentally by, or through (dia), faith. We are said also to be justified. "by, or in. (en), Christ, in contrast to the being justified by, or in (en), the law. That is to say, we are justified in virtue of, or by, Christ ; not in virtue of, or by, law. This last is the phrase met with in our passage, and the mention of "in the law" here in contrast to " in Christ" shows that justification is not taught as flowing from our being in Christ, as some have mistakenly sought to uphold. A Warning. Who would not gladly accept such a Gospel? Who would defer closing with such an offer? These questions we might have asked, did we not know something of our own heart. And Paul, who had resisted the truth himself, till he was arrested by the Lord and converted, knew well the feelings and the prejudices of a Jew. So he wound up his address with an appeal. "Beware," he said, "therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets." And then

he reminded them of the words of Habakkuk (i. 5), quoting the Greek Version : * " Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your day, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." The prophet who furnished him, when writing to the Romans, with the quotation illustrative of the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17), is the same who provided him with the arrow to drive home to hearts the word of warning, for any who might be inclined to reject or trifle with that Gospel.

* We have said quoting the Greek Version, for though not altogether verbally the same, it agrees with it in sense, and as having what is not in the Hebrew, "ye despisers," also "and perish." The address was ended. The Gospel had been preached. The appeal not to reject it had been made. We have seen how Peter could preach the Gospel (ii., 10:). We learn here how Paul could preach it. It was objective, not subjective, truth on which he chiefly dwelt. He spoke of God, and of His ways, full and varied as they were. God had chosen their fathers. God had exalted them in Egypt, and had brought them out with a high arm. God too had suffered their manners in the wilderness, and, destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, had divided it among the tribes by lot. Then He appeared as a Giver. He gave them judges and prophets. He gave them too Saul as king. . After that He was known as a Raiser-up, first of David, then of his seed - Jesus in the incarnation, and last in raising Him up in resurrection. A Fulfiller also of promises had He proved Himself to be. A Giver, a Raiser up, a Fulfiller of His promises - what an announcement was heard that day ! If such God is, on His word all can and should rest. Who can wonder that such an address deeply touched, and interested too, the audience, both Jews and proselytes, or that they desired to hear such words again? For we should read verse 42, "As they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath," and not as in the A.V., that "when the Jews were gone out, the Gentiles besought," etc. As yet Luke has not noticed the presence of Gentiles in the synagogue. (It doesn’t say that the Gentiles were IN the synagogue! ED.)

Another thing may be observed instructive to all preachers of the Gospel - viz., the pains the Apostle took to ground the faith of converts on the written Word. Speaking of God, as we have seen, he refers to facts in history well known to the bulk of his audience. Telling them of the incarnation and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, news the latter was doubtless to many, he turns them to the Old Testament, which they owned was the inspired Word of God, and points out how in the history of the Lord it is fulfilled. Speaking of the incarnation, he quoted the second Psalm, as we have noticed above. There was one to be born in due time, who would by birth into this world be, and be owned by God as, His Son. Of no mere man could that be true. None of us are God’s children by natural birth. But the Virgin’s Son was, being conceived of the Holy Ghost. To Him then the Psalm pointed, and in His birth at Bethlehem that verse of it quoted by the speaker was fulfilled. Then as to His resurrection and consequences of it, the Apostle would ground their faith on the Scriptures of truth. And whilst the converts might afterwards say, Paul spoke in such an earnest persuasive manner as to carry the hearts of so many with him, they could also say, "But we believe, not because he said it, but because he brought out to us prophetic Scriptures, which treated of these truths." To sum up the principles in preaching which this Gospel sermon brings out. Objective truth was pressed, and that has power, and attraction for souls. Then the faith of the hearers was sought to be established on the written Word. Would that evangelists more followed the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that master in the art of preaching. A Chronological Difficulty. And now a word on a chronological question. According to the common

text of 13: 20. Paul is made to mark the period of the Judges as one of about four hundred and fifty years. This agrees with Josephus (Ant., VIII. 3: 1),* but cannot harmonise with 1 Kings 6:1, which fixes the commencement of the building of the Temple - which was in the fourth year of Solomon - as having taken place four hundred and eighty years after the Exodus. Now deducting from this the period of the wilderness wanderings, the reigns of Saul and of David, it leaves for the settlement in the land and the time of the Judges combined about three hundred and sixty years before the setting up of a monarchy. Which, then, is right? The statement in Kings is so definite, and was written much nearer the days of Solomon than those of Paul or Josephus, that it naturally claims acceptance on the part of the reader, till distinctly proved to be wrong. How, then, can we get over the difficulty raised by the common text of the Acts? Now the earliest Uncials, with the Vulgate and Memphitic versions, read the passage differently. "He divided unto them the land by lot about the space of four hundred and fifty years. And after that He gave them judges," etc. The years mentioned, therefore, would precede the era of the J udges, and refer to all that had been mentioned as going on before. The acts and dealings of God related up to the settlement in the land went on, we should then understand, during four hundred and fifty years, dating from the birth of Isaac, when Abraham’s seed first became sojourners in a land that was not theirs. Textual critics, as Lachmann, .Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, adopt this reading. And it may * well be the solution of the difficulty.

* Josephus dates the commencement of the Temple in the live hundred and ninety-second year after the Exodus. Deducting the wilderness period and the reigns of Saul and David, with the period between the entrance into the land by Joshua and his death a.nrl that of the Elders who outlived him, amounting in all to about one hundred and forty years, the residue fur the Judges will be about four hundred and fifty. But how would that agree with Jephthah’s statement (Judges 11:2 G), which goes far to support the chronology of 1 Kings? The congregation broke up, and on dispersing requested, as we have already stated, a repetition on the next Sabbath of that to which they had listened. Many, however, of the Jews and proselytes, not content with having heard such an address, felt compelled to follow Paul and Barnabas. Their company they sought. They were to them preachers of good tidings. To these the Apostles further spoke, and persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. Souls had been won for Christ that day. The company of believers on earth had been augmented, and now continuance in the grace of which they had heard became them. What the law could not do for them, that grace had provided, and peace with God - an effect of justification - could be enjoyed; for to continue in the grace made known was the way to have settled peace of conscience. The effect of the one address on the congregation was marked. The results of it to many were blessed indeed.

* We say may because others contend, first, that this solution is untenable, and second, that the Apostle by no means intended that the period of the Judges lasted for four hundred and fifty years, but that in such a period, the commencement of which is not stated, there were in some portions of it judges in the land. Of course ere solving the difficulty we have first to settle the text of the Apostle’s speech, and thus to learn what has to be explained. And it has to be decided that the reading of the oldest Uncials is here mistaken, ere the attack on the veracity of the Divine record can hope to succeed.

Chapter 54

04.17. THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY ACTS XIII. 44— XIV.

"THE kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (Matthew 13:47-48). Thus had the Lord foretold what the kingdom should resemble after His departure. The parable being a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens, it necessarily described only what would be true when the King had ascended into the heavens ; and from the cast of the parable it is apparent, when we read it, that the Lord was contemplating the blessing of Gentiles equally with that of those who had been Jews. The net, He said, gathered of every kind. Now that parable, as far as the parable went, stopping short of its full explanation, was to receive abundant illustration at Antioch in Pisidia. And Paul and Barnabas, neither of whom had heard the Master deliver it, were, more than any of the Twelve, to be witnesses of its fulfilment. Paul had preached a gospel never heard in that city or country before. Its first, effect was to interest and to attract the congregation in that synagogue. The tidings were by the assembled company wholly unexpected, and the two, strangers to all there, travellers it would appear, whose purpose and service were hitherto unknown, stood forth, one as the herald, but both as witnesses to the truth of that of which Paul spake.

Interest had been aroused. Earnest souls had followed the strangers, their hearts, it appears, opening up to the truth, whilst the whole company had manifested an unusual interest in all that they had heard. Were Paul and Barnabas silent during the week whilst waiting for the next Sabbath? Any opportunity for a public meeting during the interval may, very probably, have been denied them. Yet, we may be pretty sure that personal intercourse with them, if sought for, was not denied; and, probably, long ere the next Sabbath drew nigh, the two found themselves no longer quite alone. Hearts, we see, had been touched, and grace doubtless had been laid hold of by some, before opposition was manifested and open rejection of the truth was unmistakably displayed. Souls were already being cared for; the good fish were being, and about in large numbers to be, put into vessels; whilst the bad fish, the rejecters of Divine grace, were cast away. The parable was receiving an illustration, though the full explanation of it awaits its fulfilment at a future day, when "the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:49). Meanwhile then, as now, fishermen were at work, looking after the good and putting them into vessels, and leaving the bad for the angels to deal with. At Antioch, at Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe was this service to go forward.

Next Sabbath. The week went by. The Sabbath came, and with it an enormous increase to the accustomed congregation in that synagogue; for almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord. Previously there had been just Jews and proselytes together ; now there was seen a large admixture of Gentiles - natives, many of them, doubtless, of the place. Very probably the most of them had never set foot before within those walls. On this occasion it

was evident they could not stay away. To hear the Word of God they had come; and, though Gentiles, were nevertheless many of them thirsting for truth such as Judaism could not supply, but which these strangers could impart. And now began opposition to the movement. The Jews, to their shame be it said, were filled with envy (or, jealousy) when they saw the multitudes, and spake against the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed ("contradicting and" of the Authorised Version should be omitted). The presence of such a multitude stirred up their jealousy. Paul and Barnabas could command an audience such as they had never been able to get. So what had been welcomed the previous week was now denounced and determinedly opposed.

What is man? A Jonah would rather see Nineveh destroyed, to sustain his reputation as a prophet, than that the vast city should be spared on its repentance. These Jews would rather that the Gentiles had been kept in ignorance of the Gospel, to keep up their prestige among them. They could not bear to see these preachers drawing crowds of Gentiles to hear the word of grace, which put all on a common level, and proclaimed that the blessings now being dispensed were equally within the reach of and could be shared in by all. Were Jewish prejudices and jealousy to carry the day? To that the two Apostles would not yield for a moment! So boldly speaking out, they declared before their opponents and the assembled company, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46-47). God had then declared by the prophet Isaiah His desire to minister blessing to Gentiles, and His purpose to provide for that through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turning to Gentiles, when the Jews should judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, had been no afterthought in the mind of God. The Gentiles now hearing that were glad. In the scriptures given to Israel there was found this announcement regarding them. Would the Jews boast of a Divine written revelation given only to them? In that, it was now shown, mercy to Gentiles was foretold. Rejoicing at this, they glorified God, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Jews and proselytes had received blessing on the first Sabbath ; Gentiles on this the second Sabbath shared in it, and further, the Word of the Lord, Luke writes, was spread abroad throughout all that region. Like a river in flood overflowing its banks, the living waters were no longer confined to the synagogue and to those who attended there. Outside, and beyond the limits of Judaism, they forced their way. But, unlike a river in flood, which causes so often devastation, and may spread dismay, the preaching of the Gospel, in finding ready access to hearts, ministered everlasting blessing and unbounded joy.

Persecution. The ranks of Judaism, and of heathenism likewise, being thus thinned, and the adherents of the new sect, as the Jews viewed Christians, so increasing, measures were taken to stop, if possible, the movement; to intimidate the converts, and to drive away the Apostles. Apparently not powerful enough in themselves to take the forward place in this work, as their countrymen at Corinth subsequently attempted, they stirred up the devout and honourable women; that is, female proselytes to Judaism of some social standing at Antioch, and with them the chief men of the city. Through these they raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. Thus a slur was to be cast on the preachers, since women of position and men of rank in the place united to drive them away. One can understand what a handle this might give. "Poor ignorant people," it might be said, "are easily led astray. But see how those who are

worthy to be looked up to treat such people! The intelligent and the influential at Antioch will have none of their teaching. Were it only us Jews who made an uproar, it might be put down to our religious prejudices. But if the honourable people of both sexes of the native population, the ancient and honourable, oppose it, there must be something wrong in it." The plot was craftily conceived. Were the Apostles intimidated? "They shook off the dust of their feet against them," - following in that the Lord's directions both to the Twelve and to the Seventy (Luke 9:5; Luke 10:10-11), - and then went to Iconium. Were the converts dismayed and depressed at the departure of their teachers? "The disciples," we read, "were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:52). Paul and Barnabas were gone; but the Holy Ghost remained. They were experiencing the truth of the Lord's words (John 16:22), for they had a joy which no one could take from them. The Jews might seem to have prevailed : they were really defeated. An assembly was planted. It stood the storm. The Jews might be filled with fury : the converts were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Iconium. Travelling along the great road eastwards, Paul and Barnabas reached the important town of Iconium, about sixty miles distant. At this point a great road branched northward to the Euxine, to the ancient Amisus, now Samsoun, whilst the trunk road tended eastward, though circuitously, to Tarsus in Cilicia, and on to the Euphrates. Iconium therefore held an important position geographically, and was the chief town of a small and independent district, governed by a tetrarch. According to Cicero and Strabo, it was the chief town of Lycaonia, and now called Cogni, or Konieh. It has fared better than Antioch, for a town of considerable size still remains, whilst nothing of Antioch has survived the biting tooth of Time. To the synagogue the two betook themselves, and so spake that a great number both of Jews and of Greeks believed. The Word here had power, and bore fruit. The enemy also worked, and raised up opposition, for the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren. That people, specially called out by God to witness for Him as the one true God in contrast to idols, here as elsewhere used heathen, and even idolaters, to stay the progress of the truth. Everything seemed against the work. God's ancient people who believed not, and Gentiles who had never known Him, were both arrayed against the Apostles. Yet the work marvellously spread. Nor were the Apostles easily dismayed. "For long time," we read, "abode they there, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, by granting" (rather than, "and granted") "signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Here we read of miracles: at Antioch we read of none. But, as is common in the work among the Gentiles, they have a subordinate place. The word was first spoken, then miracles were wrought in attestation of it. Results were marked, great, and, we may say, immediate: "The multitude of the city was divided : and part held with the Jews, and part with the Apostles." It was not work done in a corner, nor did the Apostles, like conspirators, cany on their operations in the dark. They worked as those who feared not the fullest publicity. They shrank not from the light. Yet their weapon, to men, might seem a poor one - the Word of God. But it was enough. And from the ranks of the heathen, as well as from those of their own countrymen, converts were gained. Preachers hitherto unknown entered the city and laboured, till Iconium was divided. What reaping had there been ! But the very success raised a tumult, two parties being thus found within the city walls, so an organised attack, it was determined, should be made on the Apostles. Warned as to it, they fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about. Urban and rural districts were visited and evangelised. By persecution the work was more widely spread; the bitterest attacks of the enemy

but helped it forward.

Lystra. In common with Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were situated in the ancient province of Lycaonia, which at this time had been divided into different governments. Iconium, as we have said, was under a tetrarch; Lystra and Derbe were within the territory of Antiochus IV, King of Commagene, and had been since A,D. 37. This fact explains the historian's statement why they fled to Lystra and Derbe, the ruling power of these latter cities being different from that of Iconium. About forty miles separated Lystra from Iconium, and about twenty separated it from Derbe. Christianity, first carried to it by Paul and Barnabas, flourished there for several centuries. Its name is preserved in history, but the proof there of Christianity having flourished is only to be found in the ruins of churches which still remain, and in the modern name of the place, Bin-bir-Kilisseh - 1:e., the thousand and one churches. How has the light which once shone in it been quenched! A Cripple Healed. Preaching the Gospel there, a cripple from birth, being impotent in his feet, his name unknown to us, was one of the audience. He heard Paul speak, and was doubtless attracted by tidings to which he had never previously listened, and unconscious of the temporal blessing in store for him. We can fancy him sitting with his eyes fixed on the Apostle. The Apostle now fixed his eyes on him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet." "He leaped up," we read, "and walked." He was walking! To spring up was the act of a moment, and never repeated; so the aorist tense is used by Luke in relating it. He walked - 1:e., was walking; so the imperfect tense describes it. The Multitudes. The effect on the man described, the effect on the multitudes is next stated. Probably the miracle had been worked in the open air, the Apostles preaching in public, for there is no mention of a synagogue there, nor at Derbe. Multitudes then could see what had been done. The impotent man was on his feet, and was using his legs in a way he had never done. All were struck with astonishment, and, speaking in their own tongue - Lycaonian - they explained the phenomenon by the presence, as they thought, of the gods in human form. Barnabas they supposed was Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. The whole city was astir. And the priest of Jupiter, preparing to welcome the supposed gods in a becoming way, brought oxen and garlands unto the gate, to honour them by sacrifice. That intention, on learning of it, was frustrated by the immediate interposition of the Apostles, who rending their garments, rushed, or sprang forth,* perhaps from their lodgings, to which they had retired. Now among the people collected with the priest and the sacrificial victims, they addressed them. The homage they declined, and instead of receiving a sacrifice they would teach the crowd. The text of that address Luke here relates ; we give it in full.

* The "ran in" of the Authorised Version should be given up for "sprang forth," which is generally accepted as better. The Address. "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you rain from heaven, arid fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness."

We learn from this how Paul could speak to ignorant heathen, as we afterwards see how he addressed the intelligent and the educated heathen at Athens. Of God he speaks, the living God, the Creator of all things, even heaven, earth, and sea, and all things that are in them. To make Him known to the Lystrans he and Barnabas had visited their city, seeing that to become

acquainted with the Divine mind was God's desire for His creatures. That accounted for their presence there. Idols were to be turned from, the living God was to be acknowledged. What then could Paul tell about Him, hitherto to them unknown? They were indebted to God, whom he preached, for rain from heaven, and for the fruitful seasons which had so often gladdened their hearts. A God of whom they were ignorant, and had never served, was yearly and constantly thinking of, caring for, and ministering to them. No religion in the heathen world would have taught them that. It was new teaching indeed. There Paul stopped. Had he missed an opportunity of presenting the Gospel? We believe not. He was meeting those ignorant heathen on ground which they could all understand - viz., the blessings which as creatures they had enjoyed. He was acting in the spirit of the Master, who when on earth addressed the multitude as they were able to hear it (Mark 4:33). So here Paul dwelt on the beneficence of God, manifesting His desire to do His creatures good in filling their hearts with food and gladness. To have quoted Old Testament scripture on this occasion would have been out of place. What did these Lycaonians know of a Divine written revelation? To have quoted from the writings of Greek poets might have been equally unsuitable.* He appealed to that with which all were familiar, the rain and the crops, and told them by whom these favours, which ministered to their daily necessities, were provided. At Antioch in Pisidia he spoke, as we have seen, of the goodness and faithfulness of God to Israel. At Lystra he spoke of the goodness of God to His creatures. It is one step gained when a right thought of God is implanted in a heart hitherto estranged from Him (Colossians 1:21).

* It has been suggested that the Apostle quoted from some lyric poet, whose name and whose writings are however quite unknown. It is but a conjecture, incapable of proof.

Stoning. Faithful as the servants of the living God, they thus, though with difficulty, restrained the multitudes from sacrificing to them. A new experience now awaited Paul. He had escaped for his life from Damascus. He had fled with Barnabas from Iconium, when an onset was made to use them despitefully. Now pursued by Jews from Antioch and Iconium, with the cognisance of the people of Lystra, they succeeded in stoning him. Had they accomplished their purpose and silenced for ever the voice of that man whom they could not overcome by their arguments? It seemed like it when they dragged him out of the city supposing that he was dead. Thus far had they been allowed to go. But his life was in God's hands. Something of the great things that he must suffer for Christ's sake he had now experienced. Stoned, and left for dead, his enemies were satisfied. Now the Lord worked and raised up His servant. For, when surrounded by the disciples, with sorrowful hearts we may well believe, and doubtless to the surprise of all, he rose up and re-entered the city. On the morrow able to travel, he went with Barnabas to break new ground at Derbe. His life seemed a charmed one. Not only did he revive, but he was able for the twenty miles journey on the next day, and to begin in a new place to preach the glad tidings of salvation.

Derbe. A small town Derbe appears to have been, situated near a large lake now called Ak Ghieul, but its identification - for no modern town represents it - is still a matter of conjecture. Here, as we have already remarked, we have no mention of a synagogue. The Jews, if any, must have been but few in the place. So a time of quiet seems to have succeeded the storm experienced at Lystra. The hostile Jews who had followed their steps from Antioch and Iconium, pursued them no farther. And so no opposition at Derbe is even hinted at. Now, remembering that it was generally the Jews who raised the disturbance, making Gentiles their tools, it is not surprising, if Jews there were but few, that freedom from persecution was vouchsafed them in that city. And with this agrees the

reference by Paul, many years later, to the treatment he met with on the journey, at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra (2 Timothy 3:11), which omits any mention of opposition at Derbe. Here then they were permitted to labour in peace, evangelising as was their wont; and great blessing was the result. For they made many disciples (Acts 14:21), as we should rather translate. A breathing time was granted them.

Timothy. At this point we may notice one who was marked out to be a most devoted companion of the great Apostle and a very true-hearted labourer (Php 2:19-22). We allude to Paul's own child in the faith, Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2), the son of Eunice and the grandson of Lois, two godly women who embraced Christianity. Of what town he was a native it is difficult to say. Very probably he belonged to Lystra. Certainly the province of Lycaonia could claim him as one of her sons, who was destined to be imperishably connected with the early history of Christianity from his close and long association with the Apostle Paul. Converted by Paul on his first missionary journey, Timothy was found on his second journey to have been well reported of by the Christians at Lystra * and Iconium (Acts 16:1). The work in the young man was real. It had stood. It bore fruit. And never after had any one reason to discredit his conversion.

* Very probably from the mention of Lystra here before Iconium it was Timothy's native city. His walk and his service showed unmistakably that he was a real and earnest Christian. Converted by Paul, who calls him his own child in the faith, we have nevertheless no details about that change wrought in Timothy, nor have we been told when exactly, or where, it took place; nor does Luke allude to him at all, till he joined Paul, never to turn from him whilst the latter was in life. Details of conversions are very rarely introduced by the beloved physician. It is interesting to note, however, how links are formed by God of lasting continuance, though the people thus first brought together cannot forecast their future. The Return. From Derbe they retraced their steps to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Important work lay before them. They had been evangelising as they passed from city to city, and many converts were the result. Would they leave them, when just converted, to get on as best they could? That, we learn from 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 3:10, was not the desire of the Apostle Paul. Establishing converts in the faith he knew was needed; and if permitted, he delighted to revisit former scenes of labour to do it. And no persecution that he had met with could deter him from such a service, though, as in the case of the Thessalonians, circumstances might prevent it. At this time, however, there were no hindrances, so they turned back to the cities from which they had been driven, taking them in regular, and so in the inverse, order.

Building up. And now teaching and pastoral care were called into exercise, the Apostles being especially occupied with the growth and well-being of the Christians. Revisiting those cities, they found ample scope for such service, and were free to carry it out; for we read not of any fresh outbreak of feeling against them in the streets of Antioch or Iconium. And even in Lystra Paul could evidently walk in safety, though on his first visit he had been dragged out of it for dead. The Gospel is necessarily aggressive. It arouses animosities in those who would pose as champions of traditional religion. Ministering to converts, however, might proceed, though even that is not always the case, without fresh demonstration of hostility. Thus it was. So to confirming and to strengthening the souls of the disciples Paul and Barnabas especially addressed themselves. The spiritual life imparted through the Word by the Spirit should exhibit growth and development. For that a teaching ministry is provided (Ephesians 4:12). To be built up in Christ and established in

the faith is needful for the well-being of every believer (Colossians 2:7). Well were the workmen in early days aware of this, and they sought as enabled to effect it (Acts 15:32; Acts 15:41; Acts 18:23). For this service was not confined to Apostles; witness Judas, Silas, and also Timothy (1 Thessalonians 3:2). In the Acts we read that it was done; in the Epistles (Romans 1:11; Romans 16:25 ; 2 Peter 1:12) we see how it could be done. Confirmation, then, in the New Testament was not an ecclesiastical rite, but a ministering to souls. And here exhortation could find scope for its exercise, and encouragements to stand fast in the faith would be in season. So we read that they exhorted the disciples to continue in the faith, adding (the historian seemingly here reproducing the very words of the Apostles), "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Fitting, indeed, was it for them thus to speak, and with power must their exhortation have fallen on the disciples. All knew, and some had witnessed, what Paul and Barnabas had suffered for the truth. Of the names of any of the converts in Asia Minor who listened to these exhortations we are in perfect ignorance, save probably those three already mentioned, Timothy and Lois and Eunice. For somewhere, in one or more of the cities named, may we not without rashness hazard the conjecture that Timothy was a listener to the two Apostles when they thus addressed the saints? Much tribulation, or rather many tribulations, they spoke of. What such might be Timothy had seen exemplified in the experience of Paul at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra (2 Timothy 3:11). So he would in a measure be prepared for any to which he might some day be called. Yet, prepared too to expect deliverance in one way or another, even as the Apostle reminded him, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me." Of entering the kingdom through tribulation they had spoken, yet their hearers had already entered into it, spiritually, by the new birth (John 3:5). There is, however, the entering into it in person, when the Lord shall have come for His own ; for nothing short of salvation for the whole man is God’s purpose for His heavenly saints. Between these two events, however, much tribulation may be experienced. To this latter entrance Peter refers (2 Peter 1:11); and of this Paul many years after reminded his own child in the faith, as he quoted, for his benefit primarily, and surely for ours also, one of the five faithful sayings, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" etc (2 Timothy 2:12). These, part of Paul’s last words to Timothy with which we are acquainted, may well have recalled to his mind many incidents of that first missionary journey, and the exhortation above quoted, given to all the converts.

Elders. The establishing of the saints thus cared for, provision, we find, was also made for the maintenance of order in the assembly by the appointment of Elders. We have read of the institution of a diaconate at Jerusalem; now of the institution of an elderhood in the different assemblies recently formed we are to learn. Elders were officials appointed by Apostles,* or by their delegates, as Titus, and very likely also Timothy. Of Titus being entrusted with this service we read distinctly (Titus 1:5). Of Timothy’s authority for that there is no mention. From the tenor of 1 Timothy, we may however say, it is not unlikely that he did appoint them, empowered for that by the Apostle, like his brother labourer Titus. Elders were to keep order, to rule in the assembly (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:9). They were also to shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-3). And whereas- Elder was their title of dignity, Bishop or overseer was that which described them in their work (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:5; Titus 1:7-9). Their jurisdiction, as that of Deacons, was local.

* They, 1:e., Paul and Barnabas, ordained or appointed for them elders - so we should read. The appointment was by the Apostles, not by the assembly. So Paul and Barnabas appointed them in every city, and there might evidently be several in a place (Acts 20:17; Php 1:1). They might also be such as laboured in the Word, but they were not labourers in the Word by virtue of their office (1 Timothy 5:17). A labourer in the Word is a gift from the ascended Christ, and given by Him to men (Ephesians 4:8); so his sphere of service is worldwide. The Elder or Deacon was an Elder or Deacon only in the local assembly where he served. In every city on this tour they appointed Elders. But it does not appear that ever after the Apostle always carried out this practice. We have no hint of any in Thessalonica, and the injunctions in 1 Thessalonians 5:11-13 seem to militate against the supposition of their existence in that assembly. Further, appointed, where they existed, by the Apostles or delegates, and made Bishops or overseers by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28), we never read that they had power to appoint Elders in their room. Apostles could delegate power to others to ordain Elders. Those so delegated, it is plain, could have no inherent authority to transmit their power to others. Will it be said that 2 Timothy 2:2 sanctions ordination by Elders, and that to the end of time? It furnishes, it must be replied, no warrant for such an assumption. The passage, as we have already pointed out (p. 169), speaks of what Timothy had heard, not of power, nor of authority which he had received. He was to hand on what he had heard to faithful men who could teach others also. One can hear doctrine and hand it on. One cannot hear authority - one receives that. One can teach truth, but authority is conferred, not taught. As little could an Elder in apostolic times ordain another Elder, as Timothy or Titus could appoint apostolic delegates in their room. Do any ask, Why then have we those portions in the pastoral Epistles relating to the qualifications of Elders, etc? The answer is plain. Given of course as they were first to Timothy and Titus respectively for their guidance, they furnish us with information as to the requisite qualifications for any discharging such duties. When any now are found to whom those descriptions apply, and being in themselves willing thus to serve, room should gladly and thankfully be accorded them for the work. To shepherd or tend the flock is a useful service indeed, and is needed as much as ever, - as well surely as Peter’s admonition to the Elders of his day, not to lord it over the heritage, but to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Grace then is called for on the part of such serving, as well as on that of those served. As none can now claim the authority, in grace let them work (1 Peter 5:2), and graciously let the rest give them room for their work. Aware that on this subject the reader may have a different judgment, as the writer had long ago, we would only add, that to Scripture we must all go, and by that be taught. Well does the writer remember how hard he fought against the truth of this matter, but found Scripture against his preconceived ideas about it, so he had to give in.

Return to Antioch. Important points come out as we reconsider the history of this journey. We have learnt by it how Paul could preach the Gospel to Jews (xiii.), and how he could adapt himself to ignorant heathen (xiv.). We see that whilst rejoicing in the work of evangelising, neither Barnabas nor he neglected the important service of establishing the converts in the faith. Each line of service, however, had its time and place. We notice also the provision made for shepherding the sheep, and for preserving order in the assemblies. This last arranged for, they took their departure from the scene of such marked blessing vouchsafed to them. Passing then through Pisidia, they came back to Perga in Pamphylia, in which after now speaking the word, they went down to a seaport named Attalia, about sixteen miles distant, "situated on the northeastern corner of a fine bay, and possessing a good haven, round which the city rose like a vast amphitheatre."* The port

is still frequented, and is known by the name of Adalia. Embarking thereat, they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been commended for the work which they had fulfilled. Gladly must the Church in that city have welcomed back the travellers, after an absence, it is considered, of nearly two years. Joy too must have filled many a heart as they listened to the story of the work among the heathen. How much had those two to tell! Their visit to Cyprus, their labour there, and the conversion of Sergius Paulus the proconsul, must greatly have interested those acquainted with the island. Then they could give an account of their labours in the provinces of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia, of the persecutions encountered, of Paul's remarkable preservation from death at Lystra, and of his speedy recovery from the effects of that attempt on his life. Amid, however, all this of which we have read, we have no account of the number of professed converts, nor a record of those baptised, nor any extract from a roll of communicants in any of the towns in which they had worked. Indeed, of Christian baptism we have never a word throughout this journey, though we may be sure it was not neglected. These at times prominent statistics in the records of modern missions are generally absent from the inspired account of Gospel work among the Gentiles. And as without salary Paul and Barnabas laboured, so to men they owed no account of their success. The record is with God.

* Lewin's Life of St. Paul, vol. 1:, p. 155.

04.18. THK COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

THK COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

Acts 15:1-35. A TIME of rest from travel was permitted to these two labourers, Paul and Barnabas. At Antioch, from whence they had started on their missionary tour, they abode on their return no little time. On incidents in connection with ministry there at this time Luke does not dwell, but gives us to know, that though resting from the fatigue of frequent travel, the happy service of quietly ministering to saints was disturbed by controversy in the assembly. "Certain men came down from Judaea, and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). The Interruption. From Judaea they came, the stronghold of Judaism. Doubtless that fact was pressed on the converts at Antioch, and very likely it invested these new teachers with a prestige which otherwise they would not have possessed. Christianity had begun at Jerusalem. There too were still found some who had known the Lord in life, which Paul had not. To those in Judaea, therefore, should not the men of Antioch look, to learn fully about Christianity? Native-born Jews, just fresh from the cradle of the faitb, should surely know better than Hellenists like Paul. We can well understand what specious arguments, at the enemy's leading, might have been resorted to, in order to gain a hearing and acceptance for these men. But who were they? Their names are now unknown, though very likely they posed then as no mean authorities for Christian teaching. Sic transit gloria mundi! * Who sent them? Not the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem, for they disclaimed all responsibility in the matter (xv. 24), however much some may have sympathised with them in their doctrine. Yet very likely the names of leaders in Jerusalem were used to give weight to the proposition now propounded (Galatians 2:12), that circumcision was an essential requisite for salvation. We can well believe what a stir was made, for converts there were at Antioch of some years' standing. And though they had prophets among them, by whom the mind of God had been made known, no revelation of such a character as this had been uttered by any of them. Were the converts then from Gentiles still unsaved? Much, of course, had many there learnt from Paul and Barnabas. But had those devoted workers kept back such important teaching? or were they in ignorance of it ? Undoubtedly both of them had been circumcised; yet they had never pressed that rite on converts from the Gentiles, though all the earliest converts to Christianity bore on their person the mark of circumcision. Could it be then that these new teachers were right, and the two Apostles wrong? Appearances might seem to favour such a surmise, when it was remembered that the first Apostles of the Lord had all been circumcised, and had also conformed to the requirements of the law. Hence a conflict arose, which was, we may well believe, keenly carried on; for Paul and Barnabas "had no small dissension and questioning with them." The work of building up souls was thus to be arrested by the controversy now raised, and carried on with persistency and vigour characteristic of sectarian zeal. So doubtless had plotted the enemy.

* Thus passes away worldly glory.

Circumcision. In what light Paul viewed this teaching, save that he resolutely opposed it, the Acts affords us no further help. The Epistles, however, make this plain, and show what a vital question was raised by those self-appointed teachers. Between them and Paul it was not a. mere matter of opinion, in which each disputant might without harm retain his own conviction. In the eyes of the Apostle it was a deadly scheme which had been propounded, for it subverted the truth of Christianity. Much, very much, was imperilled by the claim for circumcision now put forward. Let us look a little into this.

Circumcision was of the fathers, not of Moses, the Lord had declared, though taught Israel by Moses (John 7:22); and it was the sign of a covenant made by God with Abraham and his seed after the flesh, relating both to fruitfulness of offspring and to the possession of the land of Canaan as their inheritance: and God would be their God (Genesis 17:11-14). Now all those on whom circumcision was to be imperative were either Abraham’s seed, those born in their houses, or those bought with their money. And later on, the stranger, called in Hebrew Ger, who would make his home in the midst of Israel, if desirous to keep the Passover, had to be circumcised with all the males in his house (Exodus 12:48). At the first blush of the question, then, the converts to Christianity from Gentiles were neither Abraham’s seed after the flesh, nor born in the house of a Jew, nor the latter’s property by purchase, nor strangers desiring to celebrate the Passover. Why then should they be circumcised ? An answer to this question in favour of these new teachers, which could satisfy reflecting minds, it would be impossible to give. But there was more to be urged against this doctrine than simply the lack of authority to circumcise Gentiles. This Paul brought out. In 1 Corinthians 7:19 we learn that circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. That is, obedience to God is of real importance, and not the having submitted to the external rite instituted in Genesis 17:1-27 : or the contrary. If one was called having been previously circumcised, let him not efface that mark from his body; if called uncircumcised, let him not be circumcised. God was dealing with men now as men, and not primarily with an elect nation, the seed of Abraham. Hence neither the one condition nor the other was of importance in the Church of God.

Turning next to Romans, we are there taught that what is now to be sought after is reality of heart before God, and not a distinguishing mark on one’s body. And the former only are now true Jews in spirit, according to the meaning of the word Jew - 1:e., praise. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29). He who could boast of having been circumcised on the eighth day, as the law enjoined, teaches that what is now to be valued is circumcision of the heart, and not of the letter. And those who were now only characterised by the outward rite he designates as the concision, claiming true circumcision alone for those who worship * by the Spirit of God, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Php 3:2-5). Far behind then in understanding the mind of God for their day were those self-constituted teachers, whose very names have fittingly and significantly sunk into oblivion. They had come to Antioch, and pressed their claim to be listened to on the uncircumcised converts in that city, as coming from headquarters, even from Judsea. In reality they needed to learn for themselves the rudiments of Christian teaching.

* "Worship by the Spirit of God." This is what the Apostle wrote. He was not speaking of the character of worship as being spiritual in contrast to ceremonial, but of the One by whom alone we can worship God now, even the Holy Ghost. But, worshipping by Him, we need scarcely say that it will be spiritual worship. But there was more at stake, and this in the Epistle to the Galatians is plainly set forth. Unless ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved, so averred those men. "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," Paul could reply (Galatians 5:2). Would they insist on the converts keeping the law? Paul would meet that with a solemn assurance. "I testify unto every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:3-4). Would any following such perverted teaching put themselves under law? They thereby put themselves under bondage to keep the law (Galatians 4:21-31). And all their hopes of the future inheritance would, as far as they were concerned, become vain, for they came under a curse if they failed in the observance of even one command (Galatians 3:10).

Further, all who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins had received the gift of the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 1:13), and so were Christ's (Romans 8:9), which is the same as being in Christ (Gal. iii 28, 29). They were also members of His body (1 Corinthians 12:13). Full Christian blessing, therefore, was theirs already. Abraham's seed they were also as in Christ. What then could circumcision do for them? What could these teachers minister of Christian blessing which was not theirs already? Nothing. But what harm could they do? Much indeed. For any who imbibed such teaching, and kept to it, would fall from grace. No wonder then that Paul earnestly withstood it. It was really, as we learn, subversive of Christianity. In Christ all true believers really were. Now in Him "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). And again he states (Galatians 6:15) that "neither circumcision is anything, nor uneircumcision, but a new creature [or, creation]." Differing as light from darkness, or as day from night, was the true Christian teaching upheld by Paul from that Judaising teaching sought to be introduced by these unauthorised missionaries. Then too the effect of such doctrine was withering to the spirit. Biting and devouring one another would be displayed, and the observance of days, of months, of times, and of years would be introduced. Writing as to this last, Paul tells the Galatians, who were adopting it, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain " (iv. 11).

Firmly, determinedly did Paul and Barnabas oppose these men. They were false brethren, as Paul terms them, who came in privily to spy out the liberty of the saints in Christ. To such he would not give way for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with the converts from heathenism (Galatians 2:4-5). But how should this question be satisfactorily settled? Paul and Barnabas taught one thing ; those teachers from Judaea taught another. Yet it must be settled, else the peace of the assembly would be destroyed, parties be formed, and divisions result. It was then determined that Paul and Barnabas, with certain others, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about it (Acts 15:2). They went, but Paul went up by revelation, he tells us (Galatians 2:2). The Holy Ghost was guiding, that real blessing should come out of it, and the enemy be quite outwitted.

Titus. Who formed the company we shall never know on this side of death. Of one only we learn who accompanied the Apostles - viz., Titus, already converted, and that by Paul (Titus 1:4), but when and where are points alike concealed from us. In Galatians (ii. 1) we read of him as now with

Paul, so he joined that Apostle's company earlier than Timothy. And as a protest against that Judaising teaching and a vindication of the truth, Titus, who by birth was a pure Gentile, Paul took up with him, but uncireumcised. So at Jerusalem the brethren, welcoming Paul and his company, welcomed an uncircumcised Christian in their midst. And wherever they stopped on their route, and they evidently did at places, whilst great joy was caused by their announcement of the conversion of Gentiles, the ground taken up by Paul and Barnabas at Antioch was firmly and openly maintained throughout, as Titus was seen in their company, a joint partaker of grace, a member of Christ, and a fellow-heir with all true believers of the inheritance in the future.

Reception at Jerusalem. Great joy was manifested by the disciples in Phoenicia and Samaria, as they heard of the conversion of Gentiles. We have no mention, however, of any such expression on the part of the assembly at Jerusalem. Possibly the strong Judaising element there made Paul and Barnabas to be regarded with some degree of suspicion, and this surmise receives support from the Apostle Paul's own account of his visit to Jerusalem at this time. "I went up" he writes "by revelation; and I laid before them [better than, communicated unto them] that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2:2). It would seem as if reports had reached those at Jerusalem about him and Barnabas, not tending to enhance their reputation as faithful labourers and conservators of the truth. The result he tells us was, that to his Gospel the chiefs at Jerusalem could add (or, impart) nothing. "But contrariwise," he writes, "when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me to ward the Gentiles) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do" (Galatians 2:7-10). All distrust and distance seemed effectually removed. The special sphere of labour to which Paul and Barnabas had been called at Antioch they fully recognised, as much as that committed especially to the twelve. But we must not anticipate. Reaching Jerusalem, they rehearsed to the assembly, and to the Apostles, and to the Elders, all things that God had done with them. A hearing having been thus at once accorded them to relate the success of their mission among the heathen, the opposition raised its voice, and formulated its dogma - viz., "That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). The promulgators of this dictum were certain of the sect of the Pharisees, to which sect Paul had once belonged. How low he must have fallen, they would think. How far had he been diverted from what was right, they evidently would affirm. Now the controversy which had been carried on at Antioch was transferred to Jerusalem. All felt the matter an important one, so the Apostles and the Elders, but not the assembly, met together to consider it. The Conference. The discussion was free. Neither Peter nor James spoke at the outset of it, nor did Paul or Barnabas take part till many probably had had their say. For not till there had been much disputing (or, questioning) did Peter rise to speak. All therefore, we may be certain, that the advocates of the Judaising element could advance had been put forward. Then Peter arose, and could claim a hearing, not only as an Apostle, but as the one chosen of God by whom Gentiles had first heard the word of the Gospel and believed. Now to that company, as he reminds his hearers, God gave the Holy Ghost, "even as He did," said Peter, "unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Were

Cornelius and his friends circumcised in order to be saved? Had they been circumcised since that day? All knew they received salvation as they sat on their seats listening to Peter. Was that an assumption on Peter's part? He adduced proof of it, which none could gainsay. God, who knew their hearts, gave them then and there the Holy Ghost, which ensured full Christian blessing. The history of Cornelius and his friends negatived the contention of these pharisaic brethren. Circumcision could not be a necessary prelude to salvation; for those, to whom Peter had preached at Csesarea, had received the latter without first submitting to the former. Would the objectors argue that purification by legal ceremonies was imperative? Such could really only avail to the sanctifying of the flesh. But God looks at the heart. Now He had purified the hearts of those Gentiles by faith. Let them read the history of that visit to Caesarea in its right light. They would see the mistake of their contention. Thus the ground was being cut away from under their feet, and that by the Apostle of the circumcision. But Peter had more to say, and none but one who had been a Jew could so well press the next point, as none but those who had been Jews could so well appreciate it. Were the objectors enamoured of the law? Had they found freedom under it? Had they not, on the contrary, felt its claims burdensome indeed, a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear? Would they burden others with a yoke which they had found so heavy? As little weight was to be attached to this contention of the Gentiles keeping the law as to any other which had been advanced. "For we believe," continued Peter, "that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, even as they." Salvation therefore for each and all was not by keeping the law. It is by faith (Ephesians 2:8). The Apostle had finished. Silence reigned where discussion had been rife. Peter, the Apostle to the circumcision, boldly resisted the dogma which had been propounded. His speech, it would seem, was felt to be unanswerable. No one rose to support what we might call the opposition ; for the whole multitude kept silence, to let Barnabas and Paul give proofs of the real work of God among the Gentiles. Both these Apostles spoke- - Barnabas first, Paul next. They could tell much of deep interest, and doubtless details of many conversions. But the tenor of their addresses was to make known what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Important was this, because it conclusively established that the work among the Gentiles was signally owned by God. He was working, and had worked, specially by those who refused to sanction the introduction among the converts in heather lands of Jewish rites, or their being put under law. Could any then doubt that Paul and Barnabas were in the right, and those Judaising teachers were in the wrong ?

James now rose. His words were directed, not to refute the propositions advanced, which Peter had sufficiently done, but to bring Scripture to bear on the matter. What light would it cast on the subject? He quoted from the prophet Amos a passage which foretold blessing to Gentiles (Amos 9:11-12).* That such should confess the Lord and be called by His name was then no afterthought of the Divine mind. Yet nowhere did the prophetic word hint at the necessity for them to be circumcised. Hence the silence of Scripture on the matter afforded light on the controversy. God knew from the beginning what He would do If then He had not spoken of circumcising such, who should enjoin it?. Where Scripture was silent, let them be silent. How wise! Would that in later days this simple principle, which commends itself at once, had been more carried out!

* James quotes from the Greek version of Amos, but not even from that with exactness, save that for the point in hand - viz., Gentiles to be called by God's name - he quotes the Greek with verbal correctness. And he winds up with the reminder, that God makes things known from the beginning

of the world. Joel (Acts 2:1-47 :), Habakkuk (Acts 13:1-52 :), Amos, are each brought forward as needed. Portions of the Word, perhaps much seldomer read than Isaiah or the other great propbets, are found helpful, and can throw light at times on the matter in hand.

Three steps had been taken in this controversy. First, the ground of the objectors was completely cut away. Next, that God was working among Gentiles was undeniably established. Third, Scripture, though foreseeing that, nowhere taught that they should be circumcised. To Scripture teaching all must bow. As God had not enjoined circumcision on Gentiles, neither could the Apostles and Elders. Nor under the law could they put them. Yet there were certain things from which these once Gentiles in common with these once Jews must abstain as creatures of God. These James intimates - viz., pollution of idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood, assigning as a reason that "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). All might learn from the Pentateuch God’s mind for men. So all must conform to that as worshippers of the one true God, and sharers in Divine grace. It was patent that idolatry must be renounced by the converts. The Thessalonian saints subsequently bore testimony to this, for they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). And a danger there was, unless it was given up, of pandering to it, as illustrated by the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 8:10 :), and by those at Pergamos (Revelation 2:14). Next, God’s institution of marriage, a provision against fornication (1 Corinthians 7:2), was for the benefit of the whole human race. So that sin, but little frowned on among the Gentiles, must be renounced by disciples of the Lord Jesus. And lastly, the prohibition against eating blood must be enforced. This dated from the days of Noah, and was imposed on Noah and on his sons (Genesis 9:4) just after the flood. It clearly concerned thp whole human family. Here it might be asked, Did not the law prohibit eating blood? Unquestionably. Was not James then really putting the converts from heathenism under the law by this? Not at all. The law did prohibit it, but under a penalty (Leviticus 17:10-12). Genesis 9:4 prohibited it, but mentioned no penalty. In perfect keeping was this with dispensational teaching. To those placed under law a penalty attached to the infraction of the command. To those never under law, as Noah and his sons, no penalty was prescribed for disobedience in this respect. Now that command, then given, has never been cancelled, so is binding, of course, on all Noah’s descendants. On it then James insisted, but not as a penal enactment. There are things forbidden in the Word to men as men. There are also things forbidden to those under law. So whilst upholding the perfect freedom of converts from the Gentiles from the yoke sought to be imposed on them, whatever God’s Word had said to men as men, and had not cancelled, remained in force, and must be attended to. Well indeed were they guided at this conference, steering clear of any insistence on the converts in question being put under law, but steering clear equally of any relaxation of the Divine injunctions for the whole human race. The manner too of handling the controversy is worthy of notice. One may refute a proposition by showing the untenableness of it. This Peter did. One may also seek for light on it from the written Word of God. This James did. Thus the matter, to use a modern expression, was thoroughly thrashed out. Unanimity now prevailed, where diversity of judgment had been freely declared. The Resolution. James proposed writing to the Christians at Antioch. This resolved upon by the whole Church, in common with the Apostles and Elders, they proceeded to choose their messengers who should accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return. The selection was made. Judas named Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren, were fixed upon to carry the proposed letter from the Apostles and Elders to express their judgment on the question that had been raised,

and to confirm by word of mouth what had been resolved upon at the conference. Some from Jerusalem had troubled the assembly at Antioch with their Judaising dogmas. Judas and Silas should go from Jerusalem as witnesses of the statement in the letter which they carried, that those in authority in Judaea repudiated the teaching of the disturbers of converts amongst the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas could and would surely declare that. Confirmation then of it should be forthcoming by the witnesses, who would substantiate what the other two might aver. The Letter. Dismissed, they went down to Antioch, bearing the first, and the only formal communication with which we are acquainted, from those in authority at Jerusalem to the brethren from the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. "The Apostles and the elder brethren," so it ran (we give the Revised Version), "unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting: Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment; it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well." The question raised, a vital one as to doctrine, was also vital as to fellowship. For if the troublers had been correct, fellowship of Gentile converts with those at Jerusalem depended on the former submitting themselves to all the ordinances of the law. Hence they might naturally desire to know on what terms Christian fellowship could be maintained, and interchange of communion could take place. It was then for those at Jerusalem to make that plain. This they did. Hence their letter. There was, be it observed, no assertion of the rights and primacy of a metropolitan see, the occupant of which could lay down the law for others. Surely, if any city could claim that, Jerusalem might, which had been, and still was, the home of Apostles. The Apostles and Elders wrote to their brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. It was not James, or John, or Peter, or all of them apart from others not reckoned in the Apostolate, who fulminated a decree. It was brethren writing to brethren. And the letter, though firm in character, was gracious in tone. So, whilst it did not exact implicit obedience on pain of excommunication, yet the godly at Antioch and elsewhere would have hesitated to refuse for one moment to subscribe to its teaching, seeing that it only affirmed and insisted upon that which for ages and ages had been the will of God for His creatures of the human race. A great danger was thus avoided. Persecution had failed to arrest the movement. Corruption within, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, had been stamped out. Now the danger of division, and the setting up of rival schools of doctrine and practice, had been imminent. But God in His grace had sent up Paul by revelation to confer with those at Jerusalem; and the Holy Ghost, as they owned in the letter, had guided their deliberations. God again defeated the enemy, and the Church emerged safely out of this crisis. Nowhere but at Jerusalem could this question have been definitely settled. There, however, it was decided, and to that decision the leaders adhered, as James and all the Elders affirmed years after (Acts 21:25).

We have spoken of James. Who was he? The Apostle Paul in the Galatians tells us that he was the Lord’s brother, and an Apostle likewise. "Other of the Apostles," he writes, "saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother" (Galatians 1:19). Of the Apostles present at the conference that same Epistle mentions James, Cephas, and John (Galatians 2:9); for we conclude that Paul is writing of

the memorable occasion when with Barnabas he went up to Jerusalem, and was present at the council, as told us by Luke. Are there three Jameses of New Testament fame, or only two? Two only has Luke, we believe, distinguished - James the brother of John and James the son of Alphaeus. The former killed by Herod, the historian subsequently tells us that Peter spoke of James (xii. 17) without further designation, as if there was but one then alive. In this passage (xv.), and also in 21: 18, Luke mentions the same James. The question of only two or of three Jameses in the Apostolic company has been a matter of discussion for centuries. No one now can authoritatively settle it. We leave the matter, then, with this one remark, that if Luke was aware of three Jameses, and that James of Acts 12:17; Acts 12:15; Acts 21:8 was not the son of Alphaeus, but another of wholly different parentage, it is. surprising he did not mention it.*

* This remark is strengthened by the remembrance that in 1: 13 Luke has mentioned by name only two Jameses. If subsequently he introduced a third, why did he not more definitely describe him! At Antioch. Again at Antioch, the multitude was called together to hear the result of the visit to, and conference at, Jerusalem. The letter delivered was duly read, and joy filled their hearts. They rejoiced, we learn, for the consolation. And now, free doubtless in spirit, and with hearts prepared to receive, they could profit by the ministry of the two newcomers, Judas and Silas, who, being prophets, could and did exercise their gift in exhorting the brethren with many words, and in confirming them. Their mission ended, Judas returned to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas continuing for a season at Antioch, preaching the word of the Lord with many others. We have mentioned Judas. What about Silas? The historian seems to intimate that he went back with Judas, for we read, "After they had tarried there a space, they were let go [or, dismissed] in peace from the brethren to those who sent them," as we should certainly read (Acts 15:33). Silas must therefore have subsequently returned again to Antioch, for we find him there ready to accompany Paul when he commenced his second great missionary journey. We say "must have returned," for the words in ver. 34, "Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still," are generally rejected as not authentic. A few remarks in conclusion.

1st, that for which Paul and Barnabas had contended was right, and those at Jerusalem endorsed it. To the Gospel, too, which Paul preached, they in conference could add nothing. It was in accord with that to which Peter, James, and John subscribed. Paul, who had learnt it directly from God, they owned had been taught correctly, because, as we can say, divinely taught. So the danger of two schools of doctrine amongst Christians, the one claiming the support of those at Jerusalem, the other pointing to Paul and Barnabas as their authority, was at this time averted. Apostles at Jerusalem there were. Apostles also at Antioch there were. But there was, there is, but one Holy Ghost. So what He had taught Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, He maintained and all accepted at Jerusalem.

2nd. Further, we see the place the Church had in all this. It was gathered together at Jerusalem to hear from Paul and Barnabas an account of the work among the heathen. It was consulted and had a voice in the selection of the messengers for Antioch. But at the conference only the Apostles and Elders are mentioned as present. And the letter went from these last, not from the assembly. The functions and the province of the assembly are thus seen. It had not to decide questions of doctrine. It is taught, but never in Scripture; yet had a voice in selecting the two who should bear the letter to Antioch.

3rd. Then we are reminded of the personal presence and acting of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Person dwelling on earth. What Peter had declared (Acts 5:32) of His presence, the letter affirmed, as it stated, " It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." His personal presence on earth was thus owned, and His active participation in the work distinctly declared. We shall learn more of this as we proceed.

Chapter 56

04.19. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY. DIVINE GUIDANCE.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY. DIVINE GUIDANCE.

Acts 15:36—xvii. 14.

BRISKLY, we may well believe, the work went on at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas were labouring, teaching and preaching; but not alone, for many others also were now engaged in the work. A great centre this city had become. Labourers were abundant, and, what is more, the contention of Paul and Barnabas on behalf of converts from the Gentiles had been successfully sustained at Jerusalem, the Apostles and Elders in the metropolis of Judaism being of one accord with them, that Gentiles were not under the law, nor, when converted, were ever intended to be placed under it. The urgent need then once existing for their presence and labours in the ancient capital of the Seleucidai had ceased, and the two missionary Apostles could contemplate a fresh journey to revisit the scenes of recent labour.

Peter's Visit. But ere formulating plans for another tour, Peter's visit to Antioch, related only in Galatians 2:11-21, we presume took place. Another crisis in the Church's history arose. Certain came from James whilst Peter was in the city, stirring up Judaising controversy afresh; not now insisting upon the converts from heathenism observing the law, but arousing those who had been Jews to keep apart socially from such, so as not to eat with them. How busy was the enemy! How persistent in his efforts to divide the assembly in that city, and thus, of course, to bring discredit on the work! As a Jew Peter had rightly never kept company with any Gentiles (Acts 10:28). God, however, had taught him, on the housetop at Joppa, to call no man common or unclean. In conformity with that he was mixing socially at Antioch with the converts from the Gentiles, for all true believers were, and are, members of the one body of Christ, and so members one of another. The middle wall of partition has for all such been broken down, the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, having been annulled in the flesh of Christ.

Certain men, however - Paul does not call them brethren (Galatians 2:12) - came from James, and, working upon Peter, made him separate socially from those formerly Gentiles. The old question was thus revived, but in a new dress. If Gentile converts could not be Judaised, those who had been Jews should certainly keep apart from them. Thus the middle wall would be in practice re-erected. Coming from James, and with Peter now gained over, victory seemed almost secured; for the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. This new turn in affairs was speciously arranged, and one can see how those not established in full Christian teaching might by it be carried away. For, granted that no word of God imposed the keeping of the law of Moses on the Gentiles, the word of God had distinctly imposed the law on the children of Israel. Must not, then, all such still keep it? If so, separation socially from other Christians must of necessity take place. The citadel of Christian truth, which Paul and Barnabas had successfully defended, seemed on the point of being unconditionally surrendered. For Peter was ensnared. Barnabas too was led away. Fear of man, not conviction, was acting upon Peter. He, and the other Jews at Antioch, dissembled, writes Paul

(Galatians 2:13). If Paul now gave way all would be lost. But he, formerly a Pharisee of Pharisees, and once so zealous for the law, kept his ground through grace, stepped into the breach and preserved the truth for the whole Church of God. He was, as it were, at this time the one strand of the rope which preserved the whole from breaking. He withstood Peter to the face. Peter's course was inconsistent with that which he held and had declared at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:16). It would make him, too, a transgressor through building again the things which he had destroyed. For why had he given up for a time social separation if it was right to uphold it? Besides, his present conduct was really making Christ the minister of sin. He had left legal observances as a disciple of Christ to be justified by faith. If that was really wrong, in what a solemn light it placed the Lord Jesus Christ! (Galatians 2:17-18). These arguments we suppose were convincing, and had the effect of recovering Peter and Barnabas; so that Paul could take the latter into counsel about a second missionary journey, to revisit the places in which they had worked together. Into this episode in Paul's life Luke has not entered. We can understand that. His purpose was to trace out at this time the work among the Gentiles. That incident at Antioch, therefore, he passed over, as not bearing directly on his subject. A Contention. Agreement on the part of Barnabas to accompany Paul being readily given, a question arose as to the one who should accompany them. Barnabas desired Mark. Paul's judgment was against that, considering how he had left them during their first journey. Every one must feel that Paul had reason on his side. As neither would give way, and a sharp contention having arisen between them, they parted company, to work in different places. Barnabas with Mark revisited Cyprus, the scene of former labour; Paul, choosing Silas as his companion, went to Asia Minor, and went forth with the commendation from the brethren at Antioch, and began by traversing Syria and Oilicia and confirming the churches.

Confirming. A word on confirming disciples, in addition to that which has been said on p. 213 above. It allowed of course on the profession of faith on the part of the converts, but was not a necessary prelude to their partaking of the Lord's Supper. The Apostles and others confirmed the assemblies (Acts 15:41). Paul and Barnabas retracing on their first journey their steps and re-visiting the places in which they had worked, confirmed the disciples - not some, but all! Had none at Antioch, Iconium, or Lystra remembered the Lord in death till those two revisited the cities named? Then Silas and Judas, when they went to Antioch with the letter from Jerusalem, confirmed the disciples there (xv. 32). Had none all these years met in Antioch to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread ? Were Silas and Judas competent to do what Apostles as Paul and Barnabas could not ? Again, in 18: 23, Paul, we read, went through the countries of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening, or confirming (the same word here as elsewhere) all the disciples. All needed strengthening, or confirming. The context will show what the historian intended to state. The disciples as a company in the different places needed such a ministry. The Lord provided it, and others besides Apostles could do it.

Timothy. "Through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches" intimates how the work in those provinces must have spread. Churches there were. Disciples were not confined to Antioch in the former province and to Tarsus in the latter. But Paul desired to press on. So he entered Lycaonia this time from the east, which brought him necessarily to Derbe by the Cilician Gates before reaching Lystra or Iconium. At Derbe the Apostle came on the track of his first journey, and was now reversing the order of his travels. Coming next to Lystra - for the historian hastens on, and tells us this time nothing of any work at Derbe - Paul again meets with Timothy, a convert through

his labours on the previous journey; now well reported of at Lystra and at Iconium, but evidently quite a young man, as the Apostle's remark to him years after (1 Timothy 4:12) shows. Paul nevertheless was minded to take him for the work - first circumcising him because of his parentage by his mother's side. Titus he would not allow to be circumcised. About Timothy's circumcision he was decided. All occasion against Paul by the Jews should be avoided. Through the cities they now went, carrying the decrees ordained at Jerusalem. To some of the cities, as Iconium, and probably Antioch, Timothy was no stranger, and he must have known disciples in them. Silas was a perfect stranger to them all; ranking, however, as we see in the Apostle's salutation to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1 ; 2 Thessalonians 1:1), before Timothy, and next after Paul. Cheered indeed must have been the Apostle's heart amid all that he had to try him. The converts had evidently kept their ground. The "much tribulation" of which they had been warned, and which they had many of them witnessed meted out to Paul, and by this time had probably experienced in their own persons, had not quenched their ardour for the spread of the truth. The assemblies planted on the previous visit were assemblies still. And now enjoying fresh apostolic ministry, they were established or confirmed in the faith, and increased in number daily. We gather from this that a time of cessation from persecution was experienced, like that which the churches of Palestine had proved after the conversion of Paul (ix. 31). God does allow graciously a breathing time when the energy of persecutors has for a time expended itself, like a volcano which enters on a period of comparative inactivity after some great outburst from internal fires. So it seems to have been with the churches in Asia Minor at this time. So far the Apostle had been re-visiting scenes of his former labour. Now he would break new ground, turning northward to Phrygia and Galatia, through both of which provinces he went, having been forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia.* Divine guidance was markedly manifested on this journey. Here we first meet with it. Viewing the map, it will be seen that from Iconium and by Antioch a direct road led to Asia - 1:e., the Roman proconsular province of that name. Thither he would have gone, had not the Holy Ghost, who guides as to the fields of labour on earth, forbidden it. The time to work that field had not yet come. Other countries were first to receive his attention. Phrygia and Galatia were to profit by it, ere Asia heard the Gospel from his mouth. And profit they certainly did, if what we learn of the work in Galatia was at all indicative of what it was in Phrygia. Gladly did the people in the former province welcome the Apostle; "Ye received me," he writes, "as an angel of God," - his infirmity, his trial in the flesh, in no way checking the readiness of the Galatians to receive his ministry. Nor did that readiness diminish as they made better acquaintance with him. "I bear you record," he could add, "that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (Galatians 4:14-15). We may suppose, from this, that he suffered in his eyesight as well as in other ways. The Galatians felt for him, they loved him warmly. But, evidently of a versatile disposition, they were subsequently much taken up with Judaising teachers, and Paul was then regarded by them in a very different light. Gauls they were, who had migrated to Asia Minor, and exhibited that characteristic which can be traced in the race to this day.

* It is questioned what the historian intended by Galatia here, whether the Roman province of that name, or what may be called Galatia proper. We have said, "having been forbidden," for this is what Luke wrote, assigning thereby this reason for turning to Phrygia and Galatia.

Troas. Phrygia and Galatia traversed, but no details recorded connected with this visit, nor with the second referred to in 18: 23, the historian hastens on to the moment when the call to enter Europe

was made known. Coming over against Mysia, the Apostle had desired to enter Bithynia, the north-western province of Asia Minor. But, as with respect to Asia, so too with respect to Bithynia, Divine guidance forbad it. "The spirit of Jesus," as we should read, "suffered them not" (xvi. 7). But why these checks and diversions from the Apostle's purpose? Certainly the work in Galatia might have appeared a sufficient reason for not allowing him at that time to enter the Roman province of Asia. But why was the way to Bithynia barred when they were so near to it? This question remained unanswered till, passing by Mysia and coming down to Troas, Paul learnt by a vision at night, that to Europe they were to go. By prophetic announcements and by visions God was guiding His servant, and the company. Forbidden of the Holy Ghost to enter Asia, and again hindered from entering Bithynia, Paul by this vision was summoned to Macedonia.

Journeying across the Troad, as they needs must have done, they reached the town of Troas,* "the port for embarkation for any country to which the Holy Spirit might send them" (Lewin). Near to the site of ancient Troy, and now a ruin, it was then a place of importance, its walls embracing a circuit of several miles. Its harbour accommodation was good, though the port had been artificially constructed. From it and to it flowed much of the traffic which passed between the continents of Europe and Asia. But to Paul Troas was otherwise memorable, and never, surely, did it fade from his remembrance. For the vision that he had on his first visit, and the incident connected with Eutychus on his last visit before his imprisonment, were doubtless imperishably fixed on his mind. To us it has an additional interest, apart from classical associations, since it was the place where, according to our narrative, Luke first joined company with Paul. For the knowledge of this we are indebted, incidentally we may say, to the historian himself.

* How they reached Troas, whether by skirting the southern boundary of Mysia, or whether they followed the road which ran through the middle of that province, and would land the travellers at Troas, is another point which is questioned. Mysia lay in the way, so part of it had to be traversed to reach the coast. If "passing by" be taken, as Mr. Lewin contends, in a metaphorical, not in a geographical sense, we shall understand that the Apostle passed along the direct road, without taking up any work in Mysia. Asia forbidden him at present, this seems the most natural understanding of the passage. The Vision. Alone with God, in the silent hours of the night, the Apostle received what we may call fresh marching orders; and the secret of his steps being diverted from entering Bithynia was now to be understood. "A vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Gome over into Macedonia, and help us" (xvi. 9). Communicating to his companions what he had seen and heard, all agreed that it was a call from God to cross the sea to visit that country. For we read, "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that God" (not "the Lord") "had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (ver. 10).

Companions in Travel. Here for the first time does Luke write in the first person plural, associating himself with Paul as one of his companions - "we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that God had called us," etc. In this unobtrusive way does he first present himself on the stage. Henceforth we can trace, by the pronouns used, when he was with Paul and when he was not. And now we have been introduced to the great Apostle's chief companions in labour one by one. Of Titus we have learnt that he was with Paul and Barnabas at the conference at Jerusalem, Silas joined him as travelling companion at Antioch, Timothy at Lystra, we suppose, and now Luke at Troas. Of these Titus and Timothy were his children in the faith. As to the time and human

instruments used for the awakening of Silas and of Luke, history is silent.

Philippi. Setting sail from Troas, they made a straight course to the island of Samothracia, now Samothraki ; and the next day they reached Neapolis, now Cavallo, to which they were bound. Leaving there the vessel, they set forth up the country by land to Philippi, distant some eight to ten miles. Now in ruins, it was then a town of importance as the first city of that district of Macedonia, taking that place as the capital of Macedonia Prima, which had once belonged to Amphipolia. Connected in profane history with the overthrow of Brutus and Cassius by Octavius and Antony, it became a Roman colony with the Italicumjus. This carried with it immunity from public taxes,* with municipal government. It was governed by Roman laws.

* As the land tax and the poll tax. On the first Sabbath after their arrival the travellers sought out the place for prayer, there being no synagogue in the city ; this indicating that the Jewish population was neither large nor wealthy. Resorting to the spot, near the river Gangites, now Angista, they found only women. Where were the men? Religion among the Jewish settlers seems to have been at a low ebb. Some faithful ones were, however, there. The women would attend at the place for prayer, if the men did not. Was the vision all a delusion, a snare? A man of Macedonia Paul had seen, who said, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Had men been crying to God in that country? Very likely it was the prayer of godly women which was to be answered by that vision and its consequences. Unbelief might have judged erroneously, and, seeing only women, might have thought there was little field for labour in that city. Paul and his company, however, were not discouraged. "They sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither." And they spake, we can well believe, as freely and as earnestly as if a large number of men were collected with a proportionate number of women. And the women got a blessing. Thus the work began. Ere long the question, where, were the men? received an answer, as many evidently were converted. A small beginning led to great blessing.

Lydia. Of one woman we are now to read, Lydia her name, from the city of Thyatira, in the province of Lydia in Asia Minor. She "heard us," said Luke; and the Lord opened her heart to attend unto the things spoken by Paul. The change in her was real, and soon effected. And baptised, she and her household, she offered hospitality to Paul and to his company. Engaged in business, a seller of purple, she was a woman of means. She would not be denied. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord," were her words, "come into my house, and abide there." She meant what she said. "She constrained us," writes Luke (xvi. 15). Her house became the sojourn-place of that little company of four, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke. There was now one Christian household at least in the city of Philippi. Divine guidance was marked. A resting-place for those labourers was thus unexpectedly opened out. That day’s converse with the women at the prayer-house outside the city was destined to produce many and important results. Blessing came to Lydia, a home was found ready for Paul, etc.; and encouragement surely they must all have felt. One step led to another. But they were content to take one step at a time. In the work of God how often may that be necessary. Of Divine guidance Lydia could also surely speak. A native of Thyatira, but resident at Philippi for the prosecution of her trade, she could now see God’s hand in leading her to that city. She was brought thither to hear and to receive the Gospel, and to have the honour of entertaining servants of Christ. The Apostle and his companions lived under her roof. How many, surely, reviewing their path can speak of the way God has led them. Far away was Lydia’s native city. Led forth from it for secular work, she found that God’s eye had been on her,

and His hand had guided her, and now His voice she had heard in the depths of her soul, ministering salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. A Pythoness.Happy seasons they must have enjoyed, the labourers partaking of Lydia’s hospitality and imparting Christian instruction, whilst she and her household were drinking in apostolic teaching. Nor was the work confined to that household. Brethren are mentioned as converts ere Paul left the place (xvi. 40). Luke, however, does not dwell on the quiet hours and fruitful seasons, but proceeds to tell us of the opposition aroused, and of the prosecution which followed, directed against Paul and Silas, occasioned as it was by the deliverance of the Pythoness from the demon that enslaved her. A Pythoness she was called,* as having a spirit of divination, and was supposed to be possessed by Apollo. Evidently the work of the Lord was proceeding, and was pretty well noised abroad. For that damsel, under the influence of the demon, followed Paul and Silas day after day - "many days," said Luke - and publicly advertised them, crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto you (not us) the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). Mark the language - you, not us. She did not include herself among those for whom salvation was in store. Rightly so; for it was the demon who spake through her, and there is no salvation for demons, and they know it (Matthew 8:29). Two women are then specially noticed at Philippi, - Lydia, who opened her house to Paul, after the Lord had opened her heart; and the Pythoness, who opened her mouth to advertise the work.

* "Python was tho prophetic serpent at Delphi, the centre and focus of Gentile divination. He gave his name and place to the prophetic Deity of the Gentile world ; the successor of the serpent at Delphi was the Pythian Phoebus, or Apollo. And from him all who claimed the powers of divination received their title, and were called Pythons." - Wordsworth on Acts 28:1-31

We have said it was a demon which possessed her. Was that really the case? Proof was at hand for all who wanted it. Would Paul receive help in the work from such a quarter? The Lord would not when on earth (Luke 4:35; Luke 4:41). The servant would not either. So, grieved by her ways, Paul at length turned round, and exorcised the demon: "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her," he said. "And it came out the same hour" is the historian’s account (xvi. 18). The damsel was delivered from the demon. The power of the name of Christ was manifested. A greater victory was achieved than that by Octavius and Antony over the forces of Brutus and Cassius. A poor wretched member of the human family was delivered from demoniacal possession. But the gain to her masters was gone. Selfish greed had actuated them - they were making money by her. Now, all hopes of further pecuniary profit thus ended, enmity against Paul and Silas possessed them. They laid hold of them. They dragged them into the market-place before the rulers, and forthwith brought them xtnto the magistrates. That it was possession was evident. The spirit left her. That it was a demon and not divine power all could see; for, commanded in the name of Jesus Christ, it at once obeyed and left its victim. A Prosecution. By Roman law the religion of a country was not to be interfered with. Now Paul and Silas were preaching Christ. An accusation, therefore, an indictment, was ready to hand. We learn what it was. "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans" (20, 21). Virtuous, law-abiding people indeed! Worthy citizens of Philippi! In this character they now appeared. Now what had they cared about Roman law, or the preaching of Paul and Silas, so long as their pockets were not touched? But, their source of gain being dried up, they came out in this new guise. Satan can be transformed into an angel of light when it suits

his purposes. The magistrates evidently had no sympathy with the accused. The prosecutors probably knew that. And those sitting in the seat of justice would show themselves zealous for the law. The accusation thus brought, without delay and apparently without further parley, the garments of the accused were forthwith rent by the magistrates and the beating with rods commenced. Many stripes laid on them, they were sent to prison, and the jailor was charged to keep them safely. A Night in Prison. Vengeance had been exacted. The majesty of the law had been upheld. The prison population was increased by two. Night then settled on the scene, and all was quiet, we may suppose, in the streets and in the market-place of Philippi. The jailor, to carry out his instructions, cast his two prisoners into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. He could then, like his superiors, the magistrates, retire to rest with an easy mind. His new prisoners, he was assured, when so confined, could not possibly escape during the hours of darkness. So he fell asleep. But two in that prison did not sleep. What kept them awake? Were they brooding over the gross injustice of which they had been the victims? Were the wounds caused by the scourging so painful that sleep was banished from their eyelids ? They did not sleep for their hearts were full, and they gave vent to their feelings in a manner never before, we may be sure, known within those walls. Many, doutlbess, had been the curses uttered there by prisoners, impotent to do more than curse, or to breathe out imprecations on those who had imprisoned them. Bub with Paul and Silas how different! For "at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God." Prayer might seem not out of season; but praises who would have expected? And evidently these latter were no feeble attempts to encourage each other, or to put a bold face on their misfortunes. For the prisoners heard them. Those, whose feet were fast in the stocks, and so unable to move, or perhaps even to shift their position, were the freest in spirit that night. Praises or hymns to God were heard by the other occupants of the jail, coming forth from those two in the inner prison. If nothing else prevented the other prisoners sleeping, the prayers uttered and the .hymns sung by Paul and Silas must have done that, who with their wounds undressed, and painfully conscious of the treatment they had received, showed their spirits remained undaunted, and their hearts full of praise. The Jailor. What would come out of it? Why were they allowed to be thus ignominiously and unjustly treated? Had the Lord deserted them ? The secret of it all is to be disclosed. The jailor was one of those given by the Father to the Son before the foundation of the world, and ere sunrise the next morning he was to profess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So at midnight God began to work. The place was shaken by an earthquake, all the prison doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. The jailor, suddenly awaking out of sleep, saw the doors open and feared that all his prisoners had escaped. He therefore drew his sword, not to smite a prisoner, but to kill himself. But again a voice is heard, clear and loud, from the inner prison. This time it is addressed to the prison keeper, and in the hearing of all: "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here" (ver. 28). That hard-hearted man’s preserver was one of the two to whom he had shown no sympathy, and therefore deserved none at their hands.

Changed Circumstances. Calling for a light, springing into the inner prison, and trembling for fear, he is seen, where previously he had never thought of being, at the feet of Paul and Silas, whom he now brought out. Was it pity only that now took possession of him, or remorse for his treatment of them? There was more than that. Conscience-work had begun in his soul. He was now thoroughly aroused. He was sensible of a want, the urgency of which would brook no delay, nor permit him to conceal it. All might hear of it. In agony of soul, for the first time in earnest about his salvation, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" A moment of interest and joy to Paul and Silas. Nor to

them only. Was there not joy in heaven as these words were uttered by the jailor on earth 1 (Luke 15:7; Luke 15:10). Were the words of that possessed woman really true? Had she correctly described the vocation of those at whose feet he had fallen? He knew, if no one else in the prison did, that they were blessedly true. So, in deep anxiety, to them he turned, and inquired the way of salvation. His question put was at once answered. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (ver. 31). We quote the Revised Version, and give the better reading. Like the multitude in John 6:1-71 : who asked, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" - to whom the answer came, "This is the .work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:28-29); so to his urgent question caine the direct and simple answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." The jailor naturally was thinking of himself - What must I do? The answer intimated that God was willing to save him and all under his roof.

How real and important, aye and personal, a matter does salvation appear, when the conscience is aroused. No fine phrases, no vague generalities, will satisfy the person then. The one, the all-absorbing question is, "What must I do to be saved?" The thought expressed in that question implies, of course, ignorance of the way of salvation. But how completely does the answer set the soul right in this matter, as it directs it away from itself to another: "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Why believe on Him? Because all has been done, all has been suffered by Him, that had to be done and suffered for salvation to be within our reach. Our sins have been borne by Him, and propitiation has been made by His blood. How perfect then and all-sufficient must be His atoning sacrifice, that to a heathen, to an idolater who had never till that moment bestowed one thought on his soul, salvation was then and there for him, and for every member of his house if they believed on the Lord Jesus. Paul and Silas did not, however, stop there "for they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house" (ver. 32). Following in this the better reading "with" for "and to," it would appear that all his household were present with him. The message, the salvation, was for them all. Inside the prison, then, Paul and Silas repeated the offence for which they had been thrown into it. Would the jailor inform against them? would he denounce them? How could he? how should he? They had kept him from self-destruction, they had ministered the way of present salvation to that man and to his household.

Conversion. These prisoners had shown of what spirit they were. They sang praises with their feet in the stocks. They had preserved the jailor, who had shown them no kindness, but the contrary, from the guilt of suicide. They set before him the grace and the freeness of salvation. Now we learn how grace wrought in him. He displayed fruits of the Divine nature. He showed that he was converted. Consideration for them was first manifested. He took them that same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. He confessed the Lord, was ranked as His disciple, in common with his household. For all of them were straightway baptised. He set meat before Paul and Silas, who doubtless were in need of it. Thought, love, concern for these two he displayed, - fruit, surely, of that Divine nature of which he had just become a partaker ; and now, his heart full, he rejoiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God. Well, how well could he now understand those two singing hymns to God at midnight, since he and they were partakers of the same grace and shared in the same joy. The Morrow. What a night had that been for those inside the prison! Morning came, and with it the lictors, the officers of the magistrates, who had inflicted the punishment the previous day. They came with a command from their superiors to let the prisoners

go. In zeal for the law those magistrates had inflicted corporal punishment and imprisonment. Now they were to learn that they were the law-breakers, having beaten uncondemned two who had the right of Roman citizenship. Jealously was that right guarded by the Romans, and to act in contravention of it was no light matter for the offender. The magistrates had thereby laid themselves open to prosecution. At the mercy therefore of their victims, they now cringed before them, and, as Paul had insisted, carne themselves in person, brought them out of the prison, and asked them to leave the city. This, after entering Lydia's house, seeing the brethren, and comforting them, they prepared to do. A night memorable for all concerned it had indeed been. Did Lydia and those with her think that a blow had been struck at them all by the arrest, ill-treatment, and imprisonment of Paul and Silas? Very likely there was sadness in her house that livelong night. Well could she now understand that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalms 30:5), as Paul and Silas recrossed her threshold, and announced the addition of another household to the newly formed Christian community. Divine guidance, all must have felt, had been again displayed. What seemed so detrimental to the cause had really furthered it. Completely was the enemy again outwitted. He sought to stop the work by the arrest and imprisonment of the evangelists. That only furthered it, and increased the number of the disciples.

Thessalonica. From the capital of Macedonia Prirna, they went to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia Secunda, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and along the great Roman road, the Via Egnatia. The distance to be travelled was about one hundred Roman miles. There - what in Philippi was not - was a synagogue of the Jews. At Philippi we read not of Jews stirring up the multitude, such as Paul had experienced in Asia Minor. At Thessalonica, however, the Jews were again prominent, and foremost in the uproar. Leaving Luke at Philippi, Paul and Silas began work at Thessalonica, and first with the Jews. "For three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening," we are told, "and alleging, that the Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ" (Acts 17:2-3). His heart's desire, and prayer for Israel, was that they might be saved (Romans 10:1). In accordance with that he first laboured in the synagogue, and with great effect. "Some of the Jews were persuaded" (better here than "believed"), "and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks" (i.e., proselytes), "a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." The work was extensive, and souls were in earnest. Of this we have confirmatory evidence from the Apostle Paul himself, who, writing to the Thessalonians, could say, "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 2:13). So simple were they, so hearty, so real.

Opposition. Jealousy aroused, unbelieving Jews worked on the rabble ("vile fellows," as the Revised Version translates), to make an uproar. The Jews, who would not eat with such, had no compunction in calling in their aid to arrest, if possible, the movement. In this they to a certain extent succeeded, and sought for Paul and Silas in the house of Jason, but in vain. They could not find them. The Lord watched over His servants, and on this occasion sheltered them in some way not explained by the historian. The crowd however, intent on hostility to the Gospel, drew Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, there called politarchs, and accused Jason of harbouring Paul and Silas, and charged the others with him of disobeying the decrees of Caesar, saying "that there is another king, one Jesus." Paul and Silas, in their eyes, turned the world

upside down. What power their preaching must have had! Jason and others abetted them. The pestilential teaching must be stopped. It was even a menace to the authority and claims of Caesar. How loyal to the Imperial dynasty could Jews become! At home, desirous to shake off the Roman yoke ; abroad, when it suited their purpose, playing the role of doughty champions of it. These accusations, put forward, troubled the multitude and the rulers. The politarchs could not ignore them. But, more guarded in their conduct than those at Philippi, they took security of Jason and the others, and let them go. With this terminated the Apostle Paul's labours at that time at Thessalonica; for the brethren - what love was this! Fearing evidently the mob, who were ready to wreak their vengeance on Paul and Silas, sent them away by night to Berea. How grace ministered attracts those who receive it, and calls forth the exhibition of Divine nature - love from those who have been blessed.

What length of stay Paul had made there it is difficult precisely to fix, but it must have been some little time. The first three Sabbath days were spent in the synagogue ; after which they must have worked elsewhere, for we learn from the Epistle to the Philippians that the saints in that city sent once and again to minister to Paul's necessity when at Thessalonica. And since the distance between these cities was ons hundred Roman miles, communication in those days must have taken time, and weeks must have passed, most likely, between the first and the second remittance. Luke had been left at Philippi, and remained there, as the change of pronoun from the first person plural to the third now plainly indicates. We can understand then the readiness of the Philippian saints so early in their Christian career to minister to the Apostle's need. Luke's continued presence at Philippi would explain, too, the repetition of that service (Php 4:16), and how it came about that the Philippian assembly was thus specially distinguished.

Further, in support of the opinion that the Apostle's stay was not limited to three weeks, we may mention, as we learn it from the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, that the report of their conversion had sounded forth throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:8), and the saints had been instructed by Paul in person in Christian teaching, and notably in that of the Lord's coming (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 • 2 Thessalonians 2:5), though needing more, which the Apostle by his first letter supplied (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). Then, too, we are told how Paul's heart had been drawn out towards them (1 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:11), even as a nurse cherisheth her children, and as a father cares for the behaviour of his family. Moreover he had maintained himself, while there, by working at his trade of tent-making (1 Thessalonians 2:9). In addition to all this, we would remind the reader of those ties he formed, ties of which Paul's earnest desire to revisit them are evidences (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 3:10). All these facts point to a stay in that city of some little duration, though suddenly cut short by the violence of the mob stirred up by the Jews. And much fruit had resulted. The work had been successful in a remarkable manner. The word had wrought effectively in many, and already (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) there had been raised up some who voluntarily cared for the saints, labouring among them, and who were over them in the Lord. A needful service this was, and one which the unruliness of some (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15) would cause to be increasingly valued. All this intimates that the visit there was of some length. But much as Paul might have liked to prolong it, other fields of labour had to be occupied, which the enemy, by driving them away from Thessalonica, set them free to enter upon.

Berea. "Ever onward" was the great Apostle's motto. So, carrying out the Lord's instructions, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye unto another" (Matthew 10:23), Paul and Silas departed to Berea, now Verria, or Kara Verria. This was situated in another division of Macedonia - Macedonia Tertia - and so under different jurisdiction. Nothing daunted by past experiences, they sought out the Jews in that city, by entering into the synagogue. Here they had a more favourable reception from the frequenters of the synagogue, who, not indeed ready to receive the Word just on the authority of two strange men, searched the Scriptures daily, and proved that the new teaching was correct. Jealousy and clamour had been displayed at Thessalonica; a readiness to weigh matters, and fairness in listening, characterised those in Berea. "They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The result we read : many of them believed. A great number, too, of Greek women of honourable estate, and of men not a few. Was Berea to be a second Derbe, where they could labour in peace? Or, would it resemble more what had been experienced at Iconium and Lystra, to which places, as we have seen, Jews went from a distance to stir up opposition. Alas, it was to be like these two latter ; for Jews from Thessalonica went to Berea, about fifty miles distant, having heard that the Word of God was being preached there by Paul. What persistent hostility to God and to His grace! Allowed to stir up opposition and to trouble the people, the brethren in Berea, so recently converted as they all were, cared for Paul, and sent him away as far as the sea, and some even conducted him to Athens. What malice actuated those Jews! They would not receive the truth, and, if possible, would hinder anybody else from enjoying it. Children of the devil were thus manifested (John 8:41-44 ; 1 John 3:10). Is this an uncharitable statement? Scripture so characterises persistent opponents of the faith (Acts 13:10). Let us look at things in their true light.

"As far as to the sea" they went. So we should read according to the oldest uncials, and not "as if to the sea," which might be held to have been but a blind to put pursuers off the scent. At what point they embarked for Athens is not stated. A road from Berea eastward toward the sea lay through Pydna, where it turned southward, then through Anamum and Hatera to Dium, where it has been suggested that they took ship for Athens. There was also another road to Dium according to the Antonine itinerary. As Luke, however, has not traced the route we cannot definitely fix the road to Dium, nor settle on that port as the place of embarkation. We can, however, pause to admire the devotedness of those brethren who escorted Paul, and did not leave him until he reached Athens. The sea voyage to Athens would occupy a little time, say from three to six days, according as the vessel went continuously, or stopped the nights by the way. So we may compute the journey from Berea to Athens and back to have necessitated an absence from home of these brethren of between two and three weeks. But sure we are neither the time, the expense, nor the fatigue was grudged in caring for, and cheering, and helping on his way one who had ministered such blessings to their souls, and, it may be, whose weakness of sight made him more dependent on others. Brotherly love was active in them. They were manifestly children of God. Paul must for a time be at Athens alone ; Silas and Timotheus abode at Berea still.

Chapter 57

04.20. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED IN ACHAIA.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED IN ACHAIA.

CHAPS, 17: 15—XVIII. 22.

INTO three of the four divisions into which Macedonia was at this time divided, Paul, Silas, and Timothy had penetrated ; Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea had each in turn been blessed with the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. And as persecution arose in one place they moved on, and could do it the more readily, because the above-mentioned towns were situated in different divisions, and so under different governments, though all were subject to one central proconsular jurisdiction, the head-quarters of which for the whole of Macedonia was fixed at Thessalonica. Of three Roman proconsular provinces in these parts we have mention made in the New Testament, viz., Macedonia, Achaia, and Illyricum or Illyria. Of work in the first we have read. To apostolic labours in Achaia Luke by his history will now introduce us. Of work in Illyricum we have no specific record beyond the brief notice in Romans 15:19. But what a labourer was Paul! How true was it he did not seek to build on another man’s foundation, but carried out as far as in him lay the words of Scripture, "To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see : and they that have not heard shall understand " (Romans 15:20-21). "I laboured more abundantly than they all;" he had previously thus written of himself to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:10). No Apostle was more active or made longer journeys than he did. Of the band of four who had crossed from Troas to Neapolis, Luke had been left at Philippi and Timothy had remained for a time at Thessalonica, when Paul and Silas left it by night for Berea. Now Silas and Timothy, who had rejoined him, were left for a little at Berea, and Paul went forth alone to break new ground. The Thessalonian saints had sent Paul and Silas away, thus caring for their safety. The Bereans did the same for Paul, against whom the fury of the mob in the city was really directed. But some of them, as we see, went with him all the way to Athens, manifesting in this marked way their true Christian love.

Athens. - To the centre of Greek intellectual culture the Apostle had now come. There philosophers congregated. In that city had been seen, each in their day, great philosophers, poets, orators, and statesmen of the old world. ’Tis true the golden age of Athens had passed, but philosophy was still cultivated. Epicureans and Stoics frequented the city, and came across the Apostle. He in their midst, the one champion of Christian teaching, the preacher of Divine grace, the leveller of all mere human pretensions, and the lifter up of the Crucified One as the only hope, refuge, and saviour for men, - he now perambulated the city, bereft of any Christian companions, entirely alone. What occupied his thoughts? What concerned him? Luke answers in part these questions. The Apostle himself supplies further information. His spirit was stirred, or provoked within him, as he saw that city given up to idolatry, or rather full of idols. The exercise of the human intellect, great as it had been in the past, had not lifted the people out of the folly, to say no more, of worshipping stocks and stones.

Looking round, he would see everywhere traces of man's degradation. In the city which could boast of a long roll of names renowned in the heathen world the true God was by most unknown. Could the Gospel win trophies there? The task might well appal a stout heart; and the consideration of it might naturally preoccupy any one who surveyed it. As yet Paul was alone, for the message sent by the Beraean brethren for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him * with all speed, had not, we may believe, had time to be delivered and acted upon. Other thoughts, however, had a place in his mind. He remembered the Thessalonian saints, so brightly and so recently converted. He thought of them. Very likely many there had known a comparatively smooth path till the Gospel reached them. How changed were their circumstances! Fierce persecution assailed them. They were in a position to them very new, though one with which Paul had been made familiar. He knew well how difficult it would be, nay, how impossible, unless sustained by Divine grace, for them to stand their ground. So he ardently desired news of their welfare. How could he get it ? One way there was, and only one, viz., to send Timothy back there when he should have rejoined Paul. And much as he would have valued the presence and countenance of that young disciple, he was willing to be left in Athens alone, that Timothy might revisit Thessalonica, there confirm the faith of the suffering saints, and then rejoin Paul with word of their welfare. But this could not be done in a day or in a week. Paul therefore thought it good, he writes, to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). What love in Paul's heart! What earnest desire for their welfare! What he had been, when there, like a nurse and like a father (1 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:11), that he was still. With feelings thus mixed, on the one hand stirred within him at the idolatry rife around, on the other earnestly solicitous for steadfastness in the Thessalonians, he began to work alone, and held intercourse with people in the public place of resort, the market-place, speaking with any that met with him. He had a word for any and every one, whether Jew or Greek; a gospel, glad tidings indeed, for all who would receive it; even salvation through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. On the Areopagus. With Jews and devout persons, 1:e., proselytes, he discoursed in the synagogue. With others he spoke in the market-place. And now of an address given on the Areopagus at the request of certain philosophers we are to be pretty fully informed. Epicureans and Stoics who had met with him desired to hear more particularly what he had to say. The market-place probably could not afford that quiet to listen to him which his questioners desired. Evidently he had something to communicate, something strange, something new. It was tine latest importation into Athens. What was it? What the value of it? What the purport of it? Ready certainly Paul had shown himself to converse with his neighbours, and anxious evidently to impart to them something which so deeply interested him. What was it all about? A babbler some thought him. A setter forth of strange gods others described him. He should speak for himself and expound his doctrine, that philosophers, men of cultivated minds, and men of intellect might sit in judgment on it, and decide on its worth or worthlessness. This doubtless the philosophers purposed. So to the Areopagus they took him, and there heard what must have been new, and of vital importance to every one of them.

Never before had a Christian such an audience, and such an opportunity. He was to speak on that hill where the supreme court of Athens held its sittings. He was to speak to a company composed of philosophers of the heathen world. He had a subject on which he could speak, and a text which he could urge with great weight. His subject was the inscription he had seen on an altar, viz., "To an unknown God"; his text was a quotation from Aratus, a Cilician poet, but found also, though not quite in the same words, in a hymn to Jupiter by Cleanthes,* who, born at Assos in B.C. 300, died

about B.C. 220.

* Cleanthes, though the author of some fifty works, produced very little that was original.

"An Unknown God," This the Athenians admitted, and thereby confessed that, with all their philosophy and intellectual studies, there was One of whom they were ignorant - this Unknown God.** To make Him known could be no crime, nor an idle occupation. Paul then would make Him known. He is the God of creation, all around and above being His handiwork. In temples made with hands therefore He does not dwell, nor has He need of anything at the hands of His creatures, seeing that He giveth to them life, and breath, and all things. Who He is, and what He gives, stated, next follows what He has done. He has made of one all nations upon the face of the earth, having also determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation. Then is stated what He desires, viz., that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Now this, which of his hearers would gainsay, for had not Aratus sung, as he now reminds the philosophers, "We are also His offspring"? An unknown God near them! True indeed are the words of Zophar the Naamathite, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7). The philosophers had not discovered Him, the Athenians were ignorant about Him

** It is said that owing to some plague, the cause for which was unknown, but supposed to proceed from some god, that altar had been erected. Blood should be omitted. The subject thus opened out, Paul now preaches from his text. If we are the offspring of God, as the Athenians boasted, idol-worship must be wrong. The Deity could not be like an image of stone, or wood, or metal. If men are the offspring of God, God cannot be like a lifeless idol. Plain indeed was this deduction. No one could refute it. A death-blow it dealt to idolatry. In this way the Apostle worked that day. The premises granted, the conclusion was irresistible. But how skilful and powerful, because divinely led, did Paul show himself to be. The altar "To an Unknown God" furnished him with his subject, and he used it effectively. The Creator of all things, the Lord of earth and heaven, dwells not in temples of human workmanship, nor needs either help or sustenance from the creature. Then as regards objects of worship, the words of Aratus, confirmed by Cleanthes, and endorsed by Paul’s audience, showed the utter senselessness of bowing to stocks and stones as the likeness of God.

These points established, the altar and the poet pressed into his service, he went on to speak to the consciences of his hearers. God, whom he declared to them that day, had a message for each one of the audience. And Paul was there to deliver it. God, the to them Unknown God, was calling on men everywhere to repent. And this it was imperative on all men to obey, if they would escape His wrath, "seeing that He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead " (xvii. 22-31). The babbler, as some thought Paul, was the messenger of the God of heaven. The setter forth, as otkers viewed him, of strange gods, was commissioned to tell them about the Unknown God, whom they had for longVignorantly worshipped. Which of the philosophers, who had passed by that altar, ever expected to have a message directly concerning himself sent from that Unknown God ?

What language was heard that day on the Areopagus! What a contrast to that which had often been there listened to, and to that which generally took place! Sentences of death had commonly

been there pronounced, and at times not always in righteousness. Here was an announcement of coming judgment, which concerned all the audience, and judgment in righteousness too, which must issue in final condemnation, unless averted by repentance. Then the earnest pleader, so different from those who had stood there before him, was not pleading for his life, nor petitioning for a favourable sentence from his judges. He was there to plead with all his audience that they should flee from the wrath to come. Would any ask, with what result? As for the philosophers some mocked; others promised to hear him again. In these dispositions of mind he left them. He had given his message. He was clear of their blood. Nevertheless his visit to Athens was not without some fruit. For "certain men clave unto him, and believed, among the which was Dionysius an Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (xvii. 34). The interview with the philosophers on the Areopagus had not ended to the damage of Christianity. Some might scoff. But scoffing was not argument. Others might promise a further hearing. That showed their inability then and there to refute what had been advanced. But all of them, in a coming day, will acknowledge the importance of the Word.

Corinth. From Athens Paul proceeded to Corinth, the then capital of Achaia. He left what had been the great seat of learning to work in the centre of licentiousness; for if Athens was famed for its philosophers, etc., Corinth bore an unenviable reputation for immorality, in connection especially with the temple of Venus. Here he first met with Aquila and Priscilla, who had recently left Italy because that Claudius Csesar had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. This godly couple now became acquainted with Paul, and commenced a friendship which lasted for life. Their being of the same trade - tent-makers - may have first drawn them together. The friendship, however, now formed was enduring; and when Paul left Corinth, and touched, upon his way to Judea, at Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him thus far, and there remained for a time (1 Corinthians 16:19). Aquila being a native of Pontus, Asia Minor was his country. We never read of his presence in Judea. These two were zealous labourers in the Lord’s work. Apollos owed much to them, and Christians in towns where they resided were indebted to them for a place in which to meet to show the Lord’s death. Acts 18:26 tells us of the help they were to Apollos. 1 Corinthians 16:19, Romans 16:3-5 acquaint us with their service to Christians by an assembly meeting in their house, as well as their service to Paul in laying down their own necks for his life, a service to be thankfully remembered by all the assemblies of the Gentiles. To the last Paul had them in remembrance (2 Timothy 4:19). As at Athens, so at Corinth, as we have said, the Apostle had to commence the work alone. Activity indeed characterised him. So without either Silas or Timothy, he began to labour in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading both Jews and Greeks. Rejoined by these two, he was constrained, we read, by the word (not, as in the Authorised Version, ’’in spirit"), testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. The everlasting welfare of his countrymen he ardently desired. Definite results now, followed. The Jews opposed and rejected the Word. Paul, then, repudiating all further responsibility regarding them, shaking out his raiment, - an act illustrative of bis determination, - left them with the solemn words, "Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean : from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Leaving the synagogue, he taught in the house of one Titus (or, Titius) Justus, contiguous to it. This man was a proselyte, for he worshipped God, and doubtless was favourable to Christianity, so had the honour of providing a suitable meeting-room in which the Apostle could teach and preach. The Lord thus watched over the Gospel.

Progress. Despite the undisguised hostility of the Jews the work spread, and for a time they could take no public steps to prevent it. Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house. Many of the Corinthians, too, received the Word, and by baptism openly professed themselves to be disciples of Christ. The word told. Consciences were reached. Public profession was made. Now had we only Luke's account we should never have known what exercises of heart Paul at this time passed through. He evidently felt it was no light service to labour in Corinth; and the First Epistle to the Corinthians acquaints us with the spirit in which he began in that city. Does not this remind us of the mistake that may be made in jumping to conclusions on matters about which we have not full information ? Who would have thought, when reading of the victorious progress of the work at Corinth as given by Luke, - who, we say, would have supposed from that account, what exercises of heart the Apostle was passing through? On this his first visit he had determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). Natural gifts they valued - as excellency of speech and of wisdom. Of the first he was destitute. His speech was contemptible (or, of no account, 2 Corinthians 10:10). To the second he would not resort. "The Jews," he writes, "require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles" (not, Greeks) "foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). Enticing words of man's wisdom he set aside, desirous that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. True workman he was, and solid building was that which he vulued. And, knowing what they were naturally, he was with them in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). From the Acts who would have gathered all this? Again, so careful was he that his ministry should not be blamed, that save Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas he baptised none, lest any should say that he had baptised unto his own name (1 Corinthians 1:14). Nor would he take the smallest thing from them towards his support while labouring in their midst. From Macedonia he received help and needed help, but none from the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:9). The wants which his profits at tent-making could not meet, free-hearted contributions from the Macedonian saints supplied. Was this caprice on his part? No. For whilst working in this spirit the Lord's approval was communicated to His servant in a vision at night. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9). The servant was in his right place. He was the instrument whom the Lord would there use. The Shepherd knew where Paul was, the circumstances which surrounded him, and the encouragement which he needed, and provided this last. The Shepherd knew, too, the sheep that he had in that licentious city, given to Him of His Father. His eye was on them, and their everlasting welfare He would ensure. For that Paul had been guided to the city, and he should have the honour, the privilege, by his labours of making them manifest.

Chronology. At Corinth nobody did set on Paul to hurt him. His experiences at Lystra, Philippi, and Thessalonica were not at this time repeated. Opposition, however, was organised, and an appeal to the newly-arrived proconsul the Jews were determined to make. The new proconsul, we say, for Gallio had just come to take charge of the province of Achaia. Here, then, we get another note of time. We have seen that the famine predicted by Agabus, and the awful end of Herod Agrippa I., had thrown light on the period that had elapsed between the Crucifixion, Ascension, and Pentecost, and that visit of Paul and Barnabas with supplies from the brethren at Antioch to their brethren in Judaea. We can now estimate the length of time that elapsed between that visit and

the attempted prosecution of Paul at Corinth before the proconsul's tribunal. In the thirteenth year of the reign of Claudius Caesar, A.D. 53, Gallic arrived at Corinth as the new proconsul. In the fourth year of Claudius Caesar, Herod Agrippa died, A.D. 44. Nine years, then, had passed during which we have had recounted the first missionary journey, and the second so far as it conducts us to the Apostle at Corinth and the prosecution attempted there. But as he had been labouring in that city for eighteen months previously, we must fix Paul's arrival at Corinth at about the beginning of A.D. 52, at which time the edict banishing Jews from Rome was issued, which sent Aqiiila and Priscilla to Corinth. As little did Claudius know what he was doing by that decree for Paul and the Church of God, as did Augustus what he was doing for the fulfilment of the word of prophecy, when he issued his decree for that enrolment which took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ.

Gallio. To return. Marcus Annaeus Novatus having been adopted by Lucius Junius Gallio, was called Junius Aunfeus Gallio, and is the man of whom Lnke now writes. He was the brother of Seneca the philosopher. This most amiable man - if his brother Seneca rightly described him - and one of easy temper, now occupied the place of authority as proconsul. To him the Jews brought their complaint, expecting, doubtless, a willing ear. Their plot, however, completely failed. Gallio refused to take cognisance of their charges. Questions of Jewish law did not come within the sphere of his judicial powers. Any matter of wrong, or wicked villainy, he would, as he said, have listened to. Questions of their law, and disputes about words and names, he was not sent by the emperor to sit in judgment upon. So he drove them from the judgment-seat. Attempting further to compel him to listen for fear of a tumult being raised, the beating of Sosthenes being evidence of the strong feeling that had been aroused,* Gallio, a man of imperturbable temper, was proof against any such demonstration. He refused to interfere. He cared for none of those things.

* It is a question who beat Sosthenes, - the Greeks, as D, E, H, L, V, state, supported by the Syriac versions; or the Jews. The oldest MS., A, B, with the Codex Sinaiticus, suppgrted by the Vulgate, omit "the Greeks." With that omission accepted, the passage seems rather to refer to the Jews as those last named. Probably Sosthenes was inclined to Christianity already, or perhaps had declined to support the prosecution attempted by others, and hence the displeasure of his countrymen. Opinions on this matter are much divided.

Tactics. What efforts were made to stop the work! Unwearied was the enemy, and versatile were his attacks. On the first missionary journey tumults were raised at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, and at the last Paul's life was attempted by stoning. On the second tour different tactics were employed. Perhaps in Europe the way of hindering in Asia would not have succeeded. So the ruling powers were invoked at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, and legal processes were resorted to. At the first-named the charge preferred was one of having broken the Roman law by the unauthorised introduction of a new object of worship. At Thessalonica tho accusation assumed the form of treason against Caesar. The most turbulent people - the Jews - professed thus great concern for the Imperial honour and authority. What a farce! At Corinth new ground was chosen. Paul was a breaker of the Jewish law, teaching something contrary to the Mosaic law. But none of these attempts, based though they were on apparently legal grounds, were successful in stemming the movement. It went on in spite of each and all; and Gallio having refused to entertain the charge made by the Jews, Paul was at liberty to continue his labours, which he did for a time, and then departed in peace on his way to Jerusalem, accompanied, as far as Asia, by Aquila and

Priscilla. To Syria. Paul, we read, having tarried after this yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, having shorn his head at Cenchrea: for he had a vow (xviii. 18). To whom the last remark refers has been much questioned. We believe Luke referred to Paul. We know no reason why he should not have made a vow, ignorant as we are under what circumstances it was made; though Romans 16:1-2 may afford a little light on the matter, from the way the Apostle there writes of Phoebe, a deaconess of the assembly at Cenchrea, who carried subsequently the apostolic letter to Rome. "A succourer of many, and of myself also," he says. It may well have been that, overtaken with some illness, he had been indebted to the ministrations of Phoebe, and in gratitude to God for his recovery had made a vow. Putting Acts 18:18 and Romans 16:2 together, the latter suggests a possible explanation of the former. Reaching Ephesus, he left Aquila and Priscilla there, he himself entering into the synagogue and reasoning with the Jews. Allowed now of God to visit that city, his reception by his countrymen was encouraging, since they asked him to abide for a little time. Desirous, however, to visit Jerusalem, he consented not to their expressed wish, but promised to return to them if God permitted. The historian's real account of his answer is much shorter than that commonly ascribed to him, so we reproduce it, quoting the Revised Version :"And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; but taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you, if God will, he set sail from Ephesus" (Acts 18:20-21). Ending his voyage at Caesarea, he went up and saluted the Church, and went down to Antioch. Thus came to a conclusion his second great missionary journey. What an interesting tour it must have been. Not only in Asia Minor had he preached - breaking up, too, entirely new ground - but to Europe the work had extended, and in the capital cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth he had planted the standard of the cross. How true is the description he gives of himself a few years later, when writing to the Corinthians : "Thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing : to the one a savour from death unto death ; to the other a savour from life unto life" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). What a description of his apostolic service ! Truly the word was not spoken in vain.

Divine Guidance. We have headed this journey Divine guidance. This was a special feature of it. Human wisdom did not direct the Apostle. In traversing, as we have seen, Asia Minor, he had desired to enter the province of proconsular Asia, but the Holy Ghost forbade it. Seeking to turn aside north ward to Bithynia, the spirit of Jesus barred the way thither. Neither to the right hand nor to the left could they turn, so they journeyed on to Troas ; for it was God's purpose that in Europe, not in Asia, Paul and his company should at that time find their proper sphere of service. The plan of the work and the development of it were both of the Holy Ghost. And, when they had reached Troas, Paul understood the reason and the wisdom of his being diverted from his purpose. The time had arrived to carry the gospel into Greece, so a vision appeared of a Macedonian entreating Paul to help them. Reaching Philippi, there was work to be done in the prison. But for that Paul and Silas must be imprisoned. In a way surely never expected, the Lord worked in that capital of a district. Then at Corinth, the capital of Achaia, meeting at first with comparatively little success combined with determined Jewish resistance, was he in his right place? The Lord Jesus by the vision at night comforted him, and acquainted him with His purpose of grace toward souls in that licentious city. Thus again Divinely guided, the Apostles remained, and met with great success. Human wisdom, it was plain, had in all this no place. How needful then is Divine direction, and the

Holy Spirit's superintendence, when even an Apostle could be at fault as to the field of operation to be occupied.

Another feature in connection with this journey is the character of the only address during it of which Luke has given us an account - an address which he did not hear. For a purely evangelistic discourse by the great Apostle of the Gentiles we should turn to Acts 13:1-52 : For his manner of reasoning with ignorant heathen we should read his few words spoken on the spur of the moment at Lystra. At Athens and on the Areopagus how different is the tenor of his discourse! On this occasion he is more on his defence; but availing himself of the inscription on the altar that he had met with, he introduced to them the Unknown God, and demonstrated the insensate folly of the most intellectual of mankind. If the Greeks called themselves the "offspring of God," how could they worship stocks and stones as their gods? The boast of their poets Aratus and Cleanthes demonstrated the folly of their practice. If human wisdom could be at fault as regards the work of the Lord, it was indeed a blind guide to lead its possessors into the knowledge of God. The tenor then of this discourse is in perfect harmony with the special characteristic of this journey, and explains why it has been preserved in the pages of inspiration. Idolaters were being guided to see the folly of their ways, and to learn who was the God hitherto unknown to them. Evidently God was working, and the Holy Spirit, the Divine Person dwelling on earth, was directing. Peter had been led, contrary to his preconceived ideas, to enter the house of Cornelius, for the time had come for Gentiles to share in the blessing. And Paul had been led against his purpose to cross over into Europe, for the time had come for Greece to be evangelised. The time and the field for service are ordered by God. The Holy Ghost directed then, and directs still. Would that this were more remembered, and room given for Him to lead in the work.

Luke's Accuracy. An infallible guide there is in the Church of God, but not a human one. That should give confidence as to the carrying on of the work, despite the hindrances from the enemy and the failures of the servants. And now one would call attention, ere closing our remarks on this second journey, to the accuracy of the historian, as shown in the way he mentions the authorities in different cities. We have seen how accurate he was in describing Sergius Paulus as the proconsul of Cyprus (p. 187). He is equally accurate in terming the magistrates at Philippi preetors and their officers lictors (xvi. 20, 35). When writing of the authorities at Thessalonica, he terms them politarchs (xvii. 6). And later, as we shall see, speaking of certain authorities at Ephesus, he styles them Asiarchs (xix. 31). All these were the local authorities in the different cities, the Roman governor, or proconsul, being over them as ruling in each province. Luke then, by giving each its correct title in these different cities, shows that he knew well what he was about, and this mark of accuracy should increase confidence in him as a faithful historian. The Written Word increasing. That missionary journey so fruitful in blessing has an additional interest for us. It occasioned the first addition to the written revelation of God which bears the name of the Apostle Paul. He had evangelised, as we have seen at Thessalonica, and his heart, we learned from himself, was much bound up with the converts there. And when hindered from revisiting them as he had wished, and that more than once (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18), for Satan, in some way not explained, prevented it, he had sent Timothy to see after their welfare, whilst he himself remained alone at Athens. Hearing from Timothy on his return of their steadfastness in the faith, despite all their persecution, he dictated his first letter to them, which was shortly followed by the second. From this time the Apostle contributed, under the guidance of the Spirit, to enlarge the collection of New Testament

writings, then in its infancy, with Epistles bearing his name, addressed to local Churches, as those to the Thessalonians, or to several assemblies in a region, as that to the Galatians, as well as some addressed to individuals. Thirteen Epistles in all are generally ascribed to him, of which twelve bear his name. To this subject we shall refer again, only remarking here that Paul dictated rather than wrote the most of them. Writing with him, for some cause, whether from impaired eyesight or what, was a difficult matter (Galatians 6:11, Revised Version). Employing an amanuensis, he, however, authenticated each one, to prevent any mistake as to those which were his, by a salutation, - written, we suppose, always by himself. "The salutation of me Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18). Now this, whether in the shortest form, as in Hebrews 13:25, or in the longest (2 Corinthians 13:14) is found at the close of all Pauline Epistles, but in none other. And not till Paul had passed away for some years did any other New Testament writer adopt anything like it. Then John, in closing the Revelation (xxii. 21), used very similar language. A Characteristic. A great extent of country had now been evangelised, and flourishing assemblies had sprung up in towns and in districts. But where are they? How many cities in which Paul laboured are in ruins, or if not that, the work which had been carried on has died away! Antioch in Syria, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in Asia Minor; Philippi, Thessalonica, Beraea, Athens, and Corinth in Europe; in these had he preached, and fruits of his labours in all were found. What can we say of them now? Antioch in Syria still survives, but no Christian Church, it is said, exists within its walls. Antioch in Pisidia, with Lystra and Derbe, are in ruins. Iconium still remains, a town of some importance. Of the cities in Macedonia and Greece above mentioned Philippi is in ruins ; of Corinth its glory has departed ; Berea, Athens, Thessalonica still remain. Then too the city of special prominence in the Apostle’s third journey - Ephesus - is marked only by its ruins. A melancholy thought this gives us; yet, on the other hand, it is quite in keeping with the characteristic of the Christian Church, which is heavenly, and has not its permanent home on earth. In this it differs from Judaism. In the latter, one house - the Temple - and one altar are constituent elements connected with that worship, and both of them must be on earth. But we are to worship God in spirit and in truth, and should worship by the Spirit of God (John 4:24 ; Php 3:3). Cities therefore may fall into decay and ruin, and ecclesiastical buildings be destroyed, yet the Church of God abides, and true acceptable worship can be rendered independent of localities, or of material buildings. The Divine infallible Guide too, who was on earth in the Church at its beginning, is with her still (John 14:16). Human infallible guides were not in apostolic days, nor are there any such now. Only one infallible Guide, and that one Divine, there ever was since Pentecost, and He is here still. With Him, we have the Word of God as well, a guide in the confusion around, and the storehouse of instruction in the things of God. To this last let us cleave. And in proportion as the Holy Ghost’s presence is owned, and His guidance sought, light will be cast on the written Word, and rich blessing will result.

Chapter 58

04.21. THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—DIVINE POWER.

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—DIVINE POWER.

ACTS xvni. 23—xix. 41.

"IN labours more abundant, in prisons more frequent, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft" (2 Corinthians 11:23). Such is part of the description the Apostle gave to the Corinthians, when on this third missionary journey, of his activity in service up to the date of that Epistle, as well as of his sufferings for Christ's sake. Never resting satisfied with his labours, he knew no lengthened cessation from toil till his imprisonment by the Roman authorities. Then, after reaching Rome, journeying with him ceased, but to be entered on again as soon as he was released (Hebrews 13:23). His labours, we may say, only terminated with his death. A Fresh Start. He had reached Antioch for the fourth, and, as it turned out, the last time before his long imprisonment. Remaining there some time, he moved forward again, and went over Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples (Acts 18:23). On the first occasion of his labours in those parts he visited Phrygia before Galatia (xvi. 6). On this he reversed his movements, going through Galatia before Phrygia, apparently shaping his course for Ephesus, which he had promised to visit (xviii. 21). But having evangelised in both these provinces on his previous journey, he was desirous of first revisiting those scenes of labour, and of strengthening all the disciples. So he went through them in order. As yet the Galatians had not been led away by Judaising teachers, though soon after he left them this time that trouble must have developed, which called forth his earnest appeal in the circular Epistle to the Churches of that province.

Ministry to Saints. As yet, however, strengthening the disciples was the ministry needed. Details of this, and of this part of his journey, are wanting. One thing, however, is abundantly clear. We have remarked on it previously (p. 212). The Apostle was not content with having evangelised a country or a town, and of having been the means of numerous conversions. Building up and strengthening was required. He would devote himself also to that, for Paul was a teacher as well as an evangelist. Turning attention now for a moment to Luke, lack of detail in ministry at this time is quite in keeping with that historian's practice. For when Paul and Barnabas, on a previous journey, entered on the service of building up the saints at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, the historian, whilst just mentioning it, to intimate the character of their ministry, gives us no details about it. Are we, then, left in the dark on this matter? By no means. The Pauline Epistles supply information as to apostolic teaching. So with some, if not most of them, in existence before the Acts was written, there was the less need for Luke to enter on this subject. Of these Epistles six certainly were in existence, for they were written before the Apostle's first imprisonment. And it may be that four more were in circulation before the Acts saw the light; though of this we cannot be confident. The six referred to are the two to the Thessalonians, the two to the Corinthians, that to the Galatians, and the one to the Romans. How Paul could comfort saints in trial, and in the prospect of the rapture, and of the Lord's subsequent personal coming to earth, when the day of the Lord will begin, the two first-named teach us. Then of his manner of correcting abuses and mistakes in

doctrine, coupled with a tenderness of heart for saints amongst whom he had worked, the two to the Corinthians are good examples. Further, his uncompromising opposition to Judaising teaching, which sought to put converts from the Gentiles under the law, is set forth in the Epistle to the Galatians. Whilst,. for a systematic unfolding of the Gospel, as needed by Christians, the Epistle to the Romans stands out as second to none. All these written before his imprisonment, there came from his prison at Rome four more, especially ministering Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians treats of God's counsels in connection with Him, so Church teaching markedly appears in it; whilst that to the Colossians, its complement, treats of the fulness that there is in the Head, even Christ, above and beyond whom there is nothing, and can be nothing, for the saint. Heathen philosophy cannot vie with this, for the height to which it can take believers (Colossians 2:8-10); Jewish teaching cannot equal it (Colossians 2:16-17). Riches of grace we read of in Ephesians; of the fulness that there is in Christ in Colossians Then Philippians ministers Christ for the walk here: who is the example (Phil, ii) the object (iii), and the One to rejoice in (iv). And that to the Hebrews treats of His person, divine and human (i, ii); shows, too, how He surpasses Moses and Aaron, and tells of His present service as High Priest - God's provision for Christians in the wilderness, - as well as of His service as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, in making propitiation for the sins of the people. The former service is being carried on; the latter is finished; and in token of that He has sat down on the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12).

Apollos. A new worker now appears on the scene, another Hellenistic Jew - Apollos, or Apollonius, a native of Alexandria, who at this time visited Ephesus. A learned or eloquent man as he is described, he was also mighty in the Scriptures. With power of expression, and with plenty to say in connection with the written Word, he soon made all in the synagogue conscious that he was no ordinary teacher, nor one who would take a backward place. "Instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of Jesus (as we should read here), knowing only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25). He taught what he knew, but in full Christian teaching he was as yet deficient. "The things of Jesus" betrays that - "knowing only the baptism of John" confirms it. In the synagogue he spake boldly. Mighty in the Scriptures, eloquent in speech, fervent in spirit, a diligent labourer, what a valuable helper he might become! Priscilla and Aquila perceived this as they heard him, and seeking him out, took him home and there expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Priscilla and Aquila, we have said, following here the better reading. Very probably the wife was more apt at imparting knowledge than her husband. In the privacy of home those two could thus serve, communicating truth once unknown to themselves, but which they had surely learnt from intercourse with Paul. So, though Paul and Apollos had not yet met, nor did for some time, Aquila and his wife, having profited from their intercourse with Paul at Corinth, were able to help Apollos, which they did. What links are there in different chains! Apollos was to become a most useful helper in the Lord's work. For that, however, he needed teaching. Drawn to Ephesus, he met with those who could instruct him. And these had been driven out from Rome, and drawn to Corinth, that in the providence of God they might first meet with the great Apostle and learn for themselves. Instructed in Christian truth, and always ready to help as they could, the appearance of Apollos in the synagogue at Ephesus pointed out fresh service ready to their hand. They responded to the call, and taught him as probably none others then in Ephesus could have done ; so that he, so highly gifted in grasping truth and in expressing himself, could become a most valuable worker amongst the saints. A worker amongst the saints we have called him, who was also a bold champion of the faith, for in that service he

evidently shone at Corinth (Acts 18:27). To Corinth Apollos went with a letter of commendation from the brethren at Ephesus. As at the capital of proconsular Asia, so in that of Achaia, he laboured amongst his countrymen, mightily convincing " the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." A new instrument to further the work of God had then appeared in that city. His manner of working was quite in harmony with that of the Apostle. To the Scriptures he turned - to them he appealed; and his countrymen, however unwilling to yield, must have felt that the weapon he used with such effect was that revelation, on the possession of which they were so ready to pride themselves. "A guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes" (Romans 2:19-20), it was thus they regarded themselves, as having, what others had not, a Divine revelation. Now, from the storehouse of that written word Apollos drew the weapons with which he refuted the Jews, and left them without an answer. But another circle of interest there was, and he did not neglect that in his zeal to refute his countrymen. Brethren there were, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. These he helped much (Acts 18:27). And Paul, writing afterwards to the Corinthians, reminded them of that eloquent and earnest man’s ministry, saying, "I have planted, Apollos watered" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Leaving Greece he and Paul met for the first time at Ephesus, and then became personally acquainted. Personal intercourse with the former did not diminish the value that Paul had formed of that servant of Christ; and he showed that, when he wished Apollos to return to Corinth to help them in their then unsatisfactory condition. For Apollos, though most eloquent, and doubtless very attractive as a speaker, had not sought, and did not seek, to gather round himself, or to lessen the affection and value saints at Corinth had for Paul. The Apostle had full confidence in the purity of his aim and motives. Apollos, unwilling to go then, declined the service, hoping, however, to revisit them later. The servant of Christ, he was the servant of no man on earth ; and not even apostolic authority or direction could make him go against his judgment. A lesson this for the Church of God. An apostolic see, or a Vicar of Christ ordering in the fields of service was then unrecognised and unknown. For Paul acquiesced in the refusal of Apollos, and did not press it (1 Corinthians 16:12). At a later date, after Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome and release from it, we read of Apollos once more, evidently still labouring and still enjoying the confidence of the Apostle (Titus 3:13). A faithful servant of Christ, but subject to no man on earth as to his work for God and for Christ, is the picture presented of him.

We have been introduced by Luke to the chief labourers in the Word noticed in the Acts - viz., Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul, James, Timothy, Titus, and now Apollos. Stephen, of course, had long left this scene ere Apollos appeared on its stage. The rest, however, were still alive, and continued to work, though the historian no more concerns himself with the labours of several of them. And now Aijuila and Priscilla were called to fresh service, since by the arrival of Paul at Ephesus a large increase of die assembly took place. Here, apparently, that useful service on their part began of opening their house for Christians to meet in assembly. Of the Church in their house mention is first made in 1 Corinthians 16:19. And afterwards in different places, as we have already remarked, this couple provided under their roof a meeting-place for Christians. But still greater service would they be permitted to perform, even laying down their necks for Paul’s life (Romans 16:3).

Ephesus. But we must not anticipate. Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus. Now, by the upper coasts, or country, we are to understand an inland route in contrast to

a coast route, the coast being naturally viewed as on a lower level than the inland country. In harmony with this, some, and good authorities too, would read that he came down to Ephesus, for the city was situated on the river Cayster, a few miles from its mouth. It had a port, though already it was getting choked up with alluvial deposit. This was connected by a short canal with the river. And so Ephesus had become a great centre of commerce, nor had it as yet ceased to be a commercial centre for that part of Asia Minor. Moreover, it was the capital of Proconsular Asia, and the residence of the Proconsul. Its great fame, however, was occasioned by the temple of Diana, renowned throughout the ancient world. A centre of trade, the seat of government, and a stronghold of idolatry - all this made it a place of no secondary importance. Would the gospel triumph here as it had done elsewhere? In the metropolis of Judaism it had flourished, so that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. In the seat of intellectual learning, where philosophers abounded, it had been preached, and converts had been gained. In Corinth, noted for licentiousness, much people had given evidence of the power of the truth, and were ranked amongst the company of Christians. Now, under the shadow of that temple of Diana, famed for its magnificence, and one of the wonders of the world, and in the city specially devoted to her worship, would the Gospel hold its own, and manifest there also its power to draw hearts to God and to His Son? Little, perhaps, had been done in aggressive work as yet, beyond the preaching in the synagogue. By Paul’s labours the work would be enlarged, and the power of the truth be more widely exemplified. An Important Question. The Apostle’s first act, on this visit to Ephesus, placed on record by Luke, was the asking certain disciples he now met with, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" or, as the Revised Version renders it, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2). They were believers already, so he did not question them about the new birth, nor did he challenge the reality of a Divine work in their souls. He asked about their receiving the Holy Ghost subsequent to believing. His question was in perfect keeping with his teaching in the Epistle to the Ephesiaus: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (i. 13). Now, both the question asked, and the statement just quoted, draw attention to the receiving of the Holy Ghost after one has believed. It is therefore a blessing, a gift, consequent on believing - as the Apostle calls it, "the gospel of our salvation." Receiving the Spirit is, then, it is clear, something different from and subsequent to being born of the Spirit. In this both Peter and John concur. In the Gospel of the latter, where we first meet with this truth of the gift of the Spirit, we read, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed (so John wrote) on Him should receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). This gift could only come consequent on the Lord’s ascension. Peter endorses this teaching as he states, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him " (Acts 5:32). And Paid can again be cited as a witness, since he wrote, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father" (Galatians 4:6). The conclusion to be drawn from these Scriptures is irresistible. The gift of the Spirit is a perfectly distinct blessing from the new birth, and is bestowed on those who have believed already the gospel of their salvation, and who are already sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The importance of understanding this must be our excuse for again asserting it.

Now these men, in all about twelve, had not shared in that gift, though born of God, being, like. Apollos before he met with Aquila and Priscilla, acquainted only with the baptism of John. An abnormal state this was, but certainly not unique, when we think of saints in these days. The men

questioned by Paul answer him at once, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," or rather, "whether the Holy Ghost is" (i,e. had come). Of the existence of the Holy Ghost, of course, they were aware. John the Baptist taught that, and had seen the Spirit, like a dove, descend on the Lord Jesus, at His baptism in Judea. But the Baptist foretold that the Lord would baptise with the Holy Ghost - a future blessing then. Now, these disciples had not heard of that having taken place. So they answered as above; for their words, "whether the Holy Ghost is," are what may be called a technical form for describing His presence on earth. The contrast to this would be " is not." Of this last we have examples in the Old Testament: "Enoch was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). So Jacob in his sorrow said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not" (Genesis 42:36). Their existence was not doubted, but of their continued presence on earth Jacob had no hope. He viewed them as dead. So the reply of these men meant, that of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost on earth in person they were wholly unaware. They had not known what it was to receive the gift of the Spirit.

Now, their answer was in perfect character with the teaching of the Gospel of John in the passage already cited. Till the Lord was glorified the Holy Ghost would not come, nor be given as a gift to saints (John 16:7). And these disciples, knowing only the baptism of John, could not have known about the Lord’s death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. They were not yet sealed. Are there not many believer’s who could not say that they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed nor how that gift can normally be received ? That little company, instructed now by Paul, were subsequently baptised, and by the laying on of his hands they received the Holy Ghost. God in this attested the apostleship of Paul, showing that he was not inferior to any Apostle ; for what Peter and John did at Samaria, Paul did at Ephesus - confer by imposition of his hands the gift of the Holy Ghost. And these men, like many Christians in their day, as those at Pentecost and those at Caesarea, spake with tongues, an evidence of the gift conferred on them. For further remarks on receiving the Spirit we refer the reader to Outline of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans,* pp. 47, 87-89.

Ministry at Ephesus. An Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ was in the city which prided itself on being the temple-keeper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter. He had proved he was an Apostle, for he had by imposition of his hands conferred the Holy Ghost. Moreover, he was a teacher, and no ordinary one, being able to meet in discussion both Jews and Greeks (Actsxix. 8-10), and whom no one had yet vanquished in fair argument. In addition, he could work miracles, real ones, about which there was no deception, and in the displays of which there was no collusion. For three years his ministry was carried on in the city (xx. 31). Into few verses, however, is all this compressed (xix. 8-22). Yet, in a way very orderly, is it presented to the reader. For first we learn of his ministry in the Word, then of the display of miraculous power, after which consequences following from both are recounted (13-20). As to ministry in the Word, Paul, as his custom was, first presented the truth to his countrymen in the synagogue. There he spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing (or reasoning), and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. For all this the Jews there must have been somewhat prepared by the previous labours of Apollos, though doubtless the Aportle enlarged the scope of teaching, as he reasoned and persuaded in a fulness, probably, that Apollos had not. Not, be it observed, that he preached the gospel of the kingdom : that would have been dispensationally out of place. The Lord preached that. It, however, fell into abeyance on His death,

to be revived in a coming day (Matthew 24:14 ; Revelation 14:6-7). But Paul reasoned about the kingdom of God, for that now exists on earth.

* Published by E. Marlborough & Co., London.

How did the frequenters of the synagogue treat the Apostle’s ministry? Many doubtless received it. Some, on the other hand, were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the multitude. Discerning, as at Corinth, the temper of these, he left that field of labour, and separating the disciples, reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus.* The opposition in the synagogue really then furthered the work - Gentiles doubtless would more readily attend in the school than in the synagogue; and Jews, if desirous to learn, could equally well listen to one of their nation teaching in that place. For about two years this went on ; iso that, as the historian tells us, "all they which dwelt in Asia (i.e. proconsular Asia) heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks"(Acts 19:10). Miracles. - And divine attestation of the Apostle was specially and plentifully accorded. All might see, who were willing to see, how Paul was owned as a servant of the God of heaven. A vessel to convey the knowledge of grace he certainly was; a vessel in which divine power was displayed he as surely was. For "God," we read, "wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out" (11, 12). Never before had such miracles been wrought in Ephesus, or indeed surpassed elsewhere. The Lord’s words, "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father" (John 14:12), had abundant fulfilment through Paul as well as Peter.

* "One" should probably be omitted here. The omission leaves it an open question whether that was merely the name of the building, or whether Tyrannus was living, and owned the school. He may have been alive, and have become a convert.

Exorcists. But these displays of miraculous power brought prominently to the front the question of exorcisms. And the marked effect of Paul’s miracles led to attempts to rival and to equal them in the casting out of demons. Among the heathen there were those who professed to exorcise demons; among the Jews there were those who really did it. This the Lord distinctly owned when He was on earth (Matthew 12:27) ; and Josephus tells us (Ant., VIII. 2: 5) that Solomon had left for future times different forms of exorcising, which were in use, we suppose, in that historian’s lifetime. For he relates a case which he himself had witnessed, of one Eleazer, a Jew, casting out a demon in the presence of Vespasian. At Ephesus, it seems, there were such people, wandering Jews, as Luke describes them, and among them were found sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who did this, using doubtless some old and recognised formulas thought suited for that purpose. But now it was seen that without the use of any of the prescribed charms, simply in the name of the Lord Jesus, demons were exorcised by Paul. This was something quite new at Ephesus. And certainly, by the admission of all, that name was efficacious in this work. For these exorcists, accustomed to charms or incantations which any who knew them could use with effect, supposed that Paul was introducing a new charm, to which others could equally resort. For the name of the Lord Jesus, when \ised by him, had a power which no demon evidently had resisted. The Name of Power. Was that name, then, just a charm, only more potent than other charms in vogue in the province of Asia? That it was more powerful in exorcising, these sons of Sceva confessed. They would, then, use it. If Paul worked by it, why should not they? If it was all-powerful when used by one Jew, it

would be equally so when used by others. Thus they had evidently reasoned. Two conditions, however, were requisite for any one to use it with effect. Both of them were lacking in these men. The one was genuine saving faith in Christ; the other a true confession of His Lordship. No one can use that name in conflict with demons unless he is a real believer and confessor of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the language of these men betrayed where they were, and what they were. "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth," was their word to the evil spirits. "Whom Paul preacheth." True, Paul did preach the Lord Jesus, for he believed on Him. But there is not a word here of acknowledgment on their part that they also believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the very way they spoke of Him, simply as Jesus, without giving Him a title of honour, distinctly showed that they did not own Him as the Lord. What right, then, had they to speak with any show of authority in that name. Could they deceive demons, and make them believe they were disciples of Christ, when in truth they were not ? Of two sons of Sceva we now learn, who attempted to use the name of Jesus as a charm. But the man possessed with the demon overcame both of them, as we should here read (Acts 19:16). Supernatural power worked in him - demoniacal power, and the would-be exorcists fled the house naked and wounded ! Moreover the demon spoke, definitely refusing compliance with their demand, and his words must have struck all who heard of them : "Jesus I know, and Paul I know (or, am acquainted with), but ye, who are ye?" (15). The demon knew Jesus, he said, and by his language evidently meant to distinguish between the Lord and his servant Paul, as the second verb translated "I know" in the Authorised Version is different from the first in the original. Then that name was not a charm which just any one could use. The effect of this on the public was marked. Fear fell on all, both Jews and Greeks, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Under the shadow of the magnificent temple of Diana, where real demon worship was carried on (1 Corinthians 10:20), the evil spirit confessed that he knew Him, whom Paul called the Lord. And many others had already left their victims, when commanded by Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus. Conflict with demoniacal power on the part of Paul ended with the signal discomfiture of the former.

Confession and Burning. And this received signal confirmation in the fact, that the profession of those who used charms (i.e. magical arts), hitherto a lucrative business, received a severe blow. Many who had practised them, now converted, came and confessed their deeds. Revelations must have been made which doubtless astonished many of the common crowd, the uninitiated. Paul had nothing to conceal or to confess. But those now converted saw what their past ways had been, light shone on them, and confession on their part followed ; for clearly the magical arts they had used were not of God. A new life received made them real and true, and the past had to be given up as inconsistent, to say the least, with that which was true. Further, not a few brought their books, in which the incantations and charms were recorded, and burned them publicly. A holocaust indeed, the effect of the word of God working in their consciences. Reality characterised them, and they thus gave proof of their sincerity ; for the sacrifice made was no small one. The books now burnt, they reckoned, amounted in value to fifty thousand pieces of silver - about £1,770, it is generally supposed. Remembering that money was nothing like as cheap as it is now, their pecuniary sacrifice was greater than those sums would be with us. And all this was the fruit of Paul’s preaching, since we read, "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" (xix. 20).

What effects, indeed, had it produced !

Exercise of Heart.- And now what a commanding position Paul occupied ! The work had spread. All in Asia had heard the word of the Lord, and assemblies in that province were presumably numerous (1 Corinthians 16:19). Special miracles, meeting the needs of afflicted creatures, were wrought, without one failure, we may be sure. Evil spirits were subject to the Apostle when he invoked the name of the Lord. And whilst his enemies had to acknowledge the power of that name, it became patent that none of them could successfully make use of it. All this, followed by the confession just mentioned, and the holocaust of magical books, might well have turned the head of any one in whom grace was not continually at work. Irresistible was the power he could wield, delegated though it was ; and his teaching took effect on converts in numbers, and the work spread throughout the province. Such is the picture, a truthful one, drawn by the historian. To an outsider Paul must have seemed a wonderful person. So he was. But doubtless many, who were conscious of his power, little knew the exercises of heart he was passing through. We learn of them, however, and that from himself. Sorrows and anxieties pressed on him. The state of the Galatian converts, and the sectarian work and false doctrine working at Corinth, weighed heavily on his spirit. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:11), he wrote to the former. His anxiety about the latter, as to how they would receive his letter correcting what was wrong, he expressed to them, and has therefore made plain to us. "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s Gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus, my brother; but taking my leave of them I went from thence into Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). The care of all the Churches was on him, beside daily trials. That was no light matter. The gaping crowd, as they witnessed his miraculous powers, might have thought him a demi-god. We learn what anxiety pressed on him, who was but a man. Nor was that all, for the hostility of the Jews pursued him even in Ephesus (Acts 20:19).

Demetrius. The Apostle was now purposing in himself (i.e. in his spirit) shortly to move forward to Macedonia to revisit that country, and also Achaia. After which his ultimate destination at present was home, to which he hoped to get when he should first have visited Jerusalem again. A few years, however, were to pass before he set foot in the metropolis of the Roman earth. And much exercise and no small danger was he destined to face before he should leave Proconsular Asia. In view of his intended movements he sent forward Timothy and Erastus, he himself waiting yet in Asia for a season. And now we read of a storm suddenly bursting out, which had doubtless for a time been brewing. The enemy very probably had selected as his time the month devoted to the worship of Diana, when her votaries from all parts gathered round her shrine. "About the time of the Passover," writes Lewin (vol. 1:, p. 405), "commenced the Artemisius, or the month of Diana, so called from the annual festival of the goddess observed at that period throughout Greece and Asia. Originally at Ephesus, certain days only of the month had been devoted to the service of the goddess, but eventually a decree was passed that the entire month should be kept sacred." * This month of games and feasting may serve to explain the Apostle’s words to the Corinthians, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:8). Was he anticipating special opportunities for the Gospel throughout that festal month, the close of which would not be much before the time for the feast of Pentecost? But Demetrius seemed determined to have the first word.

* It may interest the reader to learn that the decree has survived the ravages of time, having been found there by Chandler on a slab of white marble. A great concourse of people from all parts of

the province then assembled together, afforded a fitting opportunity, for which perhaps that man had waited, to stir up popular passion. And the large number of converts now in Asia, of whom Epsenetus was the firstfruits (Romans 16:5) must necessarily have diminished the demand for silver shrines of Diana. It was this manufacture which proved so lucrative to Demetrius and his companions. Hence the falling off in his trade provided him with a grievance which his fellow-craftsmen could readily appreciate. He would lose, therefore, as he thought, no time in the prosecution of his project. "This Paul," as he contemptuously styled him, must be stopped, and that at once. Our craft, he said, is in danger, and the worship of the goddess will fall into disrepute. The argument addressed to the pocket had more weight, we may be well assured, than any real veneration for Diana. The train skilfully laid, the match was applied, and the city was, to speak metaphorically, in a blaze. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" those attending the meeting called by Demetrius now cried out. To the theatre they rushed, the crowd doubtless swelling as they went along. The place was soon filled with a vociferating multitude; and for two hours unceasingly they cried, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians ! " A popular cry is easily raised and taken up, as it was in this case. All could shout out " Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" But why were they shouting this? What was it all about? The greater part of the vast concourse could not tell. So, though they had carried with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s companions, in their impetuous rush to the theatre, they evidently knew not what to do with them. No one touched either of them : not a hair of their heads was hurt. Had Paul appeared it might have been very different. He would have ventured himself into the midst of that excited and noisy throng; but the disciples prevented him, and the Asiarchs * who were friendly dissuaded him from his purpose. A perfect babel of voices there was, on which no one for a time could make any impression. Not that no attempt was made. For we read that one Alexander attempted to address the multitude, but in vain. Put forward by the Jews, on their behalf we believe, and to make his defence, he found himself completely baffled. A fluent speaker, and a persistent opponent of Christianity, as we suppose, he and the other Jews doubtless counted on his getting a hearing. But a Jew! who would listen to such? The multitude had not yet learnt to distinguish between Jews and Christians. The Jews probably wished thus publicly by Alexander to dissociate themselves from Paul. In this they signally failed, and no one in the city had weight or influence enough to calm the excited crowd, till the town clerk, a public officer, came forward to address them. How foolish did they appear! Neither Gaius nor Aristarchus had attacked their goddess. Neither they, nor any Christians, had committed sacrilege by robbing the temple. To be quiet, therefore, and to do nothing rashly, became them all. If Demetrius had a grievance, there were the law courts : to them he should turn. To the proconsuls he should address himself, not to the excited crowd which was filling the theatre. So to disperse quietly became them all, lest the town authorities should be called to account for the uproar.

* The Asiarchs superintended the preparation for the games, and defrayed for the most part the expenses of them. The assembly dispersed. It had done nothing but shout. It had effected nothing but to cover itself with ridicule. Its folly was shown up. Its senseless act was rebuked. The town clerk was wise. The people had been befooled by Demetrius and his fellows, as probably many a reflecting one thought when calmly reviewing the whole matter on the morrow.

We may now consider what effects had been produced by this effort on the enemy’s part to stop the work. On each of the three missionary tours he attempted it, and on each journey in a different way. On the first the Jews, those bitter enemies of free grace, were most active in hounding on the

Gentiles to drive away Paul and Barnabas. Successful in that at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the folly of their course was displayed ; for, driven from Antioch, the Apostles preached in Iconium; driven out of that, they preached at Lystra; obliged to fly from Lystra, they evangelised in Derbe. So in all these cities, one after the other, the banner of the Cross was unfurled, and many recruits in the shape of converts to the faith were enrolled in the company of saints. On the second journey the device was to raise the question of the legality of the course on which Paul and his companions had embarked. At Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, this was the form of attack. Did it succeed? The magistrates at Philippi had to own their mistake in ill-treating and imprisoning illegally two Roman citizens, and virtually apologised to them for it. At Thessalonica they took security (perhaps bail) of Jason and others, and there apparently the matter dropped. The charge was foolish in the extreme. At Corinth the prosecutors had their appeal to the Proconsul dismissed, and they themselves summarily driven from the judgment seat. And now at Ephesus the shouting crowd looked foolish indeed, and had to disperse quietly, acquiescing in the prudent advice of the town clerk. Foiled was the enemy on each occasion. The word of the Lord was tho more spread abroad, and converts increased, who proved steadfast to the truth. What shall we say of Paul at this time ? As at Thessalonica, so at Ephesus, the rabble did not lay their hands on him. Had they caught him, as they had Gaius and Aristarchus, they might have taken his life. The disciples must have thought that, and the Asiarchs evidently felt that the excited multitude could not in their then temper be trusted. Of his feelings Luke tells us nothing; Paul, however, has not been so reticent. Writing to the Corinthians shortly afterwards, he says, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to (or, befell) us in Asia : that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we bad the sentence (or, answer) of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth [or rather, will] deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us" (’2 Corinthians 1:8-10). Great indeed had been his danger at this time. How keenly he felt that! Had we only the Acts we should never have known about it. Had we only that letter to the Corinthians, we should never have understood the allusion. Fittingly do the historian and the Apostle write. The work of the historian is especially to relate truthfully facts and events. This he has done, whilst the Apostle has put on record what were his feelings and the greatness of the trial. Is not this in harmony with that which we read elsewhere. We may learn in the Gospels of the treatment the Lord met with from men. We are taught in the Psalms, by the spirit of prophecy, what He felt at such times and in such circumstances (Psalms 22:1-31 :, Ixix.). It seems only fitting that the sufferer should express what were his feelings. That time in Asia must indeed have been one of special danger, if, as seems probable, it was to that the Apostle referred when writing to the Romans of the devotedness of Aquila and Priscilla; " who have," he said, "for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles" (Romans 16:4). Having been with Paul at Corinth and at Ephesus, and nowhere else up to the date of the writing of that Epistle, Paul’s words seem most likely to refer to that great trouble which had befallen him in Asia. Paul suffered for the truth. He suffered for Christ. "I will show him," said the Lord to Ananias (Acts 9:16), "how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake" Great indeed they were. The Jews were especially, and nearly everywhere, hostile to him. Bitterness, malice, reproach, these he had to encounter. Stoning he had suffered. Stripes and imprisonments he had endured. Shipwrecks too he had experienced, straits of all kinds he had known (2 Cor. xi 23-28). Who would have gone through all that for nothing t What compensation,

then, was there? The love of Christ in the present, and the assured hope of being with Him and reigning with Him in the future. These were encouragements for him. Are they sufficient for us?

04.22. THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY-TO JERUSALEM.

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY-TO JERUSALEM.

Acts 20:1-38:—xxi. 16. TO Jerusalem was Paul bound, but desired to revisit first his scenes of labour in Europe. The poor saints at Jerusalem were laid on his heart, and he looked for collections to be made by Christians in heathen lands to supply their need (2 Corinthians 8:9 :). The abortive attempt to stop the work at Ephesus being plainly manifested, Paul prepared to leave that city, but leisurely, no crowd now driving him away, and not before he exhorted the disciples, who might well require steadying after such a time of disturbance. And now, re-treading ground already traversed, Luke, in character with his brief account of the Apostle's labours in Asia on his second missionary tour, passes quickly on to notice Paul's return from Corinth back through Macedonia, by Troas, on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1-6). But first visiting Macedonia once more, where he had many ties, the fruit of previous labours in the Gospel, we are told that he now gave them much exhortation. Assemblies had been planted. So he busied himself with caring for the Christians.

Supplementing. - We pause here to point out how the Epistle to the Corinthians, above referred to, supplements the history of the Acts. Luke briefly states the character of Paul's ministry at this time in Macedonia, whilst he wholly passes over any notice of his being at Troas. It is true he did not make any stay there, so there may have been but little to record. But why was his stay at Troas now so limited? On his first visit a vision had summoned him to Macedonia. At once he obeyed it. Now there was no vision calling him elsewhere. Why, then, did he not stop awhile? Why was he free to minister in Macedonia? The non-arrival of Titus at Troas - for Paul had expected him there - and the subsequent meeting with him in Macedonia, explains it all. Let the Apostle speak : "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother : but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). Again : "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side ; without wore fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are east down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 Corinthians 7:5-7). So now his burdened heart rebounded, as it were, from joy ; for he writes, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 7:4). His freedom in ministry, which there evidently was when in Macedonia, is now explained; and why the historian passes over all mention of the visit to Troas is easily to be understood. And now, after three months devoted to his visit to Corinth, the Apostle's thoughts turned towards Jerusalem. Thither would he journey with companions, selected by different assemblies, to carry up the. alms for the poor saints in that city.

Returning. Which way would he take ? Two courses there were. He might go by sea to Syria, or journey through Macedonia, and embark near Philippi. A plot of the Jews against Paul determined

his route. He returned by land to Philippi, with his companions Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, as Luke most likely wrote; Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica; Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; as well as Tychicns and Trophimus, natives of Asia. Paul left Achaia. Separating on the road, but where is not stated, his companions preceded him to Troas, where they were to await his arrival, Paul tarrying a little at Philippi with Luke, with whom, as the change of pronouns now indicates, he resumed his journey. "Tarried for us," "we sailed," writes Luke. Can the tarrying "for us" (Acts 20:5) indicate that all had reached Philippi together, and the rest, Paul excepted, started forward to Troas? That does not seem unlikely. Five days Luke and Paul passed on their way to Troas. Why such a length of time remains unexplained.

Breaking of Bread. A week spent at Troas, a Lord's day came round. It was the last day of their visit there, and they met with the Christians in that seaport to break bread. "Upon the first day of the week, when we [as we should here read] came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Here we get an intimation of the observance of that Christian service instituted by the Lord (Luke 22:19-20), and disorders connected with which Paul had but recently written to correct for the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:20-29). Instituted by the Lord, we see His desire for His people. Revealed, too, to Paul, we learn it was to be carried on by converts from among the Gentiles. For the first disciples this service, doubtless, was intended to be a comfort, and the Lord's provision for that end (compare Jeremiah 16:7, in the Revised Version, with Luke 22:19-20). From the prophet we learn of a practice of comforting mourners in breaking of bread for them, and giving them the cup of consolation. Sympathy is sweet, and kindness in the hour of sorrow most would value. But real comfort must come from a higher source than the human heart. The Lord would, then, comfort them indeed, unfolding the rich blessings flowing from His death, by His body given for them, His blood shed for them. In addition to this, we learn from the Apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, of the connection between the Supper and the Church's hope. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). And now the notice of this service in the Acts shows us that it was the object that evening of their meeting. They met to break bread. It was a service by itself, and complete in itself ; and, as the Gospels teach us, was wholly eucharistic in character. The Lord in instituting it gave thanks - nothing more. Christians in early days understood this, and blessed the cup of blessing (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Nothing in Judaism resembled this. The Temple ritual could not compete with it. This the early disciples from the first discovered, as their "continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread at home" (Acts 2:46), sufficiently instructs us. For in truth there never was a service like it, being based for us on the knowledge of God's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ, and by consequence of forgiveness of sins confessedly owned by all who take part in it, and each and all acknowledging, as sharing in the service, that there is no more sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:18). Nothing, then, remains when engaged in it but to give thanks.*

Assembled for this distinctive Christian service, Paul preached (or rather, discoursed) unto them, ready to depart on the morrow. And no doubt, conscious as he was of dangers looming in the distance (Acts 20:23), he was the more anxious to give the disciples all he could in his parting words. So he continued his speech until midnight. The room in which they were must have been of no small dimensions, for there were many lights in that upper chamber ; yet we can fancy, what from the lights and from the company, the heat was great; and to one then present sleep was overpowering. For Eutychus, a young man, borne down by sleep, fell from the third story, and was

taken up (not as, but) dead. Life was extinct. But Paul could restore him to life. He did. The sorrow of parting with the Apostle was not to be deepened by the death of the young man. The Apostle assured them that Eutychus was again alive. Joy must have pervaded the whole company on hearing that. And surely with fulness of heart must they all have taken part in the Lord's Supper which followed. Sle8p was banished from the rest that night. For Paul had not finished speaking till break of day. Then he departed on his way to Jerusalem.

* For further remarks on this service the reader is referred to a little book by the author, entitled Simple Papers an the Church of God.

Once again, after the lapse of years, he revisited Troas, and left a cloak there with Carpus. Of this he tells Timothy, asking him to bring it to Rome, where he was a second time a prisoner (2 Timothy 4:13). But the cloak did not, we believe, reach Paul in time. Ere Timothy got there the Apostle had done for ever with earth, and cloaks, and parchments, and books. By the order of the Emperor Nero he was executed. By the permission of the Lord that took place, and the labourer and soldier entered into rest through death. To Miletus. To return. Again the company moved forward, and a second time was it divided. All went by sea to Assos, except Paul, who journeyed thither overland, a distance of about nineteen miles. Why he did this has occasioned many conjectures. But since nothing more than conjecture can be offered the reader, and conjecture founded on no known fact, it is better to leave all that alone. At Assos he rejoined his companions, when they sailed for Mitylene, and, coasting along by Chios and touching at Samos,* they reached Miletus on the fourth day of their voyage from Assos.

* "And tarried at Trogyllium" is very generally omitted.

Address to the Ephesian Elders. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus to summon the elders of the assembly there to meet him. They came at once, though it involved a journey for them of thirty-six miles to reach him. But which of them would not gladly have taken that trouble at the expressed wish of the Apostle, and have gone all the way to Miletus when learning that he was there? Reaching Miletus, Paul addressed them, and Luke has preserved the text of it (Acts 20:18-35). It is the only discourse of the Apostle on this third journey that has come down to us. Not a word of Paul's ministry in Macedonia, when he was set free in spirit by the coming to him of Titus, has survived. Nor did a syllable of the long and memorable discourse on that night at Troas, so far as we know, spread abroad outside the walls of that upper room. Not so with the address to the Ephesian elders. We are familiar with it, and can see the suitability of its preservation, since it acquaints us with the spirit in which Paul laboured, and with the different lines of teaching which he handled. And first as to the spirit in which he worked. He was intensely in earnest, and ardently desired the welfare of souls. "Ye yourselves know," he said, "from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews : and how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shows d you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house " (xx. 18-20). With tears, too, had he warned each one night and day for three years (31). Had his love and interest in them declined by absence? Both were just as warm as ever. So he warns them of coming dangers - dangers from without and dangers from within. Grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock ; whilst from among themselves would men arise, speaking perverted things to draw away disciples after them. Had Paul sought to gather

round himself? They well knew that he had not. He had not received temporal support from them. "I have coveted," he said, "no man's silver or gold or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you in all things how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (33-35). Did he shrink from suffering, or from death for Christ's sake? He would have them know that, though the Holy Spirit testified in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited him, be held not his life of any account as dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus (22-24).

Then as to the different lines of that ministry.

1st. He had testified, both to the Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ (21).

2nd. He had testified the Gospel of the grace of God (24).

3rd. He had preached the kingdom (25). 4th. He had declared to them the whole counsel of God (27).

Such was the spirit in which he had worked, and such were the great outlines of his ministry among them. An assembly dear to him, arid how dear to God! It was God's assembly, which He had purchased with His own blood. Alas! how soon were defections to come in! Galatia and Corinth were examples of the rapid growth of evil in assemblies which had once enjoyed the personal ministry of Paul. So of Ephesus, ere Paul died, he had to write, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes" (2 Timothy 1:15). And later on in the Revelation (ii. 2) we learn that they had been tested by those who called themselves apostles, but were not, and they had found them liars. The warnings were not without cause, and also we can say were not in vain.

Paul was an evangelist, and also a teacher. Varied, therefore, was his range of truth, and distinct, he informs us, were the lines of it. And here in his enumeration of them we can see a beautiful order; a hint, too - may we not say it - to labourers in the Word. For first, in dealing with souls there is the need of conscience work to go forward. Repentance and faith, then, he begins with. The one without the other might drive a soul to despair. God does not desire that; so an object - the Lord Jesus Christ - is presented. With that the Gospel of the grace of God is found in season. Now with Paul that Gospel was a full one, and embraced far more than many called evangelists would suppose. The Gospel in his thoughts took in the range of truth in Romans 1:1-32 :-viii., and part of Ephesians 2:1-22 : as well. His was a teaching Gospel, as well as just the preaching of forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. And much of it was suited only for believers, as the Epistle to the Romans clearly indicates. Hence the mention of it comes in well after faith and repentance. Then, side by side with the Gospel, the kingdom was preached. That he next mentions - a subject treated of in the Gospels; nor is it foreign to truth taught in the Epistles. It formed a theme of apostolic preaching (Acts 8:12; Acts 14:22; Acts 19:8; Acts 28:23; Acts 28:31), and is introduced in most of the Pauline Epistles. These great subjects mentioned, there comes, last in order, the whole counsel of God. Teaching this is only suited for Christians. These counsels concern God's purposes about His Son, as well as His purposes towards saints, and that special

line of instruction called Church truth. In Epistles, as that to the Ephesians, that to the Colossians, and that to the Hebrews, these counsels are especially unfolded. Very distinct, then, are these different lines, but all needed for the saint to be fully instructed in Christian revelation. And now taking leave of the Ephesian elders, but warning them of coming dangers, he states what, was to be their resource. To no one on earth does he turn them. Neither of Timothy, who well knew Paul's doctrine (2 Timothy 3:10), nor of Titus, who had been also a trusted workman, does he make mention. To no man, to no order of men, does he direct them. He turns them solely "to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build up, and to give the inheritance" (as Luke probably wrote) "among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). To God he commends them. Of much about Him had he just made mention. He was calling to repentance. He had sent forth glad tidings of His grace. He had a kingdom. And He had revealed Divine counsels. Then to the Word of God's grace he turned them, in which, and in which alone, could they find the full revelation that had been vouchsafed us, even the Word which liveth and abideth (1 Peter 1:23). A full provision this was, but it reminds all of their responsibility. Suitable, then, as we have already observed, was the introduction of this address in the history of that third and, for the time, closing missionary journey. A picture of Paul's labours, and an outline of his teaching, come in so well at this juncture.

Four Remarks. We would now note:

1st. The resource for the saints pointed out by the Apostle is a virtual denial of the doctrine of apostolical succession. He commends them to no one but God.

2nd. We are reminded of the activity of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, as the Divine Person present on earth, by the words of Paul respecting the elders, that the Holy Ghost had made them bishops or overseers.

3rd. It is evident that the elders and bishops were one class, not two. The former term is their title of dignity ; the latter describes their service. And if corroboration of this is wanted, Titus 1:5-7 confirms it.

4th. We have in this address of Paul's a saying of the Lord Jesus Christ not elsewhere recorded. The personal ministry of Christ had not dropped into oblivion. Just at the opportune moment it reappears. How fully, how beautifully the Master illustrated His teaching ! He gave Himself for us. Paul's address was finished. His last words - and suitably so - were a reminder of the grace displayed by the Lord, and of that which should characterise His people. Now he knelt down, and prayed with the elders. His heart went out for them. Their feelings went out towards him, and they kissed him, weeping sore and falling on his neck, distressed that they should see him no more. Then all accompanied him and his fellow-travellers to the ship. The Voyage. The ship sailed, and we can well understand how, with tears in their eyes, and with sorrowing hearts, the elders watched that vessel till it was lost to sight. Luke now tells us of the route. Taking a straight course, they reached Coos that day. On the next they reached Rhodes. On the third they arrived at Patara, the port of Xanthus, the capital of Lycia. At this port, finding a ship bound for Phoenicia, they embarked thereon, and went direct to Tyre, leaving Cyprus on the left. It was about a three days' voyage from Patara. Reaching Tyre, they tarried seven days, till the vessel was ready to take them on to Ptolemais, the modern Acre, one day's sail farther. There they left the ship to proceed by land.

Tyre. A word on Tyre. The ancient seaport of Phoenicia, renowned of old, from the days of David downwards, remained still of importance, despite all its vicissitudes, rising phoenix-like from its ashes, though not always on the same spot. For continental Tyre, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, as predicted by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel,* was succeeded by insular Tyre, built on the island opposite the old site. This in turn was taken by Alexander, who constructed an embankment to connect the island with the mainland. Thus he succeeded in his conquest. Yet Tyre rose again; no longer insular, because of the earthwork just mentioned, though on the site of the insular city. In the Apostles' days it was still a great centre for trade - the Levantine trade. Here, then, detained a week, whilst the ship was prepared for its further voyage, Paul and his company, availing themselves of the opportunity, spent it in consorting with the Christians in the place, to all there dear, and to some certainly no stranger; for he must have passed through it once or more in earlier days. But what gives it such an interest in connection with the Apostle's history is the fact that here, during that week's sojourn, the disciples of the place said through the Spirit that Paul should not go to Jerusalem (xxi. 4). In every city already, as we have learnt, the Holy Ghost testified that bonds and afflictions were in store for him. This fresh intimation of the future was more definite, in that it forbade his visit to the Holy City. If he, then, went, it would be not only to court danger, but to disobey this new revelation. Ardently desirous of the welfare of his countrymen, even this distinct communication did not deter him, nor did another, of which we shall read very shortly.

* Isaiah 23:1-18 :; Jeremiah 25:27; Jeremiah 47:4; Ezekiel 26:1-21 : The week ended, the ship ready to sail, the whole company of the Christians, the women and children included, brought them on the way outside the city. Apart from the busy throng, in the quiet which the country afforded, and under the canopy of heaven, they held a prayer-meeting. At Miletus, Paul prayed with the elders on parting. Now writes Luke "we prayed." Several doubtless took part, kneeling on the shore to commend the Apostle, and those with him, to the care and keeping of their common Lord and Saviour. It must have been an interesting and affecting time to all present, Christian affection and Christian interest for each other thus displaying itself. The travellers then embarked. The others returned to their homes.

Reaching Ptolemais, they stayed one day with the brethren, then moved on by land to Caesarea, and found under the roof of Philip the Evangelist rest, hospitality, and surely a most hearty welcome. Here they stayed many days - a rest for Paul after all the fatigues of the voyage, and a little time of quiet before encountering the storm at Jerusalem. Of any incidents in their stay here we have no account, Luke only mentioning that Philip had four daughters who prophesied - gifted women who, in their proper sphere, helped on the work of God. For we may be sure that Paul, who had so lately set before the Corinthians what women might do in the assembly, would not have suffered Philip's daughters to do what the Holy Ghost forbade. We have said that we have no incidents mentioned connected with Paul's stay at Caesarea. One exception there is to this. To it we now turn.

Agabus. For long we have heard nothing of Agabus. He now reappears. First introduced to us at Antioch (xi. 28), when he visited that city from Jerusalem, we here meet with him again going from Judaea to Csesarea. Like James, he seems to have lived in the land, and in the province of Judea. Now, visiting Csesarea, he meets afresh with Paul, and taking the Apostle's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands with it, and announced his approaching imprisonment. We say, approaching; for though Agabus fixed no date, it was but a few days afterwards, we believe, that Paul found

himself a prisoner. "Thus saith the Holy Ghost," we read, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (xxi. 11). More and more definite, then, became the prophetic announcements regarding Paul. When at Corinth he had asked the prayers of the Roman saints, that he might be delivered from them that did not believe in Judea (Romans 15:31). Addressing the Ephesian elders, he had told them how in every city the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited him. He was aware, then, that these warnings were really from God. Is it not the more remarkable that he did not heed what he heard at Tyre ? Warned there not to go to Jerusalem, he learned at Csesarea that he would be delivered by the Jews into the hands of the Romans. Still he desisted not. Neither the command of the Spirit at Tyre, nor the entreaties of the saints at Csesarea, backed by those of Luke and others, prevailed to dissuade him. He would go on, ready to die at Jerusalem, if need be. Expostulation and entreaty proving useless, all desisted, saying, "The will of the Lord be done!" There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence (Ecclesiastes 3:7). The time to speak more on that point was passed. The time to be silent they recognised had come. To Jerusalem. The last stage of the journey was now entered upon. Taking up their baggage, they set forth for Jerusalem, a two days journey (Acts 23:31-32). Their number was augmented by certain of the Christians from Csesarea, who brought with them an old disciple, one Mnason of Cyprus, with whom Paul and his company were to lodge in the Holy City. Possibly at this time Jerusalem was full with the multitude attending the feast of Pentecost. And if Mr. Lewin is correct (vol. 2: 108), the feast began on the evening of their arrival, at six o’clock. Entering Jerusalem, Paul received from the brethren a hearty welcome, soon, however, to prove the mistake of yielding to their wishes.

Here the third missionary journey ended. No visit to Antioch, as on previous occasions, was possible, even if it had been in contemplation. Paul knew at Caesarea that going to Jerusalem was going to imprisonment. Plans and desires he had cherished of still further journeys. He had hoped to visit Rome, and perhaps also Spain. Whether he ever made a visit to the latter country cannot be definitely stated. Certainly, after his release from the first imprisonment in Rome, he was again in the East, visiting Ephesus, Macedonia, and Crete (1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:4). The desire to reach Rome was, however, granted, but under circumstances that he had not contemplated when writing his letter to the saints in that city; and the Divine promise that he should reach it was communicated to him at a time, and in a place, which doubtless he had not expected. At night, and in the prison at Jerusalem, the Lord appeared, and promised that he should witness for Him in Rome (Acts 23:11). But we must not anticipate.

Looking back on the journey just concluded, what can we say about it? How had the truth triumphed! In Ephesus, that stronghold of idolatry, it won its way in sight of that temple of the so-called goddess Diana, whom all Asia and the Roman earth worshipped. Votaries were detached from her cult, and interest in her was perceptibly on the decline. Throughout the province of Asia Christians were to be found, and assemblies had sprung up. All that dwelt in Asia had heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. Charms, too, were flung aside, magical rites were renounced, and books which had treated of them were publicly burnt by their possessors. Demon power, too, succumbed to the name of the Lord Jesus. The gospel was indeed triumphing, and Demetrius and his fellows could not but admit it. A great feature of this journey was the discomfiture of demons, and the acknowledged power over them of the name of the Lord Jesus. In addition to all this, Paul’s apostleship was placed beyond the reach of doubt or cavil, the miracles

which he wrought being in no degree behind those credited to Peter.

We next enter upon the third part of the Acts, in which God’s grace to His failing servant is markedly and beautifully displayed.

04.23. PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

Acts 21:17—xxin. 35.

WELCOMED by the brethren in Jerusalem, Paul and his company, on the day following, whilst the feast of Pentecost was proceeding, had an interview with James and all the elders. To the tale of God's work among the Gentiles and in heathen lands, by his ministry, all doubtless listened with lively interest, and glorified God. Not a word had any one to say against the work of grace which had gone on abroad. But he was in Jerusalem, and reports prejudicial to him were rife in the holy city. To those reports definite denials should be given, and no one could so well do that, they all would urge, as Paul himself.

Reports. - But reports - what evils have they often wrought, taken up, believed, and spread abroad, without the retailers or first propagators taking pains to ascertain on what foundation they rested! People's characters have been thereby blackened most unfairly, and hearts have been broken most ruthlessly. For many are often more ready to listen to the reports, and so imbibe a prejudice hostile to the individual concerned, than to receive even the most positive contradiction of them on grounds which cannot be questioned. Nehemiah was subject to such in his day (Nehemiah 6:6). Little wonder that Paul, the champion of free grace, was the object of malicious attacks in his day! What were the reports? First, that he taught the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. The first of these was wholly untrue. Timothy's circumcision, on which Paul lad insisted (Acts 16:3), gave the lie to it. The second had some foundation, since Paul had rebuked Peter to the face at Antioch for withdrawing from social intercourse with Gentiles, by not eating with them (Galatians 2:12-14). Pusillanimity, however, marked the leaders at Jerusalem. Instead of having this last question threshed out, and the proper course for Christians with reference to Judaism distinctly laid down, they desired evidently no controversy on the matter, but urged on Paul open conformity to Jewish ordinances to refute the charges against him.

Zealous for the Law. Myriads among the Jews, so they affirmed, had believed, but all were zealous for the law (Acts 21:20). Evidently full Christian ground was unknown at Jerusalem. To have died through law to law (Galatians 2:19) to live to God had not formed part of their professed creed as yet. To have died to the law by the body of Christ, to be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, to bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4), was teaching to which the Christians at Jerusalem had evidently not yet intelligently listened, nor to which were they ready to subscribe. "To go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13), was a step they had never thought of taking. The superiority of the Lord Jesus, as Apostle and High Priest of their confession, over Moses and Aaron had apparently not dawned upon them; nor had they apprehended the truth that, by the sacrifice of Christ, sacrificial rites at the brazen altar had for Christians been terminated, seeing that believers were perfected for ever by the one offering (Hebrews 10:14); and forgiveness being secured for them by His one sacrifice, there could be no

more offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18). Christian ground, as distinct from Jewish ground and position, they had evidently never been taught, and knew not, we may surely say, the Christian privilege of entering the holiest with boldness by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19), as well as that of intelligently feeding on the sin-offering, the blood of which had, as it were, been taken into the sanctuary for sin (Hebrews 13:10-12). Myriads of Jews believed, but as long as the Temple worship continued they joined in it. Full Christian privileges, and distinct Christian ground, they were slow to apprehend. On border ground there was the tendency for them to remain, content pretty much with truth common to Jews and Christians, the death of the Lord Jesus and His coming again excepted. How needful, then, was the Epistle to the Hebrews, written, as we see, to those who ought to have made progress in the school of Christianity, but who needed still to learn the first principles of the oracles of God (Hebrews 5:12). Amongst such did the Apostle here find himself. The appeal to Paul by James and ths elders shows where they were, and tho Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrates clearly what they lacked.

If it is asked, how was this, seeing that there were very godly people there, notably James, styled the Just? The answer may well be, that very probably there was a tendency in the leaders to go on as they had begun from the commencement of Christianity at Pentecost; and very possibly there was a desire in many for an easier path, thus avoiding fresh persecution. Some, indeed, had suffered in early days even unto death, and others had known imprisonment for Christ's sake. There had been, too, the spoiling of their goods by adversaries (Hebrews 10:32-34). Things, however, appear at this time to have quieted down, and James and the rest could live in comparative peace and security, though the Jews were ready and willing, if they could, to tear the Apostle Paul's body limb from limb. A Proposal. Now Paul was at Jerusalem, and many of his countrymen viewed him as a renegade Jew, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazareans. His presence, when known, would stir questions and arouse controversy. But if he showed by his acts in the Temple that he was after all as good a Jew as others, all would be well, and the stories afloat about him could be treated as calumnies. This James and the elders desired, and there seemed doubtless to them a providential opening for it to be brought about. Four men they had, with a vow on each, from which, till the rites prescribed by the law had been satisfied, they could not be free. Let Paul, in conformity with the custom, take on himself to defray the expenses of these four men, as identified with them. All would then see that he kept the law like any one else of the seed of Jacob. Now, this advice, they urged, if followed, would in no way cancel the decree of the council of Jerusalem about Gentile converts. To that decree James and all still adhered. Then it had been a question of Gentiles. Now it was one about Jews. A False Position. Had the truth of the Body of Christ been held by them in intelligence and in power, they must have seen that part of the Body could not be free from legal observances, which were properly binding, and to be submitted to by the other part. But, as we have said, full and distinctive Christian teaching was really unknown to the bulk of them. To their proposal, however, Paul assented. We know his ardent love for his kinsmen after the flesh (Romans 9:1-3; Romans 10:1), and his longing desire for their salvation. Perhaps that made him the more willing to consent, and tended to blind him to the false position into which he would put himself. The eye of the Lord was, however, on His servant. So whilst allowing him to be persuaded into this compromising position, for his profit surely, and for our warning, He delivered him out of it in a very unexpected way. For, like David of old, Paul now had a way of escape opened up which he could never have brought about. David was in a thoroughly wrong position when he fled to Achish, King of Gath, and was casting in his lot

with the Philistines against his own nation of Israel, and professing his willingness to fight on the side of the uncircumcised host. What a position to be placed in! The former champion of Israel, and conqueror of Goliath, in the ranks of the very race against which he had fought so successfully! But how to get out of that position - that was the difficulty. God then came in. "The lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away" (1 Chronicles 12:19). Freed from his false position, David had to learn, when he reached the blackened remains of Ziklag, what trouble he had brought on himself and others by moving forward to the battle-field under the banner of the King of Gath. And now Paul was in as thoroughly a false position. And soon all must see it, if the time came for him to stand at the brazen altar with the prescribed offerings. For if the vow of these men was that of a Nazarite, as is commonly supposed, sacrificial victims must be offered - viz., a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, an ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, and a ram for peace-offerings (Numb. 6: 14) - for each of them. Paul had charged himself with all that, conforming thereby to a practice which had sprung up among the Jews, of richer people taking on themselves to defray the expenses or sacrifices of poorer brethren.* The appointed seven days were running out, and Paul, at their close, would have appeared at the altar with his sin-offering. What a triumph that would have been to the Judaising party! What a blow to the truth, so firmly, so boldly, contended for by Paul! For where remission of sins is there is no more offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18) is Christian teaching, which was now gravely imperilled. But as with David, so with Paul - the Lord came in.

* See Josephus, Ant., XIX. 6: 1.

David never entered the battle with Achish. Paul never approached the brazen altar with his sin-offering. For when the days were almost ended, Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the Temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him. The man who taught all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and that place was actually in the very courts of the sanctuary, and, as they supposed, had polluted the holy place, by introducing Trophimus, an Ephesian, into the part that no Gentile could enter. In this supposition they were quite mistaken. Nevertheless, now commenced an uproar. The city was moved. People ran together, and, seizing hold of Paul, dragged him out of the Temple, intending to kill him outside its sacred precincts. But ere they could accomplish their purpose, the chief captain, with centurions and soldiers, ran down into the midst of the crowd. The appearance of the military saved Paul’s life. The multitude left off beating him. The chief captain took him. He was a prisoner now in the hands of the Romans, and bound with two chains. The prophecy of Agabus had come true. But enmity against Paul was not yet appeased, nor was the noise of the crowd lessened. Vociferating, some one thing, and some another, it was impossible for the chief captain to understand the cause of their hostility, so he commanded Paul to be brought into the castle,* where, out of the sound of the uproar, he might learn what it was all about. But as the crowd pursued Paul, crying out, "Away with him!" and as the pressure became so great, and the efforts of his assailants so determined, not content with having already 504 TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS. beaten him, he had to be carried up the stairs, borne of the soldiers. Often had his life been threatened, and often had he been in imminent danger of losing it. But each time the Lord had delivered him. Now again his life was endangered, and afresh was he rescued from death. For nothing less than that his enemies clamoured. Yet he had done them no wrong. Why, then, was he singled out as alone worthy of death at that time ? No outcry was raised against James and the elders, professed ringleaders of the sect of the Nazorseans in common with Paul. Why was he thus pursued ? Because he had boldly and persistently refused to

compromise the Gospel of the grace of God. Those once Gentiles were fellow-heirs, and of the same Body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (Ephesians 3:6). This he had maintained. And this was the real cause of his persecution, and of the clamour for his death.

* Either the barracks belonging to the castle or tower of Antonia, or perhaps the castle itself. The word used by Luke may mean either. Josephus thus describes the fortress: "Now, as to the tower of Antonia, it was situated at the corner of two cloisters of the court of the Temple, of that on the west, and that on the north; it was erected upon a rook of fifty cubits in height, and was on a great precipice; it was the work of King Herod, wherein he demonstrated his natural magnanimity. . . . On the corner, where it joined to the two cloisters of the Temple, it had passages down to them both, through which the guard (for there always lay in this tower a Roman legion) went several ways among the cloisters, with their arms, on the Jewish festivals, in order to watch the people, that they might not there attempt to make any innovations; for the Temple was a fortress that guarded the city, as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the Temple ; and in that tower were the guards of those three." - Wars of the Jews, V. 5: 8. But was deliverance from death the only deliverance he experienced at that time? Many, and perhaps most even, of the Christians in Jerusalem thought only of the preservation of his life. We, however, see that there was another deliverance brought about by the chief captain’s interposition. Paul was kept thereby from compromising the truth. Are we casting a stone at him? By no means. But facts are facts, and Scripture deals with them. He had, as we may remember, been expressly forbidden by the Spirit, through the disciples at Tyre, to go to Jerusalem; nevertheless, he went there, and nothing but God’s intervention by the Roman power prevented the Jews on the one hand from accomplishing their murderous purpose, or Paul on the other from compromising the truth, which his presence at the altar of burnt-offering with the sacrifices required by law must have brought about. It was a mercy to the whole Church that Paul was taken prisoner by the Romans. Could the teaching of the Hebrews have been subsequently set forth, if the great champion of the full Christian faith had at this time practically surrendered the latter by yielding to the doctrine of expediency? The chief captain’s prompt appearance was a deliverance indeed. The false position in which Paul had put himself he was in no longer. And what he could not have done before he could with a free spirit do now - viz., boldly address the Jews ; and though not in the Temple court, yet from a more commanding position, even the stairs of the castle.

Asking leave from Claudius Lysias, who courteously granted it, after learning that he was not that Egyptian who had formerly stirred up sedition, and led out into the wilderness a number of assassins, Paul from his elevated and therefore more commanding position intimated by gesture his desire to address the excited multitude. Great silence now prevailed, and he proceeded to speak. Greek he could speak with facility, as the chief captain learnt, to his evident surprise; but he began to address his countrymen in a tongue more dear to them - that of Aramaic which is called by Luke "Hebrew". It had since the Babylonish captivity become the common tongue of the home-born Jews. There is a charm in one’s own language, a melody to the native ear, however harsh and uncouth it may sound to that of a foreigner. To that the Jews were not indifferent. So hearing him speak in Aramaic, they were the more quiet.

Paul’s Defence. Though a prisoner in the hands of the Romans, he wa.s free in spirit. And the opportunity now occurring, he availed himself of it to let them know, what hitherto doubtless they

had never heard, the cause of the great change in his life, the result of his visit to Damascus. Commencing by reminding all of his Jewish education and training, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and well instructed in the law, and the added traditional teaching of the fathers, of his zeal toward God in old days there was no doubt. Proofs in abundance were forthcoming. He had persecuted the Way unto death, and populated prisons with suspected and incriminated persons. Of his determination to put down Christianity, if possible, he had given many and marked proofs; and the high priest and the elders were well acquainted with them. Who had more determinedly played the role of persecvitor than he? Zeal for God had indeed characterised him. Zeal for God he owned (xxii. 3) characterised them. But there may be zeal for God without knowledge. That he had experienced in his own case. That, he well knew, animated the multitude before him. He, however, was a changed man. What had made him cease from being the relentless persecutor, to become the ardent champion of the faith ? They should hear. He had seen Jesus the Nazaraean. He had heard Him speak, but it was from heaven. The crucified One had appeared to Paul in a glory above the brightness of an Eastern noonday sun. He had spoken directly to him, calling him by his name. But further. Charging him with persecuting the One who was addressing him from heaven, He directed him still to proceed to Damascus, and there to learn what he was now to do. That heavenly visions could be vouchsafed to men at times no Jew could deny. That obedience to directions from heaven was incumbent on any one thus favoured, which of the multitude before him would in his sober senses for a moment dispute? Would any take the ground that he was under a complete misapprehension as to the vision of which he now told them? He had an unimpeachable witness to confirm it. One Ananias, a devout man according to the law, and well reported of by all the Jews at Damascus, had visited him when in his blindness, the effect of that heavenly vision. He endorsed the fact that Paul had seen the Lord Jesus at that time, and had heard words from His mouth. Moreover, he confirmed what the Lord had said to Saul when on the ground outside the city walls (xxvi. 16-18), that he was to be "a witness for Him unto all men of what he had seen and heard." A worldwide commission had Paul then received. All men were embraced within the range of it. What could he, then, do? The Nazarean, as the Jews contemptuously called the Lord, had appeared to him, had spoken to him, and had entrusted him with such a commission. To profess himself His disciple, to forsake his past ways of persecution, which clearly were evil, surely became him. So hearkening to the admonition of Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling upon His name" (xxii. 16), he was enrolled as a disciple of Christ by baptism, and washed away his sins, calling upon the Lord’s name. Thenceforth he served Him, through whose servant-messenger his eyesight had been perfectly restored. Who could suppose that he could do anything else? Yet he had more to tell them, and also to tell us, that of which we have not previously read. He had another vision. A second time had the Lord appeared to him and spoken to him. On this occasion the appearance was the more remarkable, seeing that it was in the Temple at Jerusalem on Paul’s first return to the city after his conversion. Engaged there in prayer, he fell into a trance, and saw the Lord, who said to him, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me" (xxii. 18). With that freedom which characterised, as we have seen, Ananias (ix.) and Peter (x.), Paul reminded the Lord, he here tells his hearers, of his former ways as a persecutor, with which the Jews were cognisant. His past conduct he looked on as sufficient to make the Jews more ready to listen to him. But the Lord’s reply was imperative and decisive. "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (xxii. 21). What could he do, he

might ask, but endeavour, as he had done, to carry out his mission? The Lord had appeared to him in God's house at Jerusalem. Would the God of Israel, jealous of His glory, have allowed in that Temple the appearance of a blasphemer or impostor, as the Jews regarded Christ? Who then and what must He be who had there spoken to Paul ? It was One who had authority, and could send him on a mission from Himself. "I will send thee." Who in Jehovah's house could thus speak but He who is God over all, blessed for evermore?

Another thought this second appearance suggests. God had not dwelt in His earthly house since the captivity. He left it in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 10:18-19; Ezekiel 11:22-23). The house continued bereft of the Divine Presence all the time the Lord was on earth (Matthew 23:38). And the only occasion on which that actual building had been graced by the Divine Presence was that time, when the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul and told him to leave Jerusalem; "for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." A command from One speaking with authority in the Temple! What, again Paul might ask, could he do but obey? True, how true, were the Lord's words! And if confirmation was needed, soon was it supplied. The renewed vociferations of the crowd, as the Apostle pronounced the last words of the Lord's command, supplied it. "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it was * not fit that he should live" (xxii. 22), was a sad and solemn confirmation of what the Lord had said years before. Was Paul disappointed at the reception his defence had met with? Very possibly. For very decided were the renewed manifestations of hostility.They cried out. They rent their garments. They threw dust into the air. So, if the chief captain did not understand Aramaic, he could be at no loss to perceive the effect of the address.

* So the better reading, implying, as Alford remarks, that he ought to have been put to death long ago. A Roman. But what was it all about? What caused the uproar at first? And then, after Paul's defence, what called forth the cries, and the renewed exhibition of intense hostility? How could Lysias, responsible for the peace of the city, get at the truth, and so understand the situation? He resolved, without further intercourse with Paul, to scourge him, in hopes that something might be elicited from the victim to throw light on the subject. Barbarous treatment we should say, but in character with the times. Orders were at once given to that effect, and the centurion entrusted with them proceeded to execute them. Paul was tied up with the thongs for that purpose. Then he spoke, and asked a question, the importance of which he well knew, and the importance of which the centurion at once perceived. "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (25). That was enough. The threatened scourging was averted, for the centurion at once went and warned the chief captain of the privilege which Paul enjoyed. He was a Roman. Ascertaining this fact from personal inquiry, Lysias at once became afraid because he had even bound him. A Roman citizen had rights which no official in any part of the empire could trample on with impunity. And especially after the celebrated prosecution of Verres by Cicero officials everywhere would be more careful. To bind a Roman uncondemned was unlawful; to scourge him was a heinous offence. Paul, now released, passed the night in custody of the soldiers in the castle of Antonia.

Before the Council. But what should the chief captain do with his prisoner? On what ground could he detain him? Or should he go free? Puzzled evidently as to the course he should pursue, his next device was to summon the council to meet, and to bring Paul before it. Something might then be elicited to make his path clear. The council met, and Paul, who had once, it is supposed, been a member of it, for the first and the last time in his life stood before it, yet not as a prisoner

arraigned before that tribunal, for no charge had been formulated against him. Many who now looked on him must have known him in earlier years. Ex-high-priests, as Caiaphas and Theophilus,* were probably there, and doctors of the law, with whom, before his conversion, Paul had doubtless consulted. What a company to stand before, and what an occasion for them to see and hear the one whose name and whose course were well known to them all! But the purpose for which the council was summoned utterly failed to be realised. The chief captain could only gather that nothing worthy of death or of bonds could be brought against his prisoner. Questions of Jewish law were all that he could understand had caused the turmoil into which Jerusalem had been thrown; and even as to them there was not unanimity. For the council was divided. The Pharisees declared there was no evil in Paul; whilst the Sadducees, if they had had their way, would have killed him. Judicial calmness and even-handed justice, it became apparent, were absent from their proceedings. So as Paul's life was evidently in danger, the military, summoned by their commander, rescued him from his perilous position, and took him back to the castle. On Paul's behaviour at this trying time some have commented in a manner not complimentary to the Apostle. The situation was unusual, and his circumstances were trying. He was there with no charge brought against him to which he was to plead. And when he said, and could say with truth, he had lived in all good conscience to that day, the high priest Ananias ordered him to be struck on the mouth, a most unrighteous act, and, considering the circumstance we have mentioned, utterly indefensible. No wonder the Apostle's sense of the injustice stirred him up, and he answered the high priest, not knowing that he was the high priest, in a way he would not have done had he been consciously addressing that officer. And then, discerning the character of the assembly, he rallied the Pharisaic section to his side, by reminding all that his great offence in the eyes of the Sadducees consisted in upholding the doctrine of resurrection, which they systematically denied. We would, however, whilst thus noticing what the historian has told us, leave Paul in the hands of his Judge and ours, only remembering that he had been distinctly forbidden by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem at this time. It is no wonder, then, if his conduct on this occasion laid him open to animadversion. No one of us is perfect. But ere we pass strictures on him, let us be sure that we should have acted better ourselves.

* Before Caiaphas the Lord had stood, and by him had been judged guilty of blasphemy. From Theophilus the Apostle had solicited and obtained letters to Damascus to carry out his mission there.

Ananias. A few words on Ananias the high priest. He was the son of Nebedeus, and had been nominated to the office by Herod Agrippa II., King of Chalcis. A chequered experience was his, having been, ere this, sent to Rome in bonds as a prisoner, after, for a time, enjoying the dignity of the high priesthood (Josephus, Ant., XX. 6: 2). Acquitted, he returned to Jerusalem, and it would seem from Luke that he again discharged the functions of the high priesthood. Deposed from his office shortly after this, he ended his life in an ignominious way, assassinated by the Sicarii, who dragged him forth from an aqueduct in the pleasure grounds of Herod's palace, or pretorium, in Jerusalem, whither he had fled for safety. A more worthless person never, it is said, filled the office of high priest. How low had Judaism sunk! Paul's words came awfully true in the end of that arrogant man, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall"; whilst the Apostle's regard for the office is put also on record. As high priest there was a respect due to him, which his personal character could never have claimed.

Divine Encouragement. What must have been Paul's feelings during these two most harassing days ? He had left Mnason's house, where he had lodged, on the previous morning, to attend, as he had done day by day, the Temple, with the four men the expenses of whose offerings he had undertaken to defray. He passed the next night a prisoner in the castle, after having narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Jews outside the sanctuary. He had addressed the multitude from the stairs leading to the castle, expecting, we may quite believe, that the story of his conversion would tell on them, and mitigate, if not subdue, their angry passions. But nothing is more cruel than religious hate.

How often have people since that day, who have felt in their own souls the power of the truth, expected that the recital of that which converted them must act in a similar way on others! How often have such been disappointed! Was Paul disappointed at the result? And was that all the testimony, he might ask himself, that he was to bear in Jerusalem? On the second day he had appeared before the Sanhedrin, and the council had broken up in disorder. But he remained a prisoner, though a prisoner against whom no charge had been preferred, or could be, of which the Roman authorities could take cognisance. The second day closed, and night overshadowed the earth. Paul was probably alone, certainly with no friendly Christian to encourage him, or to pray with him. And, till morning came, he could look for no acquaintances to visit him. Was he deserted? Was he forgotten? If friends could not reach him - and there were certainly some in the city who would gladly, if it had been possible, have shared in his captivity - there was One who did visit him that night, and to whom bolts, bars, and guards were no obstacle. "The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome" (xxiii. 11). How different was the Lord's estimate of Paul from that of the Jews! A witness for Christ in the Lord's eyes; a fellow unfit to live in those of the Jews. Gracious indeed of the Lord was it to visit Paul. He had watched the whole proceeding. He was not unconcerned about His servant. The defence on the previous day from the stairs of the castle might seem to the Apostle to have been fruitless, since it had made no favourable impression on the crowd. Yet it was not service thrown away, strength expended for naught and in vain. Paul had borne witness to Christ in Jerusalem. That service was acceptable to the Lord. The Jews had heard that the Nazarean was in heaven, that He had those on earth whom He regarded as part of Himself, and that He could show grace to those who had openly opposed Him by persecuting His saints. The Lord remembered all this, and approved of it. How the Apostle's heart must have been cheered! It was grace indeed, but grace to His failing servant. Were some inclined to call him rash in venturing to Jerusalem after so many and such distinct warnings? Certainly the One who might have reproached him is the One who did not; and the only one that we know who received a Divine communication that night was Paul the prisoner, separated from all his friends, and detained in the castle of Antonia. Honour should be put on him for whose death the Jews were so clamorous. "Not fit to live!" they cried out. A fitting vessel to bear witness for Christ in Rome, the Lord, in the silence of that night, announced to His servant and confessor. Well does He know the time and the way to encourage a servant, lest he should be cast down and crushed under the weight of circumstances. And Paul is not the only one, nor the last in point of time, who has proved this loving ministry of the Lord; his history also bears witness that no time is out of season for such ministration, if circumstances call for it.

Divine Communications. With what communications from the Lord had Paul been favoured! Spoken to outside Damascus, and learning that all his plans were known to Him whom he had regarded contemptuously as the Nazarean, he received another communication, when in the Temple at Jerusalem, again disclosing how perfectly acquainted was the Lord with his desires, and this time for his countrymen's welfare. Guidance he received afresh. Then at Corinth, when in danger of discouragement, the Lord a third time communicated with him, and kept him in that city to labour for his Saviour. And now on a fourth occasion, but the second time at night, the Lord spoke to encourage His servant. If men might think his service in life was over, Paul should learn that there was yet more that he should be permitted to engage in. Gracious Master, how truly dost Thou care for and minister to Thine own !

Estimating Service. What real work had Paul done in Jerusalem? He had not preached in any synagogue. He had not let his voice be heard in the Temple. Nobody, that we read of, had been converted, nor any unsaved impressed. No conscience was reached. No heart was even softened. Men are too often apt to judge by immediate results. If there are none, then all that has been done is pronounced of no use. Paul had addressed the multitude from the stairs, but it only excited still more their rage and opposition. Judged, then, by immediate results, it must be pronounced a failure. But was it a failure? Did the Lord so regard it? He did not. Very different, at times, is the Lord's estimate of service from that of man's. Paul had borne witness for Christ. It was not labour in vain. And by-and-by, when the yield of the harvest can be rightly estimated and openly displayed, that will be made apparent. Meanwhile, what encouragement for labourers to remember that testimony for Christ is not forgotten by Him, nor thought little of, though at the time there may be no visible results! How many have been called to labour in the winter time, as it were, sowing the seed in anything but genial weather, or, it may be, but preparing the ground ! Such labour may seem, in the eyes of the multitude, of little worth compared with the rich harvest which falls beneath the sickle of the reaper. Most men are apt to think of the reaper; little, often, of the sower. Yet, had not the sower been first at work, what fruit would there have been for the reaper to gather? That which the Lord told His disciples at Sychar we all do well to remember: "Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth : I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." Those to whom the Lord referred had very likely long passed away. They had wrought no deliverance on the earth, neither had the inhabitants of the world fallen (Isaiah 26:18). True service, nevertheless, had been theirs, though they had never seen the fields at Sychar white for harvest. And the Lord did not forget them ; nor will He. So in other cases. Instead of hastily judging or depreciating the labours of others, let us wait for that time to judge when "the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together" (John 4:36-38). A Plot. To return. Morning came, and with it most unexpectedly light on the path of Claudius Lysias. A company of Jews, upwards of forty in number, had bound themselves under a curse not to eat nor to drink till they had slain Paul. But in the chief captain's hands Paul was safe. How, then, should they carry out their purpose ? The council was to ask the chief captain for a second examination ; then, on Paul's road to the court, these Jews would waylay and kill him. What hatred to the truth this manifested! They could not confute the Apostle, so they would kill him. And, what was worse, chief priests and elders, members of the council, were made privy to it. Those who should have set an example of impartial justice were ready to connive at this iniquity. What demoralisation there must have been among the members of the Sanhedrin, when any of them could lend an ear to such a proposition! But Paul's nephew, his sister's son, heard of it, and

told him. Sent by the Apostle to Lysias, the young man revealed the plot. The chief captain thereupon took prompt measures, and sent away his prisoner that night to Cesarea under a strong escort of soldiers, sending also a letter to Felix the governor, acquainting him with the fact that Paul was a Roman, and that nothing worthy of death or of bonds had been proved against him.

Thankful must. Lysias have been when released from further responsibility in the matter. Thrice had he saved Paul's life. The first time was when he appeared so promptly on the scene, and rescued him from the hands of the infuriated mob. A second time he saved his life, when at his command the military carried off Paul from the council, lest he should have been torn in pieces by the Sadducean members of it. A third time he saved him, when he had sent him out of Jerusalem to Caesarea under an armed escort. Lysias had done his duty. His name appears but once more in the narrative (xxiv. 22).

Paul had now left Jerusalem, perhaps for ever, certainly for years. His life at Caesarea under detention will next come before us. Meanwhile, arriving in that city, he had completed the first stage of his journey to Home.

04.24. PAUL AT CSESAREA.

PAUL AT CSESAREA.

Acts 23:33—xxvi. 32.

ABOUT ten days had elapsed since Paul, bidding farewell to Philip the Evangelist and the Christian community at Caesarea, had started for Jerusalem with Luke and others, as well as certain brethren who belonged to that city. Now he had returned to the political capital of the province, the seat of the Roman government, and escorted by cavalry. He had gone up to Jerusalem a free man. He returned a prisoner. But though his personal liberty was thereby denied him, power to minister the truth of God was still vouchsafed him, and opportunities for that service were not to be wholly lacking. Of magistrates and governors he had already had some experience. What provincial magistrates might do in defiance of righteousness he had learnt at Philippi. Before proconsuls he had also stood, first at Paphos, as the expounder of truth to the open ear of Sergius Paulus ; then at Corinth, where Gallio refused to be the instrument of Jewish tyranny, in order to condemn one who had not broken any law of the Empire. Now of procurators in Judaea he was to have experience, first of Felix, and then of Porcius Festus. On his arrival at Cresarea he stood before Felix for the first time. It was but a short interview, and spent chiefly in the governor reading the letter of Claudius Lysias, and then asking Paul, in relation to his Roman citizenship we suppose, to what province he belonged. Learning it was Cilicia, he promised attention to the matter when Paul’s accusers should come. For Lysias, having remitted the case to Felix, his superior, had ordered the accusers to prosecute their suit before the procurator at Csesarea.

Felix. - Of Felix we must now speak. Originally, like his brother Pallas, a slave, he had, in common with him, been purchased by Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius. Pallas was probably naturally the most gifted of the two brothers. Both set free, they after the death of Antonia attached themselves to the Emperor. Pallas got into high office in the Imperial household. Felix got advancement in the army. Through Pallas’s influence with Agrippina, the fourth wife of Claudius Caesar, his brother Felix, for services rendered by Pallas to the Jews, got nominated to the procuratorship of Judea. Considering his origin and rise, we need not be surprised to learn that nobility of character was not one of his virtues. Self-interest, furthered by any means in his power, governed the man. So whatever stood in the way of that he was ready to sacrifice. Of this we have a sad example in the history of Jonathan, an ex-high-priest, at whose request it had been that Felix was nominated to his procuratorship. Felix therefore owed Jonathan much. Yet, because he ventured to remonstrate with the governor for his tyrannical ways, he was marked out for assassination. Felix corrupted Doras, a friend of Jonathan, to plot against the latter’s life. This he did. And by the Sicarii* or assassins, the ex-high-priest was killed, and no one was brought to justice for the murder.

* The Sicarii, Josephus writes (Ant., XX. 8: 10), "made use of small swords, not much different in length from the Persian aoinacte, but somewhat crooked, and like the Roman sicce [or sickles], as they were called; and from these weapons these robbers got their denomination, and with those

weapons they slew a great many; for they mingled themselves among the multitude at their festivals, when they were come up in crowds from all parts to the city to worship God, as we said before, and easily slew those that they had a mind to slay."

Again, practising dissimulation towards Eleazar, a notorious bandit though he was, in order to get him into his hands, he had no sooner secured him than he sent him bound in chains to Rome. Such wily planning may for a time succeed, but the one who thus acts forfeits the esteem and confidence of honourable men. No one admires or respects such a character. Eleazar had trusted to the governor's honour, and found to what a faithless man he had listened.

Then, too, nothing was to stand in Felix' way of gratifying his passions. So, through Simon the Magician,* he got Brasilia, the sister of Agrippa II., and wife of Azizus, King of Emesa, to forsake her husband, and to live with him. Azizus dying a short time after, perhaps of a broken heart, Drusilla became the wife of Felix. No wonder that Tacitus (Hist., 5: 9) in a well-known passage described him as one who "had the soul of a slave with the power of a sovereign, and exercised his power in all manner of cruelty and lust." Avarice, too, was a vice which characterised him. Bribes he would take, and bribes he sought (Acts 24:26). On the other hand, he was not deficient in courage or decision. He had manifested that in dealing with banditti who had infested the province. So the compliment paid him by Tertullus (xxiv. 2, 3) had truth in it. Added to all this, he already had some knowledge of "the way," as Luke calls it, which made him the less ready to be swayed by the unsupported accusations of the Jews against Paul. Such was the man in whose hands, under God, Paul's life and person were for a time placed.

* This so-called magician was, Josephus tells us (Ant., XX. 7: 2), a Jew, a Cypriot by birth. Some would identify him with Simon Magus of Acts 8:1-40 : But if Justin Martyr is correct, that cannot be, for Magus, was said to be a native of Samaria. The Trial. Five days went by, during which Paul was kept a prisoner in Herod's palace, or praetorium. At the end of that time Ananias, the high priest, appeared with certain elders, we may presume those of the Sadducean party, in response to the charge of Lysias to present themselves before Felix. An orator accompanied them, one Tertullus, of mere local celebrity probably, to whom they trusted to present their cause in the most favourable light. Whether he was a Jew or a Roman the history does not intimate; for the words of the last clause of ver. 6 to the end of the first clause of ver. 8 of chap. 24: should probably be omitted. Did we retain that passage, it would indicate that he was a Jew, from the words "our law " (6). Omitting it, as seems more proper, his nationality is not declared. Evidently Ananias and the elders determined to use all efforts to crush Paul at this time, and so took down this orator with them to plead on their behalf. So far for the accusers.

What about the accused? No orator that we hear of volunteered to present his case in the most favourable light before the court. No one pleaded his cause. Was he deserted? Was he worse off for this? He had One with him unknown to Ananias, Tertullus, or Felix; and relying on His help and guidance, he could with perfect equanimity let the orator speak, and that necessarily first, assured that neither human eloquence, nor unblushing flattery, nor artful misrepresentation could really damage his defence. The Lord had told the disciples, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that spsak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you"

(Matthew 10:18-20). This Paul, like Stephen before him, would now prove. The Accusation. Tertullus, as the prosecutor, now began to plead, but in the presence of the accused. With flattery, yet not unmixed with truth, the advocate commenced. Felix had acted against the robbers which had infested the province, and had in measure put them down. Now there was another matter in which he might, Tertullus would imply, profitably engage, and gain widespread popularity and the thanks of a grateful nation. The man, the defendant, was a pestilent fellow, so should of course be put down by the strong arm of the law. But more, he was a mover of seditions (or, insurrections) among all the Jews throughout the world. If robbers in the province had been put down, here was one whose influence and evil work extended throughout the Empire. So averred Tertullus. What an opportunity for Felix, then, to ingratiate himself with the whole province, and to deserve the thanks of the Emperor himself, for stopping, by the power with which he was entrusted, further seditions which the prisoner at the bar might otherwise stir up. An enemy of the nation! An enemy to the peace of the Empire! What a monster Paul must be! But not all had yet been stated that could be, and should be. He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoraeans; and last, but not least in the eyes of a Jew, he had profaned the Temple. Four definite counts, then, there were.

1st. He was a pestilent fellow.

2nd. He was a mover of seditions among all the Jews throughout the Roman Empire.

3rd. He was a ringleader of the Nazorseans.

4th. He had profaned the Temple.

What the Jews would have put first - the profanation of the Temple, a grave crime, and one that by their regulations deserved death - Tertullus put last, placing in the foreground those other charges, which he expected would tell more on Felix. Would Felix show himself in this affair to be Caesar’s friend? Would he earn the thanks of the Jewish nation? Now was his opportunity to prove himself a worthy governor by dealing severely with Paul. Tertullus knew his man. But he did not know that God was behind it all, nor that Paul was yet to visit Rome; so all attempts of the Jews to compass his death would prove abortive.

Then was all that Tertullus had said really true? Was Paul under the cloak of religion such a pestilent fellow as the orator would wish to make out? Corroboration was required in support of the accusations. Corroboration was at hand. The Jews who came with Tertullus joined in setting on Paul. And now Felix, by examination of the prisoner in open court, could easily satisfy himself of the truth of the indictment. But more, the Jews had a grievance in this matter, which must be laid before the governor. This Tertullus now mentions. Condign punishment would have been meted out to the offender, now the prisoner at the bar, by those at Jerusalem. How that had been hindered Felix of course knew. So the Jewish advocate does not particularise it. In what different lights the same action can be presented! Lysias claimed merit for what he had done (xxiii. 27). The Jews regarded it as interference with their rights of apprehending and dealing with Paul. Yet they had no right to inflict the punishment of death without the sanction of the Roman authorities. The Defence. Tertullus had finished. The Jews there assembled had supported the allegations. It now came to Paul’s turn to speak. An undefended prisoner, with not one solitary witness to testify in his favour, could he hope to escape conviction? Would the high priest and the elders have travelled from Jerusalem to Csesarea to take up a trumpery case, or to engage in a doubtful contest? If

they, with the orator, had appeared before Felix, the case must be one of real importance, and the conviction of the offender a public duty. So many might have reasoned. Was Paul abashed? Was he appalled at the task before him? At the sign from the governor that he was at liberty to speak, he began cheerily, and, we can add, confidently. "Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do cheerfully [we should read] answer for myself" (xxiv. 10). Felix had been procurator for about five years - a longer period of office than was usually allotted to such provincial governors. He had, therefore, the more time to become acquainted with Jewish ecclesiastical matters than if he had but lately entered on his office. Evidently, too, as our historian informs us, he was not wholly ignorant of the rise and presence of Christianity in the very bosom of Judaism, and he may have had opportunities of learning that the Nazareans, as Tertullus called them, were not so bad as their countrymen would paint them. Tertullus had complimented Felix when he began. Paul did not, though he gave the governor, and rightly, credit for some little acquaintance with such matters as engaged his attention that day. At once Paul plunged into the grave subjects of the indictment. "A pestilent fellow" Tertullus had called him. What had brought Paul to Jerusalem at that time? He came to bring alms to his own nation (17). Was that like a pestilent fellow? But twelve days, too, had elapsed since he had entered Jerusalem. What had he been doing there? Purifying himself according to the Mosaic ritual and worshipping God. A strange kind of pestilent fellow certainly! Was he a seditious person, a fomenter of political disturbances among his countrymen? Neither in the Temple nor in the city had he attracted people round him. He was quietly waiting for the time to offer sacrifices, neither disputing in the Temple, nor in any synagogue, nor stirring up the people in the city. Moreover, this supposed mover of seditions among all the Jews in the Empire worshipped the God of their fathers, believing firmly in a resurrection of the just and of the unjust. Hence, with that in prospect, he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Was all that like a pestilent fellow, or a raiser of seditions? Openly and fearless of contradiction he could thus speak in the presence of Ananias and his company. And certainly no one on this occasion rose up before Felix and challenged the truthfulness of his statements. But two other charges there were. To the one he pleaded guilty. He was a Christian. He was not ashamed of it. "After the manner which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (14). Now this grave offence, as it was in the eyes of a Jew, was none in Roman law. The other charge, that of profaning the Temple, was wholly untrue; and it was enough for Paul to comment, and justly, on the absence of any supposed witnesses of such an offence. That charge fell, therefore, to the ground. Certain Jews from Asia had made the accusation, but none of them were present to support it. Had Ananias secured the services of Tertullus, and forgotten to see that material witnesses should be forthcoming? Or did he not know that this accusation was untenable’? As high priest it became him to vindicate the honour of the Temple, if Paul had polluted it.

Paul, in his turn, had finished. Felix clearly perceived that there was no ground for his condemnation: and very likely thinking to reap pecuniary profit out of the case, he deferred judgment till Lysias should come. This, it seems, never happened. The Jews, therefore, returned to Jerusalem discomfited, whilst Paul was still kept a prisoner at Caesarea. Liberty, however, was allowed him to receive the visits of his friends who might minister to him.

Fresh Honours. Two years thus passed. But fresh honours the Lord put on His servant. He had been allowed to bear testimony to Him in Jerusalem. He was now to be permitted to speak for Him at Caesarea. There were Christians, as we know, at Caesarea, and had been for years. And though Felix had been for five years or more resident in that town, he had never commanded, we may be sure, any of them to acquaint him with their tenets, or to let them preach to him. A Nazarean preach at Caesarea to a Roman! That would be strange. Yet it was true. For Paul, not for Philip, or Luke, or Aristarchus, Felix sent. The prisoner in bonds should tell the governor of the grace of God, and of His love shown in giving His Son to die for the guilty and the lost. Felix sent for Paul. The movement and the desire were on the governor's part, and he heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus, as perhaps we should read. The gospel of God's grace was preached in the governor's palace, and to him directly. How many were present we know not; nor whether it was a strictly private interview, which perhaps is more probable, we cannot definitely say. Of two who were listeners we do, however, read - Felix and his wife (or, as perhaps Luke wrote, his own wife), for he had now married her. What a pair! What an occasion! Of Drusilla we have already made mention (p. 331). Now these two, open sinners as they had been, together listened to the stirring, burning words of Paul, in which righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come were subjects of which he treated, handled, we may be sure, by a master's hand, and under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Bold was Paul. Neither Tertullus nor Ananias would have dared thus to speak in the governor's presence. But Paul, was bold. Yet it was not boldness springing from rashness. It was the boldness of the man who knew the Lord was on his side, and who was sure of the power of the Spirit. Felix felt, as doubtless he had never felt before, the power of the Word. Not that there was eloquence, which moved the feelings, and carried the listener away. But there was power in the Apostle's reasoning. Felix trembled. And well he might; for a coming judgment, when unrighteousness will be exposed and judged, is no soothing theme. And the thought of eternity for one unprepared is anything but exhilarating. He felt the awfulness of the judgment to come for one like him, guilty of unrighteousness, adultery, and avarice, if indeed his conscience could acquit him of the crime of murder. Was Drusilla alarmed? Was she too moved? About her the historian maintains silence. But Felix was - he trembled. The preacher was in earnest; the address was powerful. The governor became afraid; he was terrified.

Very probably he never expected to hear such a solemn discourse, and never before had listened to one whose very words were like daggers penetrating his inmost soul. The rebukes of Jonathan, the ex-high-priest, had been as nothing compared with this. The words of the former enraged him. Those of the latter terrified him. Yet he did not resent them as an impertinence. He felt the force of what Paul had said, which, without charging Felix with any of his enormities, yet brought them to his remembrance, shown up in their true light. Conscience can speak, and when it does the individual must be silent. The past life of the governor rose up before him as the foreground of the picture of which judgment and eternity were the background, and all lit up with a lurid light. For the first time in his life Felix was in the light. But light, unless Divine grace is known and enjoyed, is too much for the responsible and guilty creature. To get away from it is the natural impulse. So he dismissed Paul, saying, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (xxiv. 25). Many a one had doubtless trembled before Felix as the governor. Felix now trembled at the words of Paul the prisoner. But avarice still possessed him. Their last meeting had not taken place. He sent for him often, and communed with him; not that he desired salvation, but he wished for money to be offered, "that he might loose him." We say this, because, though the

words we have quoted from ver. 26 are not found in the oldest uncials, they are quite in accord with the governor's known character. But Paul, we may be sure, at the different interviews which followed, neither spoke honeyed words, nor sought to curry favour with Drusilla, in order to procure his liberty. And Felix never got the smallest encouragement to hope that a bribe would be forthcoming. Two full years passed. The governor and his prisoner were still in the same relative position to each other, when Felix was recalled. Now the time of retribution in this world might be for him at hand. To secure, then, the favour of the Jews he left Paul bound. Yet, like many another crafty plan, the object was defeated. Paul was left bound at Caesarea. The Jews accused Felix at Borne. And it required all the influence of his brother Pallas with the Emperor Nero to shield the unrighteous governor from the consequences of his flagrant enormities.

Festus. The new procurator arrived, Porcius Festus by name, a better man than his predecessor, and one who seemed to wish to act aright. The post, however, was doubtless a diflicult one to fill successfully and with credit to himself. Naturally he would desire to keep on good terms with the Jews on the one hand. Then Paul, on the other, still in bonds, the procurator must take up and deal with the case righteously. That was man's side of the matter. But there was another. The Lord had suffered Paul to be left in bonds by Felix because He had still work for His servant at Caesarea. Paul's matter, however, would be no longer vexatiously delayed.

Another Note of Time. The arrival of Festus into the province gives us another, a third, date in the history of the Acts. Herod Agrippa I. died, as we have already stated, A.D. 44. Gallio's proconsulship, the next date furnished us by Luke, was in A.D. 53. Now Festus's supersession of Felix took place A.D. 60. About seven years, then, had rolled by since Paul's appearance at Corinth before the tribunal of Gallio. And since Paul had, under Felix, been two years in prison at Caesarea, the Apostle's last visit to Jerusalem must have taken place in the year 58 A.D., five years after his first visit to the capital of Achaia. For three years of this period Piul was labouring uninterruptedly at Ephesus, leaving two years for his return to Antioch (xviii. 22), his passage through Asia Minor to Ephesus, his three months' sojourn in Greece, and his last journey to Jerusalem. Before Festus. - Three days after the governor's arrival at Ciesarea he went up to Jerusalem. Whilst there he was spoken to about the case. A new governor might be more pliant than the previous one. So the chief priests* and chiefs of the Jews approached Festus, and desired that he would have Paul brought to Jerusalem, and there tried, intending to waylay and kill him on the road. But God watched over His servant. Festus refused compliance with that request, answering, properly, that Paul should be tried at Caesarea, his accusers, as many as were able, going down thither to prosecute.

* "The chief priests," not high priest, is here the best-attested reading. Ishmael the son of Fabi was high priest at this juncture. Perhaps he felt, after Ananias' defeat, the folly of prosecuting further the matter, and so was not foremost in approaching the governor. Agrippa II. had deposed Ananias, and had appointed Ishmael to the office. How low had religion sunk among the Jews, when they quietly acquiesced in the civil power deposing and installing the high priests !

Eight or ten days having passed - so the historian probably wrote - Festus returned to Caesarea. On the following day, sitting on the judgment seat, Paul was brought before him. For the first time in his career the governor was made practically acquainted with one of the difficulties connected with that procuratorship. The laws of the Jews, of Divine enactment, and consecrated by age,

having been promulgated, as far as found in Scripture, centuries before Rome was founded, or the rise of the Babylonish power symbolised in Daniel 2:1-49 : as the head of gold, those laws differed from heathen customs and Greek constitutions, as well as from Roman jurisprudence; so that a death penalty might be incurred under them, unknown to the statute-book of the Roman Empire. And now, brought face to face with this difficulty, what should Festus do ? The trial proceeded. Once more had the Apostle to listen to many and grievous charges brought against him, none of which could be legally established. That was evident. And Paul, on answering, pressed that on his judge, saying, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all" (xxv. 8). Puzzled evidently as to what he should do was Porcius Festus. Unfounded charges were no grounds on which to punish any one in a Roman court of justice. Willing, however, to earn popularity with the Jews, he asked if Paul would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged before him. His question to Paul was a confession that he could not legally change the venue in that fashion. For that Paul's consent would be required. Would he give it? Paul knew better than Festus the risk of life that he would run, and answered the procurator at once: "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. If then [so we should read] I be an offender, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die : but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar" (xxv. 10, 11). Paul could teach Festus his duty. The proper tribunal for a Roman citizen in that province was not Jerusalem, but Caesarea. There was the seat of government, and there was the court of the representative of the Emperor. Would Festus wish to take the cause to Jerusalem, to be there tried before him ? That was not the right way of dealing with a Roman. Paul thereupon claimed his privilege as a Roman. He appealed to Caesar. The proposition just made by Festus brought matters to a point. "Hast thou appealed," he said, "unto Caesar shalt thou go." Thenceforward Paul was kept in bonds till it should be convenient to send him with other prisoners to Rome. Meanwhile a further honour was to be put on him. The procurator, King Agrippa, Bernice, and all the chief officials of the Roman power in the province were to hear from him of his conversion, and of the mission with which the Lord Jesus in glory had entrusted him - a mission that directly and blessedly concerned the Gentiles.

Agrippa and Bernice. An appeal to the Emperor was the right of a Roman citizen, though a certain discretion was allowed the provincial governors to yield to or to withhold the privilege. In this case there was no ground for disallowing it, and Festus and his council were agreed on that point.

Now a new scene opens before us, consequent on the arrival at Caesarea of King Agrippa and Bernice to salute the new procurator. Of these two we must speak.

Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa I., whose awful end is related in Acts 12:1-25 : At the death of his father (A.D. 44), the Emperor Claudius, thinking him too young to succeed to all the territories that Herod Agrippa had recently received, appointed him King of Chalcis (A.D. 48 or 49). At the age of twenty-six he received from the Emperor an increase of territory, consequent on the death of his great-uncle Herod Philip. This included Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Batanea, and Abilene, which last had originally been ruled over by the tetrarch Lysanias (Luke 3:1). On the accession of the Emperor Nero, Agrippa, who evidently played his cards well, received further extension of territory by the addition of the cities of Abila and Julias in Persea, and of Tarichsea and Tiberias in Galilee. His residence was at Caesarea Philippi. Besides this, he was invested with the

prerogative of appointing the high priests, and with the wardenship of the Temple, and the disposition of the Corban, or sacred treasure.* * Josephus, Ant., XX. 1: 3.

Bernice was his sister, and the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I., her youngest sister being the beautiful Drusilla, of whom we have already made mention. Of Bernice, morally, there is nothing good to report. She seems to have sunk lower than her sister Drusilla. She was married three times, first to Marcus, next to her uncle Herod of Chalcis, then to Polemo II., king of part of Cilicia. Like her sisters Mariamne and Drusilla, she deserted her husband, King Polemo, and was at the time of this visit living with her brother Agrippa at Caesarea Philippi; and if reports are true, and the lines of the Roman satirist Juvenal (Sat., 6: 156) are correct, her relations with her brother must be described as incestuous. Infatuating men by her charms, she had that fatal gift of beauty, ensnaring indeed to the other sex, and which has blasted the character of not a few who have possessed it. And if Tacitus (Hist., 2: 81) is correct, as referred to by Dean Alford, she was the mistress of Vespasian, and then (Suet., Tit 100: 7) the mistress of Titus his son, who would, it is said, have married her, but the jealousy of the Romans forbade it. Such were the guests of Festus at Caesarea. To Festus the presence of Agrippa II. at this juncture must have seemed very opportune. He had to forward Paul to Rome, but knew not what to say about him to Nero. The questions that the Jews had raised he did not understand, and one great subject of contention seemed foolish to him. It was about, he said, one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive (xxv. 19). Could Agrippa help him in this matter? He a Jew, was better able to understand the mind of his countrymen, and the cause of their open hostility to Paul. Of Paul, Agrippa had doubtless already heard. Now an opportunity thus unexpectedly occurred for him to see and hear the one who stirred up, as no other living person did, the intense hatred and malice of his countrymen. The matter introduced by Festus, Agrippa expressed his wish to hear that man. That desire could be easily gratified. "To-morrow," said Festus, "thou shalt hear him " (xxv. 22).

Before Agrippa. The morrow came. And Agrippa and Bernice, with great pomp, with the chief captains, and with the principal men of the city, being assembled by Festus in the hall of audience, Paul was brought in before them. We must remember that this was not a fresh trial, so we read not of a judgment seat, as in a previous verse of the chapter (6). It was an opportunity provided for Agrippa to hear the remarkable man, but a prisoner, whose case fairly puzzled the procurator. No accusers, therefore, were present, nor were they intended to be. To hear Paul was the object of the meeting (22) ; and probably to do Agrippa honour, the chief captains and principal men of the city were assembled. All present, and Paul before them, but bound, Festus briefly stated the object of the meeting, that, after examination had, he might have somewhat to write to the Emperor. Then Agrippa, addressing Paul, told him he was at liberty to speak for himself. He began. At last he stood before one who was expert in all customs and questions that were among the Jews. So he craved a patient hearing. Of his life before his conversion he first spoke. All at Jerusalem were acquainted with it. He had been a Pharisee, and now he stood to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, he could say, addressing King Agrippa as a Jew. What that promise was, and consequently what the hope of it meant, the Apostle had stated in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (xiii. 32-34). Agrippa well knew to what Paul referred - the promise of a Saviour, and the deliverance of the nation under Him from their enemies (Luke 1:68-75.) The fulfilment, however, of the national expectation involved really the resurrection of the Deliverer. This Paul preached, and announced the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Why should resurrection

be a stumbling-block? Is it incredible that God should (or, if God doth) raise the dead ? (Acts 26:8).

Then going on to narrate his course as a persecutor,* he described the manner of his remarkable conversion. This was the second time that he narrated that history. Now on each occasion we get something not mentioned elsewhere. The Lord's words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," are really, as we previously stated (p. 122), only met with in this recital, and their meaning would be well understood by his audience, for the simile was not unknown to Greek and Roman writers. Then, too, we see how the Apostle, on these two occasions on which he recounted the history of the turning-point in his life, considered the audience which he was addressing. On the stairs at Jerusalem (xxii. 12-16) he puts Ananias forward, dwelling on the good report that he had of all the Jews in Damascus, and recounts more at length than Luke had done (ix. 17) what that good man said to him. On this occasion, addressing the Roman procurator, and in the presence and hearing of Roman officials, he makes known that which previously has not been mentioned - viz., the Lord's communication to him when on the ground, which marked out his special sphere of service to be among the Gentiles. How suited was this! Which of his audience would have felt an interest in the character borne by Ananias, or in the details of his visit to Paul? But which of the Gentiles in that hall of audience was not concerned really in the announcement of Divine grace to be offered to them? So here we read : "Rise, stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee ; delivering [or perhaps, taking thee out] from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I [omitting, now] send thee, to open their eyes, 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" (xxvi. 16-18). The moral condition of Gentiles stated - blind, in darkness, and under Satanic power; by the preaching of the Gospel eyes could be opened, to light could they be turned, and deliverance From the devil's thraldom could be effected and consciously known. Further, grace would be enjoyed - the grace of forgiveness of sins; and an inheritance be shared in, everlasting in duration (Hebrews 9:15), and limited in extent only by the confines of heaven and earth (Ephesians 1:10-14).

*(1 Corinthians 15:9 ; Galatians 1:13; Php 3:6 ; 1 Timothy 1:13). And martyrdoms by his instrumentality were not unknown. Only of one do we read, that of Stephen ; but the Apostle here intimates that his was not the only one by any means. How exceedingly mad had he been! All this made his sudden conversion the more remarkable.

Before this august assembly, the elite of the province, with the king, too, and his sister as listeners, Paul had the privilege and the honour of announcing the Divine purpose of ministering to men wholly unworthy of it everlasting blessing, but only in connection with the Lord Jesus - 1:e., by faith in Him (Acts 26:18). Agrippa had watched the flowing tide at Rome to ingratiate himself with the Emperors Claudius and Nero, and was rewarded with territory over which he ruled as king. Small, however, very small, was his kingdom compared with that of the Emperor's; and poor in wealth was he compared with many who had borne on earth the title of king. Now he heard, and all the Romans assembled heard, of an inheritance in which they could have part, compared with which that of the Caesars was as nothing. Transient, too, was the possession of the Imperial throne. Everlasting was the inheritance to which Paul referred. What blessings for Gentiles to hear about, and to know of being within their reach !

Charged, then, with such a message, received in such a way, and from such a Person as the Lord, the crucified One, but now in glory, what could Paul do but spread it abroad? This he had done, insisting on Jews and on Gentiles repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance - 1:e., worthy of it. For this, he told Agrippa, the Jews seized him in the Temple, and sought to kill him. Would he renounce his line of ministry in consequence? Agrippa shall hear : "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which both the prophets and Moses did say should come : that the Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and [or better, that He first by resurrection of the dead] should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles " (xxvi. 22, 23).

Upon this Festus, who had listened, and, we may believe, earnestly, interposed, saying in a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (24). To him, a heathen, the doctrine of the resurrection seemed, as it did to philosophers at Athens (xvii. 32), but arrant folly. At once the Apostle replied, "I am not mad, most noble [or, most excellent] Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (xxvi. 25); and referred him to Agrippa, who could confirm what he, Paul, had just declared. Then turning abruptly to Agrippa, and addressing him, he said, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Confirmation of the Apostle's teaching was found in the prophets. Agrippa, as a Jew, professed to believe them. If he did, how could he stand out against Christianity, resisting the proved fulfilment in the life and death of the Lord of that which they had written? Thus suddenly appealed to, and so publicly, and put thereby into a corner, as we should say, the king evidently felt himself in a difficult position, and replied, either in jest or in irony, as it appears, "With but little * persuasion, thou wouldest fain make me a Christian " (28). Did Paul think that he could be so easily turned round, and enroll himself amongst the despised and hated company of the Christians? Paul had allowed himself to be suddenly turned round. Did he think that he, the king, could be so easily moved? Did the king then by his retort veil the embarrassment in which the Apostle's appeal had put him? It looks like it. Paul replied, taking up the expression used by Agrippa. He had nothing to conceal, nothing of which he was ashamed. So he openly expressed his desire. "I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds " (29).

* This is a more correct translation of the original. "Almost" of the Authorised Version, it is generally agreed, does not represent the meaning of Agrippa. Were that translation admissible, it might convey the thought that the king was in earnest. The rendering above, which is that of the Revised Version, gives ground to believe that he spoke in irony, or in jest. A fine answer, which, whatever effect it had on any of the company, has called forth the unqualified admiration of many and many a reader since that time. What had Paul suffered? What was he then suffering, deprived of his liberty, and attacked as he had been as a malefactor? What might he yet suffer? Did he then envy those around him, seemingly more fortunate than himself ? Did he envy the worldly success and advancement of the king, and his continued enjoyment of Imperial favours? Would he exchange his lot for that of Agrippa's ? We know he would not. Yet he had a wish, an earnest desire. For whom? For himself? No, but for others, even for every unconverted person in that hall. What was it? He tells them. That they might be as he was, his bonds excepted. Happy Paul, we may indeed say. The love of God and the love of Christ he enjoyed, of which the great ones before

him knew nothing. He had, too, a home in which they had no part, and a future to which they could not look forward, and such as they had never conceived. He knew, too, the ground he was on before God, standing on the accepted sacrifice. The procurator's duration of power was limited. The reign of Agrippa, however prolonged, could not last for ever. Bernice's fascinating powers must decline. But Paul would in time be with Christ on high, and find his home in the Father's house - a home made ready for him by the Lord Jesus Christ, with whom he will reign for ever and ever. What could earth provide to equal this? What could an Emperor bestow, or even enjoy, to rival it ?

Agrippa now rose, not wishing to prolong the interview. With him rose Festus, Bernice, and all the chief men there present. Then conferring apart, they unanimously agreed that Paul was innocent of any crime of which the law that they had to administer took cognisance. And Agrippa further ventured the remark, that it was only Paul's appeal to the Emperor which stood in the way of his immediate liberation. What was Festus, then, to write? What did he write? Who now can say? The Apostle's innocence was established. Lysias had arrived at that conclusion, after hearing what the Sanhedrin had to say against him (xxiii. 29). Felix, too, tacitly confessed it, when, giving orders to the centurion to detain him in custody till the coming of Lysias, he allowed him indulgence, as well as the privilege of seeing his friends and of being ministered to by them. And now Festus, Agrippa, and the governor's council all agreed in declaring his innocence. Not one who had legal jurisdiction over him but was convinced of the groundlessness of the charges persistently urged by the Jews. But more. Throughout his detention at Caesarea the moral superiority of Paul shines out most clearly. Before Felix the prisoner and the governor had virtually changed places. The prisoner it was who advocated righteousness and temperance, and all that in view of a coming judgment. The governor had grossly violated the principles which one in his position ought to have practised, as well as upheld. And Paul by his powerful address made Felix tremble. The latter must have felt, and inwardly owned, that the former was immeasurably his superior. The thought of a coming judgment, at which Felix was terrified, Paul could face with equanimity ; for, justified by faith, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). Then as to Festus and Agrippa. What moral greatness was displayed in that answer to Agrippa! He knew whom he believed, and was persuaded that He was able to keep that which the Apostle had committed unto Him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12). A prisoner he might be, his liberty thus curtailed; persecution, too, he had suffered; and martyrdom might end his course: yet with all that he was better off than the officials before whom he stood. He had what they had not, yet nothing that they might not come to share in with him, if they turned to the Saviour of sinners. Paul's position of acceptance before God, and the future in store for him, he desired for each one of them who would have it. Before Felix he stands as a preacher of righteousness. Before Festus and Agrippa he appears as the possessor of blessing, which far outweighed all that earth could provide or human favour could bestow.

Taken Out. We must now notice some points in his defence, or suggested by it. First, he was taken out, rather than delivered, from the people - 1:e., Israel - and from the Gentiles (Acts 26:17). Called out for heaven, and one of the Church of God, he was, as 1 Corinthians 10:32 teaches, distinct from Jews and Gentiles, apart from both. In this all Christians share, forming that third class on earth of which that passage just referred to speaks. An interesting point this is, and has for those who understand it important results. The Church is something distinct from anything before known. The Church is no development of Judaism. It is something wholly different from it.

Judaising teaching has no place in it really. The Twelve Tribes. Next we are reminded by his address of the unbroken unity before God of the twelve tribes of Israel. Since the days of Rehoboam they had been divided. Yet Elijah viewed them as a whole before God, erecting his altar on Carmel (1 Kings 18:31) of twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes. Captivity overtook the ten before Nebuchadnezzar carried captive the kingdom of Judah. To this day the ten have never returned, though they will, as Ezekiel (xx. 38-42) teaches us; and they will be again united under David their king (Ezekiel 37:19-28). So after the return of the remnant from Babylon, the little company gathered together at Jerusalem did not forget the rest of their brethren. For they offered on the day of the dedication of the house a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel (Ezra 6:17). Little likelihood of the nation's restoration, some might have thought. Such was not the view of faith, which Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the returned remnant had learnt to cherish. At all times and under all circumstances the people learnt to view them as a whole before God, and that from the days of Moses downwards. In the tabernacle this was symbolised during the dark hours of the night, as the light from the candlestick shone on the golden table, and on the twelve loaves of shew-bread thereon. Of the twelve tribes James writes (James 1:1). To the twelve tribes Paul, as we have seen, referred as presently existing (Acts 26:7). By-and-by it will be seen where they are on earth, when they emerge from their condition of dry bones, coming forth from their graves, and entering the land of Israel (Ezekiel 37:11-12). Nor on high will heavenly saints forget them, for their names will be eiiduringly written on the gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12). In the days, then, of Israel's apostasy under Ahab, Elijah, as we see, proclaimed the unbroken unity of the twelve. In the days of the nation's weakness the returned remnant thought of the whole nation. In Christian times James recognised their continued existence (James 1:1), and Paul confessed his belief in their final restoration and blessing under their Messiah in accordance with the prophetic word (Isaiah 11:11-16). The elect nation can never perish.

Ministry to Israel. We have noticed two points arising out of the Apostle's address. To a third let us briefly draw attention. In chapter 20: we have, stated by Paul himself, the chief subjects of his ministry. In our present chapter (xxvi. 22) we learn of the great use he made of the prophetic Scriptures. As he commenced (ix. 22), so he evidently went on. To them he turned his countrymen, and showed, with what blessed results to many, that the Lord Jesus Christ must be the One of whom Moses and the prophets did write, thus settling their faith on Christ in the written word of God. How Peter appealed to the Old Testament his sermon on the day of Pentecost bears witness. How Paul used that portion of revelation, then the only written revelation, his address at Antioch in Pisidia illustrates, and the Epistle to the Hebrews abundantly confirms. It was of course a new line of things, but quite in keeping with the mind of the Spirit in the Apostle's day, to open up the Old Testament Scriptures, and to show how the crucified One really answered to the inspired descriptions of Him who was to come. Christian teaching, whilst it unfolds much that was then new and distinctively characteristic of this dispensation, opens up also the Old Testament, and furnishes the only key, even Christ, to unlock that which before He came was as a sealed book oftentimes to the prophets themselves (1 Peter 1:10-12). Of the Old Testament both Peter and Paul made much use. A Coincidence. Agrippa and Bernice were now in the city in which their father had died about fifteen years before, smitten manifestly by the hand of God, through the instrumentality of an angel, shortly after that he had killed James by the sword, and had attempted, in order to please the Jews, to put Peter also to death. Now his son and daughter, finding

themselves at Caesarea, had the opportunity of hearing the great champion of Christianity - the Apostle Paul. Where death had visited their father, life, everlasting life, was put within their reach, had they desired it. He who made Felix tremble could have spoken words of life to them, if they had been willing. What an opportunity was theirs! Agrippa was unwilling to be convinced. Of Bernice we read nothing. The opportunity passed away then unimproved, and as far as we know never to return. The memories of the past might well have made them thoughtful, had not the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things stood in the way. And in time the brother and sister passed away. Familiar with courtly circles on earth, if they died unconverted, they will never reign with Christ, nor behold this earth basking in the sunshine of His presence. With the glitter of earthly pomp they were well acquainted. The glorious day of the Lord's return they will never behold.

Women. We have called attention (p. 280) to the men noticed in the Acts as serving in the work. Ere closing this part of the book we would remind the reader of women whose names will never be forgotten, as Tabitha of Joppa, Mary the mother of John Mark of Jerusalem, Lydia of Thyatira who dwelt at Philippi, and Priscilla the wife of Aquila. To these we would add Damaris of Athens, and one not mentioned in the Acts, but connected with its history, Phoebe of Cenchrea. Tabitha made garments for the poor (ix. 39). Mary at Jerusalem opened her house for prayer on the night of Peter's miraculous release (xii.). Lydia persuaded Paul and his company to make her abode their home whilst staying at Philippi (xvi.). Priscilla with Aquila received Paul under their roof at Corinth, helped Apollos to a better understanding of grace and truth (xviii.), and cheerfully, surely, prepared their house for a company of Christians to meet in week after week to show the Lord's death. Of Damaris we know nothing but that she identified herself with Paul at Athens (xvii. 34). Of Phoebe we learn elsewhere that she had been a succourer of many, and of Paul also (Romans 16:2). All these have honourable mention in Scripture. Moving most of them probably in quiet spheres of life, they did what they could ; and with womanly tact and intuition, as well as Christian love, they ministered as opportunity was afforded; and the Holy Ghost has placed on record the distinctive character of their services. How different do these shine out compared with Drusilla and Bernice ! Self, the love of influence and of admiration, to say nothing more, were guiding principles with the latter. Unostentatious yet true service for God and for Christ was the aim and desire of the former.

04.25. THE VOYAGE TO ITALY AND ARRIVAL AT ROME.

THE VOYAGE TO ITALY AND ARRIVAL AT ROME.

Acts 27:1—xxviii. 31. TO Rome the procurator sent Paul for the hearing of the Emperor Nero. At Rome the Lord had previously determined that he should bear witness to his Saviour. The Roman saints he himself had long wished to see; and, if allowed, would, when present, impart unto them some spiritual gift, that they might be established (Romans 1:11). Roman law necessitated his transmission to the capital. Divine purposes would be furthered by his presence there. Cherished desires of his heart would also be fulfilled. Paul, then, was not going against his will, though under circumstances which he had not originally foreseen. Of travel by land and by sea the great Apostle already had much and varied experience (2 Corinthians 11:25-26). Yet possibly he had never been in two such large vessels, as conveyed him, the one from Myra to Melita, and the other from Melita to Puteoli. The corn ships of Alexandria were anything but cockle-shells. Certainly, too, he had never made so long a voyage free of charge.

Sidon, Myra, Fair Havens, Melita, Syracuse, and Rhegium, these were the places at which they stopped, the stages on their journey between Caesarea, the port of embarkation, and Puteoli, near Naples, where they finally disembarked, to journey by land, and perhaps partly by canal also, onward to the capital.

Sidon. Of Sidon we have had no direct mention previously in the Acts. At Tyre Paul had landed on his last journey to Jerusalem; and during the week’s sojourn there, whilst the vessel was preparing to proceed to Ptolemais, a distinct communication, as we have seen (xxi. 4), by the Spirit had forbidden Paul’s contemplated visit to the capital. Now in the custody of the centurion Julius, Paul may have seen from the vessel the city and harbour of Tyre, and that spot on the shore where all the Christians, men, women, and children, had knelt in prayer with him and his company ere the latter re-embarked for Ptolemais. But Tyre on this occasion was not to be revisited, not being a port of call appointed for this vessel of Adramyttium, which was bound for Myra in Lycia. From Caesarea they sailed. Luke is now again with Paul, as the first person plural "we" indicates. Aristarchus, a Macedonian, was also with them, and perhaps homeward bound, so would part company at Myra, where they were transferred to a vessel sailing directly for Italy. Luke, however, continued with Paul, and they entered the gates of the Eternal City together. Starting from Caesarea, they went straight along by the coast northward to Sidon, which they reached the next day, covering in that space of time the first sixty-seven geographical miles of their voyage. In this very ancient, if, indeed, not the most ancient of the cities of Phoenicia, there were Christians. And Paul, who had evidently special indulgence, was allowed to go on shore to refresh himself with their company. Probably he had visited Sidon on more than one occasion in past years, when travelling between Jerusalem and Antioch; and we may well believe that when, in company with Barnabas, he went through Phoenicia and Samaria, announcing the conversion of the Gentiles (xv. 3), Sidon was not passed by without a visit from the travellers. Be that as it may, Paul evidently was acquainted with some of the Christians in Great Sidon, as it was once called

(Joshua 11:8; Joshua 19:28). This city, named probably after Sidon, the eldest son of Canaan, and therefore a great-grandson of Noah, gave its name to the people of Phoenicia, who are called in consequence in Scripture Sidonians (Deuteronomy 3:9 • Joshua 13:4; Joshua 13:6), but never Tyrians; for Tyre, the prophet Isaiah teaches us, was a daughter of Sidon (Isaiah 23:12). Figuring though it does in prophecy, the mother city is not, however, so prominently the object of Divine denunciation as her more wealthy and more renowned daughter Tyre, nor has she sunk so low.

We subjoin an extract from an eyewitness describing the present appearance of the two. Of Tyre he first writes: "New Tyre is now represented by a poor village. The ancient 'mistress of the seas' can only boast of a few fishing-boats. The modern houses of a better class have had their walls so shattered by earthquakes that the inhabitants have deserted them; and the modern ramparts are so ruinous that I went in and out over them in several places." Of Sidon he writes : "The aspect of Tyre is bleak and bare, but that of Sidon rich and blooming. In fact, it is one of the most picturesque towns in Syria. It stands on a low hill which juts out into the Mediterranean, and is defended by old but picturesque walls and towers. On a rocky islet, connected with the city by a broken bridge, is a ruined castle, once the defence of the harbour. The ancient architectural remains about Sidon are few - some marble and granite columns, some pieces of mosaic pavement, and some fragments of sculptured cornice. But the tombs are interesting. They dot the plain and the mountain side beyond, and have already yielded a rich harvest to the antiquary - Phoenician sarcophagi, Greek coins, funeral ornaments, and crystal vases. They would still repay a fuller inspection. The gardens and orchards of Sidon are charming. Oranges, lemons, citrons, bananas, and palms grow luxuriant, and give the environs of the old city a look of eternal spring. Sidon is one of the few spots in Syria where Nature's luxuriance has triumphed over neglect and ruin, and where a few relics of ancient prosperity still remain in street, and mart, and harbour. It is instructive to compare Tyre and Sidon. The former far outstripped the latter in grandeur, wealth, and power, but its history has been briefer and more momentous. Once and again the tide of war swept over Tyre, first leaving the old city desolate, and then the new in ruins. Sidon has been more fortunate, or perhaps I should say less unfortunate. The tide of war swept over it too, but the wave was not so destructive." * * Porter's Giant Cities of Sashan, pp. 274, 275

Leaving Sidon, now known as Saida, their next port of call was Myra, a city of Lycia, which lay a little off the coast, about two and a half miles up the river Andriacus. Their direct course would have been to have passed to the south of Cyprus, and then to steer straight for it. But the wind being contrary, on which as a sailing vessel they were very much dependent, and of course could not go directly against, they had to coast along the northern side of Cyprus, under its lee, to accomplish their purpose. On the last occasion that Paul was at sea in these parts, going then from Patara to Tyre, the wind favoured their taking the direct course, leaving Cyprus, as Luke states, on their left hand (xxi. 3). On the present voyage, meeting with adverse winds, they had to seek the shelter of the island from the force of the wind, if they were to make any way.**

**"We sailed under Cyprus, so that we remained near the shore (elevated above the level of the sea), because the shifting winds were contrary, and therefore made a withdrawal to a distance from the (northern) shoro not advisable" (Meyer).

Arriving at Myra, the centurion found a ship of Alexandria bound for Italy. This decided him, we may suppose, to venture on the long sea route, in preference to going farther in their present

vessel; and then crossing to Macedonia, to travel on the Via Egnatia to the Adriatic, by which they would have landed at Brundusium, now Brindisi. What determined their way, except it was the apparent fortuitous circumstance of a vessel sailing direct for Italy, we are not able now to settle. But God's hand was in it, and we can see it. Paul was to stand forth as God's chosen servant before all, and Malta was to have blessing through sick ones being healed.

Transferred to this vessel, a large one, for it finally contained two hundred and seventy-six souls, its size or name unknown to us, they set sail, bound for no port short of the Italian peninsula, or perhaps Syracuse on their way. Again, and more persistently than before, they experienced delays, owing to contrary winds. With difficulty, and after many days, arriving opposite to Cnidus, a city of Caria, about a hundred and thirty geographical miles from Myra, it became evident that a straight course was out of the question. For the coast here trending towards the north, they would now be brought face to face with the wind, without any shelter, as hitherto, from the land on their right. A complete diversion was therefore determined on, and they steered south, till, passing Cape Salmone, the eastern point of Crete, they could coast along the south side of that island. By the time they would reach its western extremity, they might hope that the Etesian winds, which had blown for an unusual length of time that year, might subside, and a more favourable wind waft them on their way: The wind did change before they cleared the western end of the island. In that they had not miscalculated. Was it more favourable for the ship ?

Fair Havens. We have mentioned the Etesian winds. They blew from the north-west, and generally beginning in July, stopped with the close of the month of August. But this year they had far exceeded their accustomed duration, and the difficulty which they had experienced between Myra and Cnidus beset them still, as they endeavoured to make their way along the south of Crete. With difficulty, we read, they reached the Fair Havens (xxvii. 8), near to which was the city of Lasaea. Here for the present further progress was stayed, the north-west wind making it impossible to proceed. The season was advancing. The fast of the day of atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, was past. Autumnal storms, if not wintry weather, must be looked for. To reach Italy that season was hopeless. The pressing question then arose, Where should they winter? To launch out beyond Crete no one thought of. Nautical experience of that day, with only the appliances that they had, forbade such a rash venture. Where, then, on that island should they find a safe winter anchorage? The Fair Havens had not such a reputation. And one on board, the owner, if he only, had an interest in preserving the ship and its cargo. They might of course risk wintering where they now were. But would that be wise ? The question was evidently debated, and, it would seem, openly. The master and owner, with most of those on board, advised, if possible, to work their way on to Phoenice, or Phosnix, and there winter. That had a harbour looking towards the north-east and the south-east, having an island in front called Aradus. Those acquainted with navigation counselled that. But one voice was against it - a voice now heard for the first time in giving an opinion on this important matter. That voice was Paul's.

How the master, and the owner also, pressed their view Luke l;as not related. What Paul said he has preserved, for it bears on the future history of this voyage. "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives" (10). Who was he to give such a decided opinion, opposed to that of the master, who ought to know, and to that of the owner, who must have had great pecuniary interest in the preservation of his vessel ? A prisoner on his way to the Emperor's judgment seat ventured his opinion against all the rest! He

had, we subsequently learn in verse 21, distinctly intimated that they should not leave the anchorage where they now were. Yet no wonder that the centurion inclined to the advice of seamen rather than to that tendered by Paul. Soon, however, all would have to own the wisdom of Paul's advice, whilst the owner would live to regret that his own views had been listened to, and he and all, the master included, would come to put implicit confidence in whatever the prisoner might say. Was not God, by the Etesian winds, bringing His servant into prominence, and about to show to all in that vessel what a blessed thing it was to have Paul on board? To Phosnice (or better, Phoenix), so named from its palm trees, they were determined to go, and only waited for a favourable wind to start. The north-west wind ceased. A south wind sprang up. The anchor was weighed, and they hoped that they had gained their point, and that their patience would be rewarded. They set sail, not anticipating any storm; for their life-boat was towed, instead of being on board. It was but a short run. Phoenix would soon be reached. No need to trouble to hoist up the boat. Lulled into security, they left Fair Havens. The desired anchorage they never reached. A tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon [or, as we should read more probably, Euraquilo], typhonic in character, swept down from Mount Ida, and caught the ship. The north-west wind had been harassing. The northeast was far worse. It drove them along. To reach Phoenix was out of the question. To run under Cauda,* a small island south of Crete, was their resource. Under its lee they managed to secure the boat, and to undergird the ship. To Crete they had now bidden farewell. In the open sea, ,vith no land in sight after leaving Cauda, the modern Gozzo, they felt themselves at the mercy of the winds and waves. All precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the vessel, fearing lest they might be driven on to the dreaded quicksands called Syrtis Major, off the coast of Africa. Sail was struck, and they were driven. The vessel laboured. The tempest tossed them about. They lightened the ship, throwing overboard freight. That not enough, on the next day they (not, we) threw out the tackling of the ship. The tempest continued. They could do no more. Alone in that raging sea, with a boisterous wind, no friendly soul near, they could only resign themselves to their fate. Death stared them in the face. Hope of being saved was lost. The Fates were against them, the superstitious on board might exclaim. Jupiter was angry with them, others might think. Neptune was determined to engulf them in the turbulent waters, the sailors might say. God was watching over them, Paul could have told them. There was One, as it were, at the helm. There was an eye looking down on them from above, and guiding them steadily and directly to the land that they were first to reach. For if the reader will consult a good map, he will see that the run from Cauda to Melita was as straight a course as could be. Steadily, too, we have said. Because it is stated, on apparently good authority, that the time they passed between Cauda and Melita, just a fortnight, is about what a vessel drifting would in the present day take to reach the latter island. The vessel struck at length on the first land which in their straight run from Cauda west they would reach. Was not God, as it were, at the helm ? But ere they reached Melita angelic ministry was in exercise on their behalf.

* Cauda very probably was the original reading, not Clauda. And Euraquilo has certainly the preponderance of Uncial MS. authority in its favour. A Heavenly Communication. Many days had passed, and neither sun nor stars appeared ; the tempest continued; so hope of safety had fallen to almost the vanishing-point, when again the prisoner's voice was heard. For Paul stood forth in the midst of the fasting company, and spoke as follows : "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss" (xxvii. 21). Paul had been right after all. What use, however, would it have been in such circumstances to have forced on

them all simply a recognition of that? It might have enhanced their judgment of Paul's perceptive powers, but it would have comforted none of them. And he certainly would have been the last person to parade himself before his fellows simply as one who could form a better judgment than they. Day after day had they been tossed about at the mercy of the elements, drifting in Adria. Fourteen days of that must have pretty well worn them out, what with anxiety, want of food, and doubtless lack of rest. Now he had a more encouraging communication to make. Of life he could speak, not of death. So he proceeded : "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship" (20). They had been expecting nothing but death. He spoke with certainty of the preservation of their lives. Cheering words indeed, if true. But how could he promise that ? No land was in sight. No succour was seen at hand. No abatement, it would seem, of the tempest. No rift in the clouds had let them see once more the face of the sun, nor could they scan the heavens to recognise well-known stars. Was he mocking them? He will explain. "There stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be east upon a certain island" (23-26).

"Be of good cheer," he said, and repeated it. He was God's servant. And his God, the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, had spoken by His angel; and Paul implicitly believed Him. In the midst of the sea of Adria God knew where Paul was, and thus communicated with him. Hopeless had the crew deemed their position. Helplessly drifting about at tha mercy of the elements and of the currents in the sea, they were powerless. God, however, knew the very spot where they were ; and an angel, unknown to them, had actually stood on board that night. The owner saw him not. The centurion was unaware of his presence. Even Luke had not perceived that he was near. But Paul saw him and heard him. The God of heaven had a message for that prisoner in the storm and in that vessel. Paul must go to Rome. The vessel, therefore, could not founder in the open sea with all on board. Further, no life would be lost; for God had given to that prisoner, as they regarded him, the owner, the centurion, the soldiers, the prisoners, and the crew. Could that be true ? A sign was forthcoming. " "We must be cast," said Paul, " on a certain island." The Last Night. But where was the island and what was its name? No one on board then knew, nor had the angel said. At midnight, however - and that night was a dark one - the practised ears of the sailors detected that land was near. Thay very likely heard the noise of distant breakers. Yet none could see against what they were dashing. Were Paul's words really coming true? Had they neared the unnamed island? By sounding they discovered that the water was twenty fathoms deep. Sounding soon after, the depth had decreased. It was now only fifteen fathoms to the bottom. Evidently rapidly approaching some shore, they deemed it prudent to anchor, and to await for the day. So casting out four anchors from the stern, which would speedily arrest the onward progress of the vessel, they would avoid the danger of running aground in the dark. The sailors now attempted, by means of the boat, to save themselves, intending to desert in the hour of peril the rest on board. So "they launched it under pretence of casting out anchors from the foreship. A word from Paul unmasked their design to the centurion. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (31). At once the soldiers cut the ropes, and let the boat go adrift. The centurion had evidently some authority on board. And the Apostle had acquired a well-deserved influence over him and the soldiers. They listened now to him. The Last Meal. For the day they all waited. Sleep, doubtless, was banished from every one

that night. Again Paul spoke. Each one would have shortly to put forth efforts to reach the shore. But worn out and famishing men are not in the best condition to make extra exertions. So the cheery voice of the Apostle was heard calling them all to partake of food. Paul seemed in command now. It was his word which made the soldiers cut adrift the boat. It was his voice which was now summoning all on board to eat. But eat in earshot of breakers? Eat with shipwreck imminent? Eat at such a time of intense anxiety? Yes. "This day," he said, "is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health [or rather, safety] : for there shall not a hair fall [rather, perish] from the head of any of you " (33, 34). But who would begin? Who would set the example? Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all. When he had broken it, he began to eat. Encouraged by his example, all were of good cheer, and took some food, and were refreshed. They all eat of it together - prisoners, crew, centurion, and master. It was their last meal on board, but not just the prelude to death. Death was not before them, for not a hair of their head should perish. Not a few, doubtless, since that day have partaken of their last meal on board their vessel, with the consciousness that they would never reach land, but be engulfed in the yawning sea around them. How differently situated were those in that vessel, and what a companion was Paul, the guide, the comforter, of them all in those trying circumstances ! What blessing to have him in their midst! The Shipwreck. All cheered, refreshed, and reinvigorated, measures were now to be taken to run the vessel on shore, if possible. The boat adrift, to beach the ship seemed a natural and proper course. For this they lightened it, and cast out what remained of the cargo of wheat into the sea, in readiness for further steps to be taken, when by the light of day they should discover exactly their position. The day eagerly desired at length dawned, and they then could perceive a certain creek or bay, with a beach, a smooth shore or strand, just in front of them. To run the vessel on that was their desire, and the best thing they could do. So casting off the anchors, as Luke wrote, they left them in the sea, having no more use for them. Then loosing the rudder bands, and hoisting the foresail (not, mainsail) to the wind, they made for that spot. Impelled by the wind, the vessel moved forward to it; and the forepart having struck, and remained immovable, they discovered that two seas there met; for what seemed part of the mainland on the right was in reality a little island, now called Salmonetta. Hence it was that, while the forepart of the vessel stuck fast in the tenacious mud, the hinder part was beaten by the violence of the waves, which came through the narrow passage of about a hundred yards wide between Salmonetta and Malta. But a new danger threatened Paul, to be promptly, however, averted by the centurion. If the prisoners were unchained to reach land they might escape, and their guards would be punished for want of care. The soldiers therefore, to save themselves, counselled to put the prisoners to death. To carry out that purpose would have involved Paul in the slaughter - Paul who had been so helpful and encouraging. The centurion therefore negatived the proposition for Paul’s sake. So a second time, because of Paul, the prisoners were preserved from death. And now at the command of the centurion they all left the ship, and got on shore each as best he could. Those who could swim were to precede the rest, who on planks or some other pieces of the vessel got through the surf and reached the land. It seems to have all been done in a very orderly way; no demoralisation is hinted at. Probably Paul’s presence and calmness throughout conduced to that at the end. " There shall be no loss of life among you," Paul had declared (22). "There shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you’’ (34), he had that very morning promised. It all came true. The island was reached, and the muster-roll could be called over, to find no one missing of the

company which had left the Fair Havens. What a thing it was to have been thus linked with Paul! All, given by God to him, were saved from shipwreck. And we can say that all given by God to Christ will certainly be saved. The gifts of God are without repentance.

How remarkably had Paul been brought forward by God in this voyage! A prisoner on his way to Rome, chained, we presume, to soldiers, who would have thought about him? His first advice disregarded, the master learnt by experience the folly of his own. When encouragement was needed, Paul gave it, and announced the gift to himself from God of all on the vessel (24). When direction was required, Paul furnished it (31). When the last meal on board was to be taken, Paul summoned them to it (34), and so they were strengthened for the work before them.

Providential Guidance. And now a word on God's providential guidance. When they had lost all control of their vessel on the open sea, far from land, and when neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, God, as we have already remarked, graciously guided the ship to the first land in front of them. Then nearing the shore, though they could not as yet see it, they cast out anchors from the stern, hearing the breakers dashing wildly against the rocks of Koura Point,* which are at the entrance of Paul's Bay, and a little to the left of the course which the vessel in the darkness had taken. Had she run on the rocks, would any have survived to tell the tale? But the breakers ahead and the soundings taken had warned the sailors to anchor providentially just where they did. But would the anchors hold? They did. And it appears that the anchorage ground is formed of very tenacious clay, which effectually prevented the ship dragging. So they were kept fast and safe throughout the rest of that night. And then when daylight lit up the scene, there appeared in front that strand, on which they could drive, as they did, the weather-beaten vessel. Shall we not admit the hand of God in all this? An angel of God visited the ship. The eye of God rested continuously on it. The hand of God safely guided it. And the communication from God to Paul was like a light shining in a dark place, and gilding the edge of the thick dark cloud of their misfortunes with a bright line of hope.

Melita. Safe on shore, they learnt - 1:e., Paul and all - where they were. An island they knew, for Paul had predicted that. Now its name they learnt was Melita. Into the controversy, now definitely settled by Mr. Smith of Jordan Hill, in his Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul, as to the relative claims of Malta, or Meleda, a small island in the Adriatic, to have been the scene of the shipwreck, we need not enter. The claims of Meleda have been quite put out of court. The well-known island of Malta, anciently called Melita, was without doubt the one on which the ship was driven; and Paul's Bay is the place where it was lost. The island had been long known, colonised anciently by Phoenicians; but since the second Punic war it had passed from under the Carthaginians to the Romans, about B.C. 218, in whose hands it was when Luke wrote, and subject to the propraetor of Sicily.

Barbarians. The inhabitants Luke terms Barbarians, meaning that their language was neither Greek nor Latin. Certainly they were not barbarous; for they received the shipwrecked men most kindly, and ministered to them, kindling a fire because of the rain, and because of the cold. Wet and cold must those two hundred and seventy-six men have been, considering the way they had been saved. But large as their company was to be thrown thus suddenly on the islanders, they found the kindness of the latter equal to the occasion. Who the new-comers were, beyond the fact that some of them were Romans, the islanders probably knew not. Soon, however, were they to

hear that one of the company, of no commanding exterior, nor eloquent in speech, was anything but a common person ; and further, that his unexpected visit to the island would be fraught with blessing to the sick and suffering in their midst. How they first discovered something about Paul we are now to hear.

* In 1810 the British frigate Lively was wrecked at night off Koura Point. It was put in evidence at the court martial that the land could not be seen even at a distance of a quarter of a mile away, though the surf on the shore was discernible. A north-east wind makes the surf beat on the Point with great violence (Article " Melita " in Imperial Bible Dictionary). f We should here read, " We knew." For Paul, who had foretold the approaching shipwreck on an island, knew not what that island would be till they had landed. Its name had not been disclosed beforehand. A fire kindled, Paul, ever ready to help, collected some sticks to feed it. And now a word spoken by One in Palestine years before, and of whom all the islanders were as yet ignorant, was to come true, and they were to be eyewitnesses of it. A viper, aroused from its dormant condition by the heat of the fire, having been unawares taken up by Paul with the sticks, came out of the heat and fastened on the Apostle’s hand. A venomous snake all knew it to be, and one indigenous to the island. His fate they, the natives, thought was sealed. To be poisoned by it he could not escape, even if perchance his life was spared. Perfectly familiar with the effects of the bite of such a reptile, they watched to see its victim swell or to fall down dead. To their surprise neither happened. He quietly shook it off into the fire.

Seeing it fastened to his hand, they formed an unfavourable opinion of the Apostle. No doubt, was their thought, that he is a murderer whom Vengeance, or Justice,* suffereth not to live. He had escaped drowning. By the bite of the viper he would now be killed. Learning, probably, that he was a prisoner on his way to Rome, they the more readily jumped to this conclusion. But when, after shaking off the venomous creature, Paul felt no pain, they as quickly changed their minds, and jumped to the conclusion that he must be a god. All wrong we know they were, and ignorant, of course, of our Lord’s promise to His disciples (Mark 16:18). Yet they were unbiassed witnesses of the faithfulness of the Lord to His word. That it was a venomous snake there can be no doubt. The expectations of the islanders and their surprise at the result attest that. That Paul was unharmed by the reptile is also beyond, dispute. Miraculous it was all must admit. But instead of Vengeance pursuing its victim, it was God attesting that Paul was His servant.

* The ancients viewed Diche - 1:e., Justice - as a goddess. It has been said that there are no vipers in the island, nor wood either. But Mr. Lewin, visiting Paul’s Bay in 1853, writes of a viper, as he believed, about the spot, and a little wood for kindling also. If so late as that vipers could be seen in that now densely populated island, there can be no difficulty in trusting Luke’s account that there were vipers then.

Publius. From the shore where they had congregated at first, we are next taken to the house of Publius*, called the chief man, of the island. This was his official designation - viz., First or Chief of the Meliteans. Kind had been the islanders. Kind, too, was the governor. Near that bay he had lands, and he received them, and entertained them courteously. Such hospitality was not to pass unrequited. His father was sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul visited him, prayed and placed his hands on him, and healed him (Acts 28:8). Never before in that island had such a thing been known. Healing power entrusted thus to a man was something to those islanders quite new. The

report of this miracle soon spread, and others, the rest in the island who were sick, came and were healed. Considering that Melita is only seventeen and a quarter miles long by nine and a quarter broad, and contains an area of about ninety-five square miles, and so about two-thirds of that of the Isle of Wight, we can readily understand that during their stay of a quarter of a year there was time for the welcome news of Paul's powers to permeate the island, and for individuals who had need to profit by them. A wonderful man the islanders thought him when he shook off the viper and had received no harm. What a dispenser of blessing they must have found him to be, whom chance, people might say, had thrown on their shores ! The ship-men and the centurion and all the soldiers could have told of the comfort Paul had been to them in the storm. Now the islanders could relate instance after instance of healing, and not merely some relief, but the full removal of suffering. How God honoured His servant, and fulfilled in Paul's case the promise of the Lord, "They shall take up serpents . . . and lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover " (Mark 16:17-18)!

* An inscription found at Civita Vecchia, the ancient capital of the island, confirms Luke's accuracy in thus describing the governor. To Italy. Very likely the grateful islanders would have welcomed a longer sojourn of the Apostle. But the time for continuing their voyage drew nigh, and the centurion must have been anxious to proceed, to deliver up all his prisoners at Rome. Spring then came, and they prepared to move on. Now the gratitude of the islanders was manifested. They loaded Paul with many honours, and provided things suitable for his voyage. Pleasantly, surely, must those three months have passed. No perils encountered, no persecutions endured. And now an Alexandrian vessel, which had wintered in the isle, more fortunate than the one in which they sailed from Myra, was about to proceed; so the centurion put his prisoners on board of her. Her sign was The Twin Brothers - 1:e., Castor and Pollux.* They accordingly left Malta, bound for Puteoli, by Syracuse and Rhegium. Their course took them through the Straits of Messina, and through a volcanic region, past Etna in Sicily, Stromboli in the Lipari Islands, and subsequently Vesuvius in the Bay of Naples, and then sighting Ischia with its volcanic cone. Beautiful must the sight have been to the travellers as they sailed along through the Straits, and in sight of the Isle of Capri, formerly the abode of the Emperor Tiberius, and across the Bay of Naples to Puteoli on the northern side of it. Beautiful still is that region; yet more beautiful must it then have been, for Vesuvius had not begun to manifest the devastating power that lurked within it.

* " These two were viewed as helpers of sailors, and generally as protectors in dangers " (Meyer). To Rome. Arrived at Puteoli, a stay of seven days was allowed, which Paul spent in intercourse with the Christians at that seaport. Then they commenced the land journey to Rome, distant about one hundred and forty-one miles. At Sinuessa, about thirty-three miles on their way, they fell into the Appian Way, which connected Home with Brundusium, and then travelled along it. This road, a trunk one, was well provided with horses, vehicles, and halting-places. How they travelled Luke has not informed us. At Terracina, on their way, a canal could be utilised, or they might still travel by road, the two meeting, and the canal ending, northward at Appii Forum, where they were welcomed by a company of Christians, who had come from the capital thus far, forty-three miles.

Why Appii Forum was the meeting-place may be understood, as has been suggested, because, there the canal and the road meeting, the travellers must certainly pass through it; whereas if the brethren had proceeded farther south, in the uncertainty, perhaps, which route would be selected by the centurion from Terracina northward, they might have missed Paul and Luke. Again, about

ten miles nearer Rome, at the Tres Tabernse, or Three Taverns,* other brethren met them. Paul was cheered. He thanked God and took courage. His chains did not deter those saints from manifesting their love, and doubtless giving substantial proofs of Christian fellowship. How God honoured him, to be thus met! How God thought of him, to be thus cheered What a privilege it is to be a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ ! Now, thus surrounded by them all, they entered Rome, as Luke probably wrote (Acts 28:16).

* Of these two places, well known in those days, Treponti is near the site of Appii Forum, for close to tlie former was found the forty-third milestone from Rome; Oiiterna is near that of Tres Tabernte. In Rome. At last Paul had reached the city he had for so long wished to visit (Romans 15:23). What thoughts may have crowded on his mind as he trod its streets on the way to his appointed dwelling-place - a private house! What a time had it been since they left Caesarea! How eventful! Winds and storms had they encountered; the elements had been against them; but persecution for the time had ceased. From the strife of tongues they had been kept free. The Lord, too, had repeatedly honoured His servant, both in the vessel and at Melita. And now, at the close of their travelling, Paul, as we have seen, was cheered by the presence and fellowship of the brethren who met him. A man of like passions with ourselves, human sympathy and Christian love were not extended to him in vain. And that continued with him through life. The visits of that humble brother Onesiphorus he valued much. "He oft refreshed me," wrote Paul, " and was not ashamed of my chain ; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out diligently, and found me" (2 Timothy 1:16-17). Others may have neglected him - Onesiphorus did not. It was service to Paul which he never forgot. It was a service done to one of Christ’s own, and the Spirit would place it on record. " A word spoken in due season, how good is it! " (Proverbs 15:23). Of two days in the city we shall now read, and of two years spent there we shall also hear, but all briefly told. On the third day after his arrival Paul sent for the chiefs of the Jews, and acquainted them with the cause of his appeal to Caesar (Acts 28:17-19). Ignorant, it seems, they were of the real controversy which had raged in Judaea; ignorant, too, of the bitter enmity of those in Jerusalem against Paul, they expressed a willingness and a desire to hear what he could say of the sect everywhere spoken Rgainst. A day appointed, many attended at Paul’s lodgings. We see that what had been his practice throughout was his practice still. To the Jews first. As at Damascus (ix.), so in Rome - his own nation he sought out, their welfare he desired. Were those in Rome more willing to listen? Prejudice and bigotry such as those at Jerusalem had displayed the Jews in Rome were apparently free from. But the human heart - what about that! Ah! it is the same everywhere, till God deals with the conscience. From morning till night of that second day Paul spoke to them, opening up their Scriptures, "testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus botli out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets." With Paul it was evidently not an address just interlarded with a few quotations from the Word, but he opened up the Word. A whole day was he at this task, showing the bearing of many a passage in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the fulfilment likewise of many of them, all new to these Jews. It was a discourse such as they had never listened to in their synagogue.

What was the result? Some believed, and some did not. So the meeting terminated with a quotation made by Paul from Isaiah 6:9-10, from the Septuagint. The state of the nation was hopeless. What it had been in the Lord’s day (Matthew 13:14-15) that it was still. And the prophetic announcement of Isaiah received that day in Rome a sad endorsement in the refusal of many of

the Jews to receive the truth presented by the Apostle. Still was it true, "Yet a remnant shall be saved" (Romans 9:27). Some believed. How rejoiced must Aquila and Priscilla havo been, who, we may well believe, were present, as Paul on that day opened up the Word, and as some drank it in ! But neither the personal presence, service, or ministry of the Lord, nor the subsequent testimony of the Holy Ghost, won the nation as such to grace. Obdurate it had been. Obdurate it continued to be still. Was God's grace, then, to be offered in vain? No. "This salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles," were Paul's parting words to the unbelieving Jews;" and,"he added, "they will hear it " (Acts 28:28). Everywhere the mass of the nation was the same. At Jerusalem, at Antioch in Pisidia, and now at Rome they refused the grace of God.

Two years went on, during which Paul dwelt in his own hired house, receiving all that went to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him. The Jews looked only for the kingdom in power. The kingdom then was, and is still on earth in mystery - 1:e., not yet openly displayed - though to be seen now by all true saints, but them only; and entered, toe, by all born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3; John 3:5). The sufferings of Christ had to precede His glories. This the Jews had not seen, and would not humbly receive.

Paul, then, continued ministering to all who came to him. The Lord thus cared for His servant, and permitted him still to labour. He who had borne witness to Christ at Jerusalem was now permitted to bear witness to Him in Rome. Of the Lord's words to the Eleven on the day of His ascension (Acts 1:8) this book of the Acts in a measure records the fulfilment. The Lord's promise to Paul in the prison at Jerusalem this last chapter of it assures us was being carried out : "No man forbidding him." It ends, then, with Paul still labouring. The Word of God was not bound. Long, long ago Paul personally entered into rest. Yet the truths he contended for and the gospel he proclaimed are, thank God, still heard on earth. In our day some of them have been specially revived. Gentiles still hear them, and some Jews still receive them.

04.26. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. FROM Jerusalem to Rome, from God's centre on earth to the capital of the fourth empire, we are taken in this history. Beginning with the Apostles at Jerusalem, the book closes with one Apostle located for a time in Rome. Striking and instructive have been the leading features of the then new movement, as depicted by the inspired writer. Of some of these we would here remind the reader; and ere ending this volume, we would briefly notice the plan pursued by the historian in the prosecution of his task.

Leading Features. - The first of these leading features is necessarily that of the presence on earth and the working of the Holy Ghost, as the Third Person of the Godhead. Opening with the Lord's announcement of the near approach of the Spirit's coming (Acts 1:5), we see the little company of disciples waiting at Jerusalem for that event. They were, then, an expectant company. On the morning of the feast of Pentecost, without any premonitory sign, the Holy Ghost suddenly came. This inaugurated a new dispensation - that of the Spirit. Poured out then on the company in the upper room, they were all baptised by the one Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit of which John had spoken was thus an accomplished fact, and one never to be repeated subsequently to that which took place in the house of Cornelius at Csesarea. It is a truth, a blessing distinctive of Christianity. But the Holy Ghost, though poured out on Jews at Pentecost, and on Gentiles at Caesarea, will be poured out again by-and-by, both on the house of Israel (Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29), and also on all flesh (Joel 2:28-29). For Joel's prophecy yet awaits its fulfilment. Meanwhile no fresh outpouring of the Spirit has taken place, nor have we any hint that such will again take place in Christian times. A third blessing must be noticed - the gift of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit affected the whole company as such. The gift of the Spirit was and is given individually to every true believer (Acts 5:32). This, too, was quite new, never before having been enjoyed as now. The gift continues to be vouchsafed, as individuals come to believe the gospel of their salvation (Ephesians 1:13). For though in apostolic times there were occasions on which the Spirit was given by the laying on of hands of Peter, John, or Paul (Acts 8:19 :), the normal way of receiving the Holy Ghost was then, as is now, by faith (Galatians 3:2). Much resulted from the Spirit's coming.

1st. Of two important events thus brought about we must speak. The Assembly, or Church, then came into existence, and the Body of Christ began to be formed. The first, a future thing in Matthew 16:18, is spoken of as in existence on earth in Acts 5:11. The Assembly, too, became God's House (1 Timothy 3:15), God's habitation by the Spirit, and the Holy Temple began to grow (Ephesians 2:21-22). For God. who had not dwelt on earth in His House at Jerusalem since the Babylonish captivity, had now a House in which He did dwell, and which He has never left, even the Church of the Living God. Of the Body of Christ we have spoken. Formed by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), it is here still, and will be till the rapture. In the Acts (ix. 4) we have the first revelation of its existence in the Lord's challenge to Saul near Damascus.

2nd. By the coming of the Holy Ghost, earth, which had been bereft of a Divine Person dwelling on it since the Lord's crucifixion, was bereft no longer. And of the Spirit's real presence in the Assembly Peter reminded both Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3-4; Acts 5:9). Then, too, His distinct guidance on earth Peter proved (x. 19), and Paul most markedly likewise (xvi. 6, 7). Of His sovereign action, too, on earth we are reminded in 10: 20, 13: 2, 4. He sent the messengers to Peter. He called and sent forth Barnabas and Saul on their missionary tour.

3rd. By His coming, power was provided for carrying on the work of God down here (i. 8), as displayed in the ministry of the Word, and in the effects of it. Various gifts were now called into exercise - as evangelists, like Philip; teachers and pastors, like Paul; exhorters, as Barnabas ; prophets too, and prophetesses; but each and all are seen in their place, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost they severally carried on their special lines of service. Very different was God's way of working of old. With the sword the armies of Israel went forward under the protecting hand and guidance of Jehovah, and never lost a man, except when they trusted to themselves, and went against the foe in disobedience to God's command, or had an Achan in the camp. Now by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, conquests were to be effected, though many an one might fall in that fight, of which Stephen, Antipas, and others are examples. A new way of working was thus introduced, and one most effective in its action. For Jews and Gentiles alike succumbed. The world, it was said, was turned upside-down (xvii. 6), and the kingdom of God was advanced in Jewish and in heathen lands.

Effective, we have said, was the instrument; and simple, how simple, was the message of the gospel. We see how Peter could preach it (ii., 3:, 4:, 10:). We learn how Paul proclaimed it (xiii.), noting an advance in his gospel. In common with Peter he preached forgiveness of sins, but in advance of that he announced justification likewise (xiii. 38, 39). Then, too, with the different great lines of ministry of the Word Paul acquaints us, as he enumerates four distinct ones in his address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (xx. 21, 24, 25, 27). The kingdom advanced by the gospel, the saints needed establishing in the faith. Of this we learn in 14: 21, 22. And assemblies formed, care for the maintenance of order was manifested in the appointment of elders. This brings us to notice the difference between ministry arid office, though both might be exercised by the same person (1 Timothy 5:17). The former needed no human authorisation for its exercise, and its continuance is promised whilst the Church is on earth (Ephesians 4:12-13), its instruments being gifts from the ascended Christ. Church officers derived authority from Apostles or their delegates ; but there is no promise of their perpetuation, nor any provision for that end beyond the lives of Timothy and Titus. How perfectly distinct these are in the Word, both as to their origin and objects !

Then, too, the Assembly is seen engaged in spiritual exercises, Christians breaking bread together on the Lord's Day in remembrance of His death (Acts 20:7); and, as occasion called for it, saints are seen in prayer (iv. 24-31, 10: 9, 12: 5, 13: 3, 21: 5). A living, active, earnest community had been formed on earth.

These are some of the salient features of the movement. What a movement, then, it was! Like a rushing river, which carries all before it, regardless of impediments, it moved along, neither man nor devil able to arrest its course. The like of it had never been seen. A word spoken changed the current of men's lives, turned them right round, and gave them a new object and a new prospect (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). It was not a national movement, nor was it patriotism, as men use that

term, that swayed its votaries. Yet life, liberty, and everything here worth enjoying were sacrificed, if need be, by the converts. It was a movement distinctly catholic in character, and it knit hearts together in a new and wondrous bond. A fellowship was formed, and expression given to it, such as had never before been seen in this world. No wonder, then, that we have a history of it full of interest, and abounding in almost romantic incidents. And in harmony with the movement, the very history of it is peculiar, unique in character, and unlike any other. The Plan of the Book. From the time of the Lord's ascension to the Apostle Paul's arrival at Rome is the period of time embraced by the Acts. Yet we have little else than the labours of Peter and Paul. What were those of James the Less at Jerusalem, or of Thomas, the reputed Apostle of India? Where were others at work when Paul found only Peter and James at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-19)? Did John do nothing worthy of record, till he finally removed to Ephesus, besides what is told us of him in connection with Peter at Jerusalem, and in Samaria (iii., 4:, viii)? Again the historian of P.iter and of Paul breaks off in the middle of their work. We read of Peter's deliverance from prison; then he vanishes from sight, to be seen no more in the Acts, except at the memorable meeting details of which we meet with in chap. 15: As the Apostle of the circumcision, it is plain that he regarded the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia as his special charge; and we may gather from his Epistle (1 Peter 5:13) that he did not in later, any more than in earlier, years remain stationary at Jerusalem. But where he went after he left Jerusalem (Acts 12:17); or whither he betook himself after that passage between Paul and him at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-21); or what he did at Babylon, whatever place we understand by that name - all this is left a story untold. So, too, of Paul. Beyond the first interview with the Jews at Rome, just after his arrival there, we get nothing but the brief notice of the two years' residence in that city of the most zealous of the servants of Christ (Acts 28:30-31).

It is true, we can say. that the book treats chiefly of the acts of these two Apostles. It is true, too, we can say, that Luke presents facts chronologically, in telling Theophilus first of the work in Jerusalem, then of its spread to Samaria, and after that of the work among the Gentiles. This is in accordance with the order sketched out by the Lord (i. 8). But whilst stating these facts as facts, we do not exhaust the chief features of the work. To some of these, not touched on in what we have stated, we would now turn. Had any one sat down to compose of his own accord a history of the movement, would he have stopped, unless prevented by some unforeseen occurrence, just when Paul had arrived for the first time in the great metropolis of the Roman earth? Surely he would have given us a little insight into Paul's intercourse with people when in his own hired house, and some little idea of the way the Word got an entrance into Caesar's household. Nor would he have refrained from noticing the Apostle before the Emperor at his first trial; and perhaps would have told us a little about his subsequent labours in Crete, and his visit to Miletus, where he left Trophimus sick (Titus 1:5; 2 Timothy 4:20). And yet we could not say that the history is incomplete or unfinished, like Stephen's speech, or Paul's defence (xxii.), interrupted before the speaker had ended, and with no after-opportunity of completing it. Its composition betrays no such haste; for if Luke had been minded to have extended it, he had doubtless ample opportunity, when with the Apostle shortly before his martyrdom (2 Timothy 4:11), of gathering from him all the details of the hearing before the Imperial judgment seat, even if Luke had not been an eyewitness of the events as they took place. But all this is wholly passed over, as well as Paul's labours after those two years so briefly noticed. And why ? May not the reason be simply this? The history of the Acts was not intended to give us so much man's work for God, carried on though it was by the

agency and under the supreme direction of the Holy Ghost, but rather to trace out the Divine manner of working on earth by the Spirit for and by men after the Lord's ascension. Hence, when the great features of the work have been set before us, the history closes, never to be resumed.

These great features are three in number - God working in power for His people, manifested especially in Jerusalem ; God working primarily by His word, as manifested especially outside Jerusalem and elsewhere; God working in grace toward His failing servant, set forth so beautifully in His dealings with the Apostle Paul. Briefly to express these - the power of God, the word of God, and the grace of God toward a failing servant. To make this plain we must, at the expense of reiterating some things already noticed, called attention afresh to remarkable displays of Divine power. As we have seen in what has passed before us in connection with the work at Jerusalem, the power of God in one form or another is generally the foremost feature. Outside the city the first place is generally given to the Word. We have several speeches of Peter at Jerusalem, but they all follow some manifestation of power, and give usually the reasons for its display. At Caesarea, on the contrary, we read first of God's word by Peter, which, listened to and received, was followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, accompanied with the speaking of tongues. When the Lord would commence the work in Samaria, Philip went down and preached Christ unto them. (viii. 5.) He worked miracles as well (6, 7); but we read, "They believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptised, both men and women" (viii. 12). So at Damascus (ix.); at Aritioch in Syria (xi. 19-24) ; at Salamis and at Antioch in Pisidia (xiii.); at Derbe (xiv.); at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens (xvii.); at Corinth too, and at Ephesus (xviii.), it is the word of God, and not the manifestation of power, that we first read of as arresting the attention of both Jews and Gentiles; and it converted those who gave heed to it. At Paphos, as we have seen, and at Philippi, we have accounts of miracles worked; but in each case it was to remove the hindrance Satan put in the way of the free reception of the truth already preached. The sorcerer Elymas, a son of the devil, was struck blind for a season, because he perverted the right ways of the Lord, and sought to turn away the proconsul from the faith ; and the damsel was delivered from the evil spirit, only after she had followed Paul and his company many days. For if the hostility of Satan could not arrest the progress of the work, the Spirit of God would not receive from such a quarter any testimony in its favour. At Iconium and at Ephesus we have notices of other miracles wrought, but they seem to have been in confirmation of the word previously spoken (xiv 3; xix 11,12). Nor need the miracle at Lystra be an exception to this rule ; for it appears not unlikely that the word had taken hold of the impotent man, before at Paul's command he leaped up and walked (xiv. 9). At Jerusalem, with the exception of Stephen's speech, the word follows the manifestation of power. But even in his case miracles wrought by him are mentioned before we read of his power in ministry (vi. 8, 10).

How suited, then, the candid reader will surely admit, was all this to the work to be done! If the Apostles could stand forth at Jerusalem, and proclaim a revelation they had received from God, their opponents in the council and in the synagogue would meet them on similar ground, and affirm therefrom the necessity of adhering to the revelation given by God through Moses at Sinai. Had He not appeared there in the midst of the people when the Tabernacle was erected ? and had He not manifested afresh His presence at Jerusalem (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11)? They could and did oppose the disciples, as in the case of Stephen with a revelation as much from God as that which was being declared to them. Did the followers of the Lord Jesus speak of a gift now

given to none but those who believed on His name? The unbelieving Jews could point to the many marks of special favour bestowed on their forefathers. From Abraham to the days of Daniel, Jehovah had often interposed in power on their behalf. For the deliverance of Israel it was that the destroying angel had passed through the land of Egypt. For Jerusalem’s sake God had at a later date decimated the ranks of the Assyrian invader. For Israel, too, the sun and the moon had stood still, the stars had fought against Sisera, and for Hezekiah the shadow had retrograded ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. For them the Red Sea had been divided, and the waters of Jordan had stood on a heap, till all had passed over dryshod. For Daniel, faithful to the God of heaven, the angel had been sent to shut the lions’ mouths. And with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego a fourth had been seen in the burning fiery furnace, bearing the likeness of a son of God. What nation but theirs could speak thus of God’s intervention on their behalf, or exhibit so many proofs of His lovingkindness and tender mercy? How could such arguments be met but on their own ground 1 If they could appeal to the powers of God exerted so often on behalf of their fathers as a reason for remaining obdurate, let them see with whom and for whom He was now working. That nation which formerly had experienced His intervention for His people’s deliverance, must now witness His interposition in favour of those they persecuted, and that to death. They had crucified the Lord of glory; but He was now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and had shed forth the Holy Ghost on His followers. At the Temple gate a miracle, which none could gainsay, had been wrought by two unlearned men, professedly in the name and by the power of the One the Jews had so recently crucified; and when charged to speak no more in His name, those two humble fishermen had bid defiance to the council. They could not make them afraid. And still greater wonders were done, so that the sick were brought out and laid in the street, that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them for their healing. From within and from without the city the sick and those afflicted with devils were brought, and all were healed. Despite the known displeasure of the council the work spread; so, to stop it, the whole company of the Apostles were next put in prison. In the morning the prison was empty, though bolts and bars were untouched, and the keepers were standing before the doors; but the men lately in prison were in the Temple teaching "all the words of this life." The council now doubted whereunto this would grow. And well they might! No threats could intimidate those men, no earthly power restrain them.

Stronger measures were resorted to, and Stephen was stoned. But here, too, though outwardly seeming to triumph, he really triumphed over them. For rising above the spirit which legitimately characterised Judaism, he cried, not for vengeance on his persecutors, but implored their forgiveness from the Lord. And, stranger still, one who was consenting to his death, and kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned him, this one, who manifested by his acts that he was, and had continued to be, exceedingly mad against the Christians, was suddenly changed on his journey to Damascus. A light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, had shone around; his companions saw it, and, more, they heard him speak to Some One by them unseen, in answer to words addressed to the persecutor, but unintelligible to the rest. In this case it was no weak enthusiast, nor any one seeking a fitting opportunity to declare himself on the side of the Nazoraeans; but a man more hostile in spirit to the truth than the rulers themselves, for he had solicited, unasked, letters from them to the synagogues in Damascus, and had started on his self-imposed mission. Their most zealous instrument converted, the rulers paused in their career of outward opposition, and "the Church had rest throughout all Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria" (ix. 31), till the civil power, in the person of Herod, essayed to put down the spreading sect, by striking

at them in the city of Jerusalem. James, the brother of John, was killed by the sword, and Peter was kept in prison, guarded by four quaternions of soldiers, to be killed after the Passover feast had ended. Twice had he been in prison before. This time, to make all secure, he was chained to two soldiers, and one night only intervened before the day appointed for his execution. But on that night the angel of the Lord awoke the Apostle, and, while the sleeping guards were unconscious, their prisoner escaped them. He left the prison in a very orderly way, leaving neither sandals nor mantle behind him; the iron gate, too, which led into the city, opened of its own accord to let Peter pass and the angel likewise; and he was free. Shortly afterwards Herod, who had stained his hands with the blood of James, was smitten by the Lord, and died a most awful, agonising death. On whose side, then, was God now? For whom was His power in exercise? Then, too, some of these displays had a feature most peculiar. They were not miracles worked by men, but were the direct interventions of God. The finger of God was thus manifested in that very city of Jerusalem, of which He had said that His name should be there. The arm of Jehovah was again awake, but this time for those whom the rulers wished to put down. In no other place on the whole earth could His power, when exercised, have more plainly declared His approval of the Apostles and of the brethren. Here, in the very centre of those who claimed to adhere to and to uphold the revelation He had formerly given at Sinai by Moses, the Lord was showing Himself strong in favour of those who announced a fresh revelation from the God of their fathers. God’s intervention of old showed that Israel were His people, and that Moses, who worked miracles, was His servant. Who were His saints now; and who were His chosen servants? The high priest and the elders of Israel were arrayed on one side, the Apostles and their converts on the other. On the one side were earthly powers, both religious and civil, and the prestige of many centuries. On the other was human weakness, and a revelation at the most a few years old. Then the Lord Jehovah, by the Holy Ghost personally present on earth, showed plainly in the very metropolis of Judaism, and under the shadow of that House which the Jews rightly called His Temple, who were really His. His acts, His interpositions in power, to all who had eyes to see and hearts to discern, decided the question without equivocation or the possibility of a doubt. How convincing that should have been to their enemies! How encouraging it must have been to them!" The Lord of hosts was with them ; the God of Jacob was their refuge." The importance, then, of this display of power who can question? And why miracles have precedence at Jerusalem all can surely see. But the Apostles and others had a work to do - to make known to Jews and to Gentiles that One whom they themselves had been brought to own - the Lord Jesus Christ. How should this be accomplished? By the display of miraculous power? No. By the preaching of the Word. Power reveals God as the Creator and as the Almighty. The Word preached reveals Him as the God of all grace, and tells of His Son, of Divine love now manifested, and of the effects of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Hence the next thing we see is the manifestation of the efficacy of the Word of the Lord, and its suitability for all classes and nations - Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, as well barbarians as the most highly civilised Were the religion of Jesus only to be propagated by power, those who succeeded the apostolic age might well have trembled and shrunk back, appalled at the task before them. But since it was to be propagated by the Word, the same Word which was effectual then can be effectual still - God’s Word applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost, the same Divine remedy suited for that age being equally suited for this. Whatever be the condition of darkness and ignorance now, it is not worse than that which reigned at Thessalonica or Lystra. Whatever be the pitch of civilisation, refinement, and intellectual activity that the world may now

exhibit, it will not surpass what could be met with formerly in Rome, Corinth, or Athens. The preached Word was the suited instrument then it is equally suited for the civilised world now.

Hence outside Jerusalem, as has been stated, the prominent feature was God working by His Word. In Jerusalem the need was first to show that Christianty came from God. The displays of miraculous power attested that. Outside it, and to all the ends of the earth, the primary object was to point out what suits lost man. The Word of God does that. Miracles have then a secondary place - God confirming the Word with signs following (Mark 16:20). But there is something else displayed in the Acts - the Lord acting in grace toward His failing servant. If we speak of Paul's failure, we must not forget the honour due to him, surpassed as he was by none in zeal for the Lord's glory and devotedness to the maintenance of, as well as to the propagation of, the truth. Yet he failed. And the Holy Ghost has recorded it for our warning, instruction, and comfort; because the failure gave occasion for the exhibition of Divine grace towards him. How often do we need such grace! Blessed be God, what was shown to Paul can be shown to any of God's people ! How could any conscious of what they are in themselves stand for one moment without the knowledge of it? As then the Lord had displayed His power at Jerusalem, and manifested the efficacy of His Word wherever preached in the world, He would also display His grace toward His servant, who had for the moment acted in accordance with his heart's desire, but not in accordance with the Lord's revealed will.

Into proofs of this, however, we need not here again enter, but only briefly remind the reader how at Jerusalem, at Caesarea, on ship-board, at Melita, and in Rome the Lord gave His servant to be honoured and respected. Here the book closes, and the reason for its structure is, we trust, apparent. God working in power; the efficacy of the Word with Jews and Gentiles, educated classes and barbarians alike; the Lord's grace to His servant when he had failed, - these subjects set forth, the historian's object is accomplished. The Lord on high was still thinking of His people. From the Father at His request the Holy Ghost had come, who still remains a witness to the truth, and is the director of the work. And gifts to men from the ascended Christ were, and are, exercising their ministry upon earth. How interesting and precious is all this, and not the least that the last great feature of the book should be the Lord's grace to His servant Paul! For what He was then, that He is still. And all that He was to Paul, that He can be in like circumstances to those who serve Him now. At this juncture in the movement the book finishes. The object in view was accomplished, and the historian laid down his pen.

Chapter 64

S. A Slight Sketch of the Holy Spirit's Ways.

A Slight Sketch of the Holy Spirit’s Ways. The Spirit, to pneuma, the Holy Spirit, to pneuma to hagion, seldom to Hagion pneuma, but very frequently, pneuma Hagion, is the Person in the Godhead mentioned last in order wherever the three are named (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). Of His personality the word does not leave us in doubt. The New Testament is very plain about it. He acts, He directs, He controls, and that, not only in the character of the Spirit of God, but as a divine Person Himself (Acts 2:4; Acts 5:3-4; Acts 13:2-4; Acts 16:6; 1 Corinthians 12:11); and even in the Old Testament His personality is acknowledged (Numbers 11:26; 1 Chronicles 28:12; Isaiah 48:16), though, for the most part, He is therein described as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, His Spirit, His Holy Spirit, His good Spirit. Throughout scripture, then, we meet with the Holy Ghost. In the first chapter of the Bible we read of Him; in the last chapter of the sacred volume we hear of Him. In Genesis 1:2 He is described as moving, or brooding, over the face of the waters, when all was in a chaotic condition on earth. In Revelation 22:1-21 : He speaks from earth, on which He now dwells, and in company and concert with the bride asks the Lord Jesus to come in His character of the morning star. To prepare the earth for man’s abode and use, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters. He acted in power on creation. He acts in power still. The fact, however, of His activity, whether moving upon the face of the waters, or dealing with men’s hearts, indicates the existence of a state of things which is not perfect in God’s sight. "By his Spirit," Job declares, God "garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13). Of the Spirit men are born again (John 3:5). Yet it is not in every age of the world’s history that we read of the Spirit being at work. He did work, He does work constantly, on men upon earth, as the catalogue of saints from Abel to our day bears witness; but His activity is not at all times a subject of divine teaching. Till the days of Moses we hear but little of the Spirit. Throughout the biographical notices of Abraham and Isaac, He is not so much as once named. In the book of Joshua He is never mentioned. And neither in the books of Jeremiah, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, nor Zephaniah is His existence even hinted at. Yet all these were horn of Him. He was in Joshua, and the prophets were one and all His penmen and mouthpieces, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). In the New Testament His presence and actings are more generally acknowledged and the Epistle to Philemon, and the Second and Third Epistles of John, are the only portions of the word in which He has not been pleased to make mention of Himself in one way or another. For His manner of working is manifest, and the terms in which it is described are various. To these the reader’s attention is now sought to be directed. Of evil spirits there are many, characterized in the word by their manner of acting, as displayed in men. For we read of a lying spirit, an evil spirit, an unclean spirit, a dumb spirit, a spirit of a demon, a spirit of Python, and, in the case of the Gadarene demoniac, it was not one, but many, which were in him. The Holy Ghost, on the other hand, is but one (1 Corinthians 12:11). Each unclean spirit can act in accordance with its character. The Holy Ghost can act in very different ways in different people and at different times. To a consideration of these let us now turn.

Before the flood He acted on men certainly in three distinct ways. He strove with man in his rampant wickedness, till God would strive with him no longer (Genesis 6:3). What a scene for God to be engaged in! In garnishing the heavens, and in brooding over the face of the waters, the Spirit of God had been once engaged; now He is described as striving with God's puny, fallen, and actively wicked creature man. But man would not yield, so the flood came upon the world of the ungodly, and took them all away, except Noah and those with him in the ark. Besides this, in two other ways He had acted, whilst striving with man. By the Spirit dead souls had been quickened: of this Abel and others are witnesses. And not only did He act in vivifying power on souls, but He fitted saints as well to be channels for divine communications to their fellows around them. God had spoken to Adam, and in the presence of the guilty pair announced to the old serpent, in the day of his apparent triumph, his final doom, which is to be accomplished by the Seed of the woman. God had also spoken to Cain, and acquainted the fratricide with His future governmental dealings with him. To Adam and to his son communications had been given. Now through Enoch, with whom we may perhaps class Lamech (Genesis 5:29), prophetic announcements were made, which concerned others beside themselves. And Noah was raised up, a preacher of righteousness, a witness for God in the midst of abounding and unrestrained wickedness. The waters receded from off the face of the earth. Noah and his family came forth from the ark to people the world afresh, and the Spirit of God, who had acted on men, and by men, before the flood, acted in similar, but also in new, ways after it.

Men were born again. Of this Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Job are examples; and a testimony for God was raised up in the midst of idolatry, which now began to corrupt and debase mankind. Prophecy, too, in the common acceptation of the term, again burst forth. Isaac, though his eyes were dim with age, blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. And Jacob, ere gathering up his feet into his bed, acquainted his family with that which should befall them in the last days. But another feature of the Spirit's ways was manifested during the patriarchal age. Saints were made acquainted with God's purposes hitherto concealed, without becoming, as far as we know, channels of inspired communications. Thus God talked with Abraham as His friend, and began that unfolding of His counsels to man, which was not completed till the New Testament canon was closed. Communications had passed between the Lord and H is saints before the flood. To Enoch a testimony was given that he pleased God. Noah received definite instructions as to the measures of the ark, and its inhabitants. In these communications the individuals so favoured were personally concerned. In the case of Abraham it was different. God not only revealed things which concerned the patriarch, but, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, He distinctly declared that He would not hide from Abraham that which He would do. And Abraham is the first person to whom the appellation of prophet is given in the Pentateuch (Genesis 20:7), an appellation evidently of significance in those days, and one, as we learn from the Psalms (Psalms 105:15), which was common to the patriarchs. A prophet then does not only mean one who can predict future events. The messenger of God who reproved Israel in the days of Gideon (Judges 6:8) was a prophet. And Abraham, as we see, is so called, who would pray for Abimelech, the Philistine king. Anil God it was who so styled the patriarch, who had acquaintance with the divine mind, being in possession of God's thoughts, as far as the Lord had been pleased to impart them to God's friend. On men too, and through men, the Spirit continued to work. By dreams and visions, as well as by prophetic inspiration, God's mind was revealed. Jacob, whether sojourning east or west of Jordan, received instruction from God by dreams (Genesis 28:12-15;

Genesis 31:11-13). And Laban, the Syrian (Genesis 31:24); Abimelech, the Philistine (Genesis 20:3); Pharaoh, the Egyptian (Genesis 41:1-57 :); and Eliphaz, the Temanite (Job 4:1-21 :), alike attest the reality of such channels of intercourse between God and the soul. With Moses, however, there commenced a new era. Dealing with souls individually, and using men as instruments by which God's mind could he made known, still characterized the ways of the Holy Ghost. For Balaam, besides Moses, prophesied, and Saul too, as well as others who were really saints. In addition to this, miraculous powers were exhibited, wonders being accomplished by the finger of God (Exodus 8:19), as the magicians rightly confessed; that is through the energy of the Holy Ghost, as the New Testament teaches us (Matthew 12:28 compared with Luke 11:20). And now in several new ways the activity and the power of the Spirit were displayed. In Bezaleel we have an example of one filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, for the work that he was called upon to undertake in connection with the erection of the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3; Exodus 35:31). The Holy Ghost was in Joshua (Numbers 27:18), who was thereby full of the spirit of wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9). On the elders He rested, to fit them for their official duties in the congregation (Numbers 11:25-26). Again, the Spirit was on Othniel, who judged Israel and conquered Cushan Rishathaim (Judges 3:10); on Jephthah, who warred against Ammon (Judges 11:29); on Amaziah, the son of Oded, who encouraged Asa (2 Chronicles 15:1); as well as on Jahaziel, the Levite, who directed Jehoshaphat in his campaign against the children of Ammon and Moab, and those of Mount Seir (2 Chronicles 20:14). Further, we read that the Spirit of the Lord clothed, or enwrapped, Gideon (Judges 6:34), and Amasai, chief of the captains, who answered so beautifully to David's challenge (1 Chronicles 12:18), as well as Jechaniah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who reproved the people and Joash, the king (2 Chronicles 24:20). He pressed, too, or fell upon, Samson (Judges 14:6; Judges 14:19; Judges 15:14); on Saul (1 Samuel 10:6; 1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Samuel 11:6); and on David (1 Samuel 16:13). He entered into Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:2; Ezekiel 3:24), and set him on his feet. He fell upon him (Ezekiel 11:5), and he prophesied. Moreover, the Spirit lifted him up, and transported him to any place that the Lord desired him to visit (Ezekiel 3:12-14; Ezekiel 8:3; Ezekiel 11:1; Ezekiel 11:24; Ezekiel 43:5). Very marked, then, were the ways of the Spirit with certain men, who manifested by what they did, when energized by Him, how His power could be exercised on and through individuals. Besides this, the Spirit of the Lord, which had instructed Israel (Nehemiah 9:20), remained among the returned remnant, according to God's solemn engagement, in spite of all that they and their fathers had been (Haggai 2:5).

Greater blessings are yet, however, in store for that people. For, great as have been the displays of the Spirit's power among them, they can look forward to a blessing they have never yet enjoyed. God will put His Spirit within them individually (Ezekiel 36:27), and pour it out on them collectively (Isaiah 44:3), when their time of trial, and of the desolation of the land, consequent on their sins, shall cease (Isaiah 32:15), never to return (Ezekiel 39:29). Nor will this blessing be confined to Israel, for God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, as Joel clearly predicts, who also tells us after what public event that will take place. God must first act in victorious power on Israel's behalf, and overthrow the northern army which will invade the land. The aggressive power overthrown, and the fertility of the land restored, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, and prophecies will be uttered, dreams be dreamed, and visions he seen (Joel 2:28-30). With the promises of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on Israel, and on all flesh, we close the volume of Old Testament scripture, leaving Israel to wait for their fulfilment, which the New Testament teaches us are still to

be desired by them. Bet what, in the meantime, is the Spirit of God doing? Is He working, or only awaiting the advent of those times of which Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel have foretold? This is an important question for all to understand. So, now turning to the New Testament volume of inspired writings, in what terms, let us ask, is the Holy Ghost mentioned, and in what ways do we therein learn He was, and is, manifested?

And, first, as to the terms in which He is pleased to speak of Himself. For be it remembered that the inspired writings are the words of the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 2:13.)

Besides those mentioned at the commencement of this paper, we read of Him as the Spirit of God, of the living God, of the Father, of His Son, of the Lord, of Jesus (Acts 16:7), of Christ, of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19), of truth, of grace (Hebrews 10:29), of promise (Ephesians 1:13). He is called the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), and is said to be "the truth" (1 John 5:6). Furthermore He is the earnest of our inheritance, the seal wherewith God seals believers, and the unction by which believers know all things (Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27). Moreover He is the other Comforter, or Paraclete (John 14:, 15:, 16:)

Next, if we inquire about His ways of acting, we learn that what He did before the flood, that He did after the cross, and that in a way He does still. By Him men are born again. He acts on the heart, and deals in life-giving power with souls. And as saints were enabled to bear witness for God in the midst of the evil around them, so, by His power and instrumentality, a testimony for God is carried on still. The character of the testimony may vary according to the wants and condition of men, and the times in which the Spirit is working. Thus, before the flood we read of Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Since the cross we have' been made familiar with preachers of grace. The character and object of the testimony has changed, but the energizing power is one and the same. Again, before the flood, and in patriarchal times, we meet with prophets. After the Lord had ascended we learn that there were fresh ones raised up, not only to foretell future events, like Agabus (Acts 11:28), but to communicate divine teaching by revelation, as well as to set forth God's truth in such a way as to make men feel that it is His word which is spoken to them. For on the foundation of apostles and prophets saints are built (Ephesians 2:20; Ephesians 4:11), and prophets are used of God to edify His people (1 Corinthians 14:3; 1 Corinthians 14:24).

After the fall, and before the flood, the Spirit manifested Himself in ways of testimony amongst men. After God took up Israel as His people, the Holy Ghost, in addition, displayed Himself in works of power, as we have seen. In power, too, we learn from the pages of the New Testament, did He work when the Lord was upon earth, and whilst the apostles continued with the church. Hence terms, similar to those met with in the Old Testament, are used to describe His workings in the New. Of Bezaleel, it was said, that he was filled with the Spirit, and of Joshua that he was full of it. Of both of these states have we examples in the New Testament. John the Baptist, Elizabeth, Zecharias (Luke 1:15; Luke 1:41; Luke 1:67), the hundred and twenty on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), Peter (Acts 4:8), those assembled together (Acts 4:31), and Paul (Acts 9:17; Acts 13:9), were filled (eplesthesan) with the Holy Ghost. The six deacons, on the other hand, with Stephen and Barnabas (Acts 6:3; Acts 6:5; Acts 7:55; Acts 11:24), are said to have been full (pleres) of the Spirit. Filled with the Spirit is used in both Old and New Testaments of those fitted for special service, as Bezaleel, John the Baptist, and Paul (Acts 9:17), or taken up, and used for a passing purpose, as Elizabeth, Zecharias, the hundred and twenty, Peter, and Paul at Paphos (Acts 13:9).

Full of the Spirit seems characteristic of the general tenor of the life. And here another Person must be mentioned, very different from the rest — the man Christ Jesus. To Him, "filled with the Spirit" is a term never applied. Scripture writes of Him as "full of the Holy Ghost" (Luke 4:1). A reason for this it is surely not difficult to discover. And in confirmation of the difference to which attention is here directed, the reader is requested to note the description of believers at Antioch (Acts 13:52), and to mark the exhortation given to God's saints in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesians 5:18). For though in a translation the distinction may, perhaps, not be made, in the original it can readily be seen. Of believers we read, "they were being filled" (eplerounto) with the Holy Ghost. To the saints it is said (plerousthe), "be ye filled" with the Spirit. The general character of the former is told us. Of that which should characterize Christians the apostle reminds us. Pleroo can be used when saints are exhorted, pimplemi is only employed when a special condition is described.

Again, as we read of the Spirit being on Othniel and others, so we find that He was on Simeon (Luke 2:25), and He came upon Mary the Virgin (Luke 1:35), on the twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:6), and, as the Lord promised, on the eleven after His ascension (Acts 1:8). Besides this, what Ezekiel describes, that the Spirit fell upon him (Ezekiel 11:5), saints of New Testament times, believers in Samaria and at Caesarea, could speak of as experienced by them. He fell on them, and Peter adds, with reference to the company in the house of Cornelius, "as on us at the beginning" (Acts 8:16; Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15). The pouring out, too, of the Spirit we are made familiar with in thought through the writings of the prophets, before we meet with an illustration of it recorded in the Acts. "An illustration" we must say, for the outpourings of Acts 2:10 : were neither of them the fulfilment of the predictions of Joel, or Ezekiel, or Isaiah. These prophecies still await their accomplishment. Meanwhile we have to own that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost is not peculiar to Christianity, though as yet it has been confined to christian times. And, further, we can add that the act was never repeated after that of which we read in Acts 10:45. On two occasions only did it take place, and in two chapters only of the Acts (ii., 10:) does the historian describe it; and Paul, the only other New Testament writer who mentions such an action (Titus 3:6), lends no support to the common idea that it may be looked for in our day. Poured out first on believers from amongst the Jews, poured out too on believers from amongst the Gentiles (thus putting the latter company on the fullest equality with the former, each receiving the gift direct from God) the Holy Ghost has never been poured again. To be filled with the Holy Spirit, or for the Spirit to fall on any one, is spoken of individuals; but the outpouring of the Spirit, is mentioned, in the New Testament, in connection only with a class, Jews or Gentiles (Acts 10:45), and hence is never repeated. And the former statements, it is clear, do not necessarily imply any descent of the Spirit from above, they only describe His reception by saints for the display of His power, through the individual in whom He was acting, as Bezaleel, Ezekiel, and others can bear witness.

Many, then, of the ways in which the Spirit acted before the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, can be illustrated from the manner of His working after. In what, it may be asked, have His ways of working since that event differed from His ways before it? With the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ a new thing was manifested. A man was upon earth, the woman's Seed, conceived of the Holy Ghost. Believers throughout all ages had been, and are, born of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus, however, as man, was conceived of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:20.) Born of the Spirit is true of every one who partakes of the new birth. But begotten of the Holy Ghost, as the virgin's child, is

true only of the Lord Jesus Christ. At His baptism by John another action of the Spirit was manifested, differing from any which had been hitherto known, and described in language peculiar to itself. On Him the Spirit descended, katabainon, as Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, and John 1:33, all carefully record. The Lord was full of the Spirit; so was Barnabas, so was Stephen, so were the rest of the deacons. The Spirit too was on Him. Of this, which Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 61:1), the Lord Himself announced the fulfilment. (Luke 4:18.) But the Spirit was also on Simeon. So far then the Lord Jesus might seem to he in the same category with these holy men; but in truth the difference between Him and them was immense, and He stands out alone in this, that on Him the Spirit descended. The Spirit which had clothed Gideon, and had worked in power on David and others, the Spirit which had moved upon the face of the waters, now descended on the Lord Jesus in a bodily form like a dove, and, as John the Evangelist adds, giving us the testimony of his namesake the Baptist, that it abode on Him, thus furnishing the son of Zecharias with the double token, by which he should discern the One who would baptize with the Holy Ghost. (John 1:32-34.) And now not only could it be said of Him that He was begotten of the Holy Ghost, and that on Him at His baptism the Spirit descended, for we are taught that, by the descent of the Spirit upon Him, He was both anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38), and sealed by Him likewise (John 6:27). In all this whilst on earth He was alone, others however according to the counsels of God were to be both anointed and sealed, the fruit of His atoning work and the consequence of His ascension to heaven.

Hitherto any action of the Spirit on men beyond that of the new birth has been, as far as we read of such things in the word, restricted to special objects of God’s choice. All saints had been born of the Spirit, but all did not prophesy, nor were all energized for special service by Him. The Lord however announced a blessing which would be common to all God’s people, and one which He could even impart whilst still on earth. And the time when this was announced, as well as the place, and the terms too in which the communication was conveyed, were in character with the blessing of which God was now pleased to speak. The time chosen was, when the Lord had appeared in humiliation, but in grace, amongst men; and had met with a poor sinner, who could not procure such a thing for herself. The place was a well-side, to which all were free to resort. The figure used was that of water, which is met with in all parts of the earth. And the class which could benefit by it was so comprehensive, as to include within its limits every one who was willing to receive it. So free, so full, so general was to be the blessing, that a poor Samaritan could share in it, and whosoever should once drink of that living water could never thirst, for the water which the Lord would give would he in the recipient a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:10; John 4:14.) This could be enjoyed before the cross, and the woman, if she knew the gift of God, and Who it was that accosted her, might have asked, and have received it — the Spirit of God within her for communion with the Father and with the Son. But in other ways would the Spirit be manifested, only, however, after the cross. Of such the Lord spoke whilst on earth. (John 7:38; John 14:16-17; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-15.) The prophetic word told Israel that on them and on all flesh He was to be outpoured. John the Baptist had announced the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Lord spake of both (Acts 1: 58), and dwelt more at length on the objects and results of the Spirit’s coming to earth. "When he is come," He said (John 15:26; John 16:13), intimating most clearly that the Spirit is not a mere influence but a divine person, Who could not abide on earth whilst the Lord was here (John 16:7), and Who never had been dwelling on earth in any previous age of man’s eventful history. (John 7:39.) The Holy Ghost, John the Evangelist in

that passage of his Gospel declares, "was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Clearly it is not of the Spirit's existence, but of His dwelling on earth that the apostle writes. "He was not," a phrase any one familiar with Old Testament phraseology would readily understand. Enoch "was not," when he ceased to live on this earth. The Spirit was not, till He came to dwell upon it. (See also Psalms 37:10; Psalms 103:16; Jeremiah 49:10; Matthew 2:18.) And not as a passing guest, a wayfaring man that tarries just for a little time, was the Holy Ghost to be known, but as the divine Person who would abide "with you," as the Lord said "for ever" (John 14:16). As such then He is surely present in the assembly of God's saints which is His habitation. No need then was there for Him to write of His presence. God's saints were conscious of it as Peter lets us know. (Acts 5:32.) Are we wrong then in speaking of it? It is true, parousia is a term never applied to the Holy Ghost, though it is used of the Lord. But it should be observed that even to the Lord it was never applied when on earth, and it is used only of Him in connection with the looking for His return. If we meet a person in his house, we do not expect him to be telling us of his presence. If he is absent for a time, he might well apprise us that he would by-and-by be present. With the Spirit's coming however was to commence the time when He would dwell with the Lord's people on earth, and also be in them, teaching them too all things, and reminding them likewise of all that the Lord had said unto them. (John 14:1-31 :) Moreover the Spirit would Himself bear witness of Christ (John 15:1-27 :), and that not merely through the Lord's people, for they were to bear witness in addition; and by His presence on earth He would demonstrate to the world its sin, and at the same time He would guide the disciples into all the truth. (John 16:1-33 :) Great indeed and marked were to be the results of His coming, and believers who received Him would become reservoirs or cisterns, out of which refreshing fertilizing vivifying water should flow to others. (John 7:31.) A man on whom the Spirit could descend and abide, anointed with and sealed by Him also, energized too by Him, and begotten of Him in a manner peculiar to Himself, able to give the Holy Ghost, and about to baptize with the Spirit, led of Him, and full of Him — such was the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God most high. Alone begotten of the Spirit, the only one too on whom He has ever descended, as well as the sole Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, there are, on the other hand, certain statements made about Him, which are applied to others as well. Men in earlier days had been energized, and fresh ones would be energized by the Spirit, who would also be written of as indwelt by the Spirit of God, anointed with Him, and sealed by Him. But for all this the Son must go to the Father. Yet ere He went to heaven, He breathed on His disciples, and gave them the Holy Ghost, communicating thus the Spirit from Himself the risen One, that, sent by Him, they might be authorized to act in discipline in His assembly upon earth. (John 20:21-23; Matthew 18:18.) And now we meet with a term used more than once on future occasions — "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Does this of necessity imply an outpouring of the Spirit each time He is received? The use of the term in John 20:1-31 : clears up that point. The disciples received the Holy Ghost from the Lord before the outpouring took place; after that had taken place, believers received the Spirit, and each one does in whom He dwells; but to receive the Holy Ghost, an outpouring each time is clearly not requisite, and further the Spirit may be received without the imposition of hands, and apart from the miraculous powers with which at times believers were endowed. Of this too John 20:1-31 : is a witness. And though the Galatian saints had received the Spirit, and those of Ephesus and Rome as well, with the exception the twelve at Ephesus, we have no hint of miraculous powers being shared in by these saints at all. At length the day of Pentecost arrived, and the Lord Jesus having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, shed forth that

which the astonished multitude both saw and heard. The Holy Spirit had come, the third person in the Godhead now took up for the first time His dwelling-place on earth, an event fraught with important issues for believers collectively, for the world, and for saints individually. And first as to the bearing of the coming of the Holy Ghost on believers collectively. The Lord Jesus, as we have seen, had been marked out by the descent of the Spirit upon Him at His baptism by John as the One who should baptize with the Holy Ghost. This baptism, peculiar in its character, and for a special purpose, now for the first time took place. Baptism with water was nothing new; John had administered such a rite. The disciples too were empowered to baptize with water. The Lord Jesus alone has baptized with the Holy Ghost. But on two occasions only have we any hint of such a baptism having taken place. On the day of Pentecost in the upper room in Jerusalem it was first administered. In the house of Cornelius (must we not say?) it again took place. (Acts 11:16.) John the Baptist had foretold it, the four Evangelists record his testimony about it, the church's historian, Luke, recounts the occasions and circumstances under which it took place (Acts 1: 5; 2:, 11: 16), and Paul in writing to the Corinthians states doctrinally the results of it. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) But as with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, so with the baptism of the Spirit, no hint have Christians to ask for repetition of it, nor is there ground to look for it. For its effect being the baptizing believers into one body, this, when once done, was not to be repeated. Believers from amongst Israel were baptized into one body on the day of Pentecost; believers from amongst Gentiles were also baptized by the same Spirit into the body in the house of Cornelius. Had it been otherwise, converts from the Gentiles might have never been allowed a place of equality, or the recognition of oneness, with converts from the race of Israel. To mark the equality and oneness both companies received the Holy Spirit in the same way, direct from above, without human intervention of any kind. One sees the reason for the second outpouring and baptizing. One may surely, too, easily discern why they did not, and could not, take place afresh. And whatever may be said by men, we should remember that One person only in scripture is said to baptize with the Spirit (Matthew 3:11), and nowhere in the word is there any statement from which to draw the inference, that an apostle could baptize with the Spirit, or that laying on of hands was ever requisite for this baptism to be bestowed. But are the outpouring and baptizing, some may ask, distinct actions of the Spirit? At one and the same time both took place, though the ideas conveyed to us by the terms made use of are very different. The outpouring reminds us of the plenitude of God's gift; the baptism describes a special effect upon believers, who, thereby made one body, were henceforth to be conscious of it and declare it. The lines of demarcation between nations were not obliterated, but believers of whatever nationality were members one of another, being members of the body of Christ, the Spirit which was in Him uniting them to Him the Head, and to one another as members of His body. Thus a double tie existed. Believers at Antioch, in Syria, in Macedonia, in Achaia, and Galatia, owned the poor saints at Jerusalem as brethren, with whom they were closely connected by the tie of birth, being children of one Father. Believers too were members of the body of Christ, being united to Him, the Head by the Holy Ghost; and this so really, that one member could not say to another, I have no need of thee (1 Corinthians 12:21); nor, if the proper development of the body is to take place, can one member he dispensed with. (Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19.) And although the body of Christ may be termed a mystical body, it is none the less a real body, and Christians are reminded that there is but one such, the unity formed by the Spirit, which all believers are exhorted to keep (Ephesians 4:3), and which, by partaking of the one loaf at the Lord's table, we openly declare that we really are. (1 Corinthians 10:17.)

Besides this, the Spirit has builded believers into an habitation katoiketerion of God (Ephesians 2:22), called elsewhere God's house oikos (1 Timothy 3:16), and God's temple naos. (1 Corinthians 3:16.) In this the Holy Ghost dwells. He is not said to dwell in the body. He forms that, but He dwells in the house. The outpouring then of the Spirit was not merely the bestowal of power, but the coming of a divine Person to take up His abode upon earth in the assembly of God's saints, as the Lord had previously declared. And so really is He on earth, that Ananias and Sapphira tempted Him, and lied to Him. (Acts 5:3-9.) So truly does He dwell in the assembly of God, whether local or general, that if any man corrupts the temple of God, him will God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple, addressing the Corinthians, the apostle declares, "ye are." (1 Corinthians 3:17.) And so surely does the Spirit abide with the church whilst it continues on earth, that with the bride (not merely through the bride) He asks the Lord to come as the Morning Star. (Revelation 22:17.)

Secondly, the Spirit's presence on earth concerned the world, and had an important bearing both on mission work in general, and on the due regulation of local assemblies. He was to testify of Christ. This, which the Lord predicted (John 15:26) Peter announced was actually taking place. (Acts 5:32.) His presence too on earth, as come, sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, attests the world's sin in rejecting God's Son, and witnesses of righteousness, because He has gone to His Father, as well as of judgment, for the prince of this world is thereby judged. Three solemn conclusions for the world does the Spirit by His presence here set forth. It is true the world has never seen Him, it cannot see Him, yet His presence is none the less sure, and does concern it most deeply, however it may refuse to heed His testimony.

Further, He directed in mission work, as well as appointed officers in the local assemblies. He selected Paul and Barnabas for their missionary work among the Gentiles, and sent them forth from Himself to accomplish that to which He had called them. (Acts 13:2; Acts 13:4.) He directed Philip to join company with the eunuch (Acts 8:29), and encouraged Peter to enter the house of Cornelius, escorted thither by the centurion's servants, whom the Spirit had sent for that purpose. (Acts 10:19-20.) He hindered Paul and his company from labouring in Asia, and would not suffer them to enter Bithynia. (Acts 16:6-7.) Neither to the left hand nor to the right was Paul to turn, for he was to journey straight on in order to enter Europe by way of Troas. On another occasion He forbade Paul by the instrumentality of others to go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4); a communication however to which the apostle gave no heed, and with what results to himself we all know. With the Spirit's action within the assembly the apostle Paul acquaints us. Overseers or bishops were placed by Him (Acts 20:28) in different local assemblies, and He divides to each man gifts charismata severally as He will. (1 Corinthians 12:11.) Opportunity then should be given in the assembly for the manifestation of the Spirit by whomsoever He may select. And true worship now, that which God owns as such, is by the Spirit of God, as we should probably read in Php 3:3. But not only to work as believers, but to be in them individually, did the Holy Ghost come. "He shall be in you," the Lord declared. (John 14:17.) In accordance with this we read of saints receiving the Spirit (Acts 19:2; Galatians 3:2); of the Spirit being given to them (Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:8), and supplied, or ministered, to them (Galatians 3:5); of their having the Spirit (Jude 1:19), being led of the Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18), and walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16); of their being sealed with the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30), and indwelt by the Spirit, as well as of the Spirit making intercession for them, helping their infirmities, and witnessing with their

spirit of their relationship to God. (Romans 8:9; Romans 8:11; Romans 8:16; Romans 8:26.) But any, and all, of this is true only of believers. For whilst souls are born of the Spirit, He dwells only in such as are already believers. He was in the prophets of old as the Spirit of Christ. (1 Peter 1:11.) He was with them as David declares. (Psalms 51:11.) But that which was true of every prophet of old, and of every vessel taken up by God for special service, was not true of all God's saints before the cross. Now it is different. And though all are not gifts from the ascended Christ, to minister in the assembly; nor are all pastors, to care in a special way for the flock; nor are all prophets, to edify God's saints, though all can prophesy, if qualified by the Spirit to do it (1 Corinthians 14:31); yet to each one a gift, or gifts, charismata, are given to profit withal. And it is the distinctive mark, as well as the common privilege, of every believer to have the Spirit of God within him. (John 14:17.) And everyone, who now with the heart believes God's testimony of forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, does share in this great, this blessed, gift (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:43-44; Galatians 3:2; Ephesians 1:13) which it needed as a rule no apostle of old to give.

So, addressing the Corinthians, Paul reminds them that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11.) Writing to the Galatians, he mentions the gift of the Spirit as common to them all. (Galatians 3:1-29 :, Galatians 4:1-31 :) And, though desirous to impart to the Romans some spiritual gift, to establish them whom he had never as a body seen, and to whom as an assembly none of the eleven had ministered, he writes of them as having the Spirit given to them by God. (Romans 5:5.) In a similar strain John writes in his Gospel (John 7:39), and presses on the youngest believer in his Epistle. (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27.) And so really does the Spirit dwell in each believer, that his body is a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19), and will, if it dies, be raised up, because He has dwelt in it, as Romans 8:11 really states. Further, any Christian who deals deceitfully with a brother in the matter of his wife is told that he despises not man but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 4:8.) How practical is the teaching in connection with this truth!

Again, the Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance; by Him too we are sealed, as well as anointed. Of the two first Paul alone writes. He is the earnest, as in us, of the inheritance we shall share by-and-by with the Lord Jesus. By the Spirit too we are sealed of God, thus marked as those who are His. Besides this, the Spirit is the unction. Paul just mentions this (2 Corinthians 1:21), but John expatiates somewhat on it. (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27.)* Thus of our future portion are we reminded and assured, as well as of our present relationship to Him whose Spirit dwells in us. God would have us informed of all this, and by the Spirit it is effected. He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father. (Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:6.) What mighty and what blessed results flow from the coming of the Holy Ghost! He wrought on men, and worked through men, before the flood. He acted in person by men in addition after the flood. After the cross, in addition to all that, He came to dwell in believers, as well as in God's habitation upon earth. All then which follows from His dwelling upon earth is distinctively christian truth.

[* But, though knowing all things as thus anointed, so that the youngest believer is not to depend on the teaching of men, the apostle never meant, nor did he ever say, that they were independent of apostolic teaching. "He that knoweth God heareth us," is his statement in that same epistle, written, as he also tells us, that we might know that we have eternal life, who believe on the name

of the Son of God. The fact of his writing the epistle shows we are not independent of divine and apostolic teaching. His writing in the way he did to the babes in Christ, shows how perfectly God has provided in His word, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, given to the individual, for his being led on in truth.]

Just one more fact should be mentioned, ere this slight sketch is concluded. Scripture predicts a time of apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 :; Revelation 13:1-18 :), and the appearance of a minister of iniquity called the lawless one. (2 Thessalonians 2:8.) What has hindered his manifestation up to this very hour? The germs of the evil, which will develop into that apostasy, were on earth in apostolic days. But what hindered then has hindered, and still hinders, the full carrying out of Satan's plans? Scripture seems to intimate that it is the Holy Ghost. It is a power, and a person, to katechon, ho katechon. What so well answers to this double description as the Holy Spirit of God present on earth, who restrains, because present, the bursting forth of that flood of iniquity, which for a time in Christendom will seem to carry all before it? The Spirit, however, though He will then have ceased to dwell upon earth, will yet work here as a field for the manifestation of divine grace and power. Souls will be converted, testimony for God and for the Lord will go out and very extensive results will he the consequence, and at length, when the Lord shall have come to reign over Israel, and God's opponents have been by Him overthrown, the outpouring of the Spirit, of which the prophets have spoken, will taken place, and rest and peace will find a dwelling-place upon this earth. E. S. (C. E. Stuart?) Receiving the Holy Ghost.

1876 101 Till the advent of the Lord Jesus in humiliation none had ever received the Holy Ghost, though in all ages the Spirit had worked, and at times had made use of men as instruments for the display of His power. In apostolic days believers did receive the Holy Ghost. Do they still? Such a question, one would have thought, could have been answered but in one way by any believer who studied the word. The contrary, however, it would appear, is the case, judging by the following extracts from a pamphlet, entitled, " Are 'the Brethren' right?" recently written by Mr. H. Govett, who introduces the subject, he tells us, not "as an enemy, but as a brother in Christ" (p. 2), and who desires the profit of his brethren, "whom, as I suppose," are his concluding words, "I have led to consider the scriptures bearing on these solemn questions, so important to our present welfare. The Lord and my brethren in Christ accept what is according to scripture." (Page 65.)

Accepting the scriptures as the only standard to which we can appeal, and by which all that may be written on such a subject must be measured and weighed, what position does the author of that pamphlet take up on this subject, that constrained him to ask the question which he has put on the forefront of his brochure? "In short," he writes, "since we have neither apostles, nor the falling of the Holy Ghost upon any, we have not the gift, or the gifts, of the Holy Ghost." (Page 16.) "Was the laying on of an apostle's hands the ordinary way of procuring the Spirit of sonship? O, then! apostles are as much needed now as then. [The italics in these quotations are the author's.] They were not merely workers of signs, they were agents of sanctification, and edification. Do we not need edification and sanctification still? Do we not need power to witness for Christ still? Then we need either the Holy Ghost's falling on us still, or apostles to bestow that power." (Page 17.)

"As then, we have no falling of the Holy Ghost on any, and no apostles, we have not the baptism of the Holy Ghost; which is the great promise of our dispensation." (Page 21.)

"In like manner it may be proved that we have not received the Spirit. This appears on the face of the record concerning Samaria. Those in our day who have advanced the farthest have believed, and been baptized. But as yet the Spirit has not fallen on us; and no apostles have arisen to pray for us, and to bestow the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. (Acts 8:1-40 :) In the sense which 'Brethren' put on the words 'receiving the Spirit,' He is received. But not in the scripture sense. Nor have we 'the sealing of the Spirit.'"(Page 22.) "Believers now have no sealing." (Page 23.)

These and kindred statements are not wanting in clearness; but surely the reader, as he perused them, must have opened his eyes in astonishment. The possession now of the Spirit of sonship is denied. Let the child of God, who cries Abba Father, witness if the author's teaching on this point is to be accepted. Are all Christians in the condition to which Mr. Govett would by his words reduce them? The great promise too, as the author calls it, of the dispensation we have not. Has God then failed to perform His word? Baptism of the Spirit, the author tells us, was only by the falling of the Holy Ghost on any, or by imposition of apostolic hands. How then could Paul write? "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Corinthians 12:13.) Paul owed nothing to other apostles (2 Corinthians 12:11; Galatians 2:1-21 : ii), yet he shared in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Hands were laid on him, but they were those of Ananias at Damascus, and subsequently those of the prophets and teachers at Antioch. On his head we may feel pretty certain that no apostolic hands were laid to impart to him the Holy Ghost. Of an illapse of the Spirit on Paul the word is silent. The last illapse of the Spirit, by which believers were baptized with the Holy Ghost, took place, our author tells us, at Caesarea, in the house of Cornelius. (Page 51.) Paul clearly was not there present. Yet he shared in the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Again, the sealing by the Spirit now is denied. The gift of the Holy Ghost we have not, nor any of His gifts. Of edification we are deprived, and the Spirit in the present state of matters we cannot obtain. And yet the author admits the need of edification. Christian reader, can you endorse the character thus drawn of your God? Not such was the character that the Son gave of the Father. (Matthew 7:11.) Have saints since apostolic days been deprived of that which they really needed? And must we continue thus lacking, till fresh apostles are raised up? For these the author looks, basing his expectation on Luke 11:49-50; Matthew 23:34-36; Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46 : passages surely, a reference to which is enough to demonstrate the instability of his ground. Luke 11:49-50; Matthew 23:31-36; refer to the Jews, not to the church. Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42 — 46 treat of the Lord's servants, and not of any company of apostles as such. Peter's question and the Lord's answer make this pretty plain. "Lord speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" was the son of Simon's interrogation. "Who then is that faithful and wise steward," etc., was the Lord's immediate rejoinder. On this point, however, we have not to pit the opinion of one man in the nineteenth century of our era against that of another. The valedictory address of Paul to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:1-38 :), the exhortation given by Jude (ver. 20), and last, but not least, the strain of Peter's Second Epistle, the very apostle who put that question, and received that answer, all make it evident, that they knew nothing of a second twelve to arise. And Peter surely, by what he wrote (2 Peter 1:15), had not viewed the Lord's answer to him in the same light as Mr. Govett regards it. (Page 52.) Apostolic teaching, then, lends no countenance to the supposition of the rise of new apostles, by whom the gift of the Spirit, or His gifts, would be conferred on believers. Nor is there so much as a hint in the Lord's addresses to the seven churches, delivered when most, if not all, the apostles, but John, had departed to be with Christ,

that the saints would lack any thing as from God, which was needful for faithfulness and service upon earth. Hear the Lord addressing the godly company in Thyatira: "That which ye have, hold fast till I come." In what terms does He address the angel in Sardis? "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast and repent." But, says Mr. Govett, if we have not apostles we have not the baptism of the Spirit. (Page 52.) Did apostles, it may be asked, ever baptize with the Holy Ghost? One alone do we read was to do that — the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 1:33.) Apostles in common with all believers shared in that baptism (Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13); but we never read that they are needful now to bestow it.

Dismissing, then, as unsupported by scripture, any expectation of the rise of fresh apostles whilst the church is on earth, let us endeavour to find from the written word the answer to a question put by our author (p. 13): "What is the meaning of 'receiving the Holy Ghost?'" Of this John in his Gospel (John 7:39) has made mention, where we first meet with that term. Now, to receive the Holy Ghost is to be indwelt by Him (Romans 8:9), and hence such are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit, and their bodies become His temples. (1 Corinthians 6:19.) Was it then simply divine power coming on individuals that is meant by the term, receiving the Holy Ghost? Old Testament saints had known that, but of none of them do we read that they received the Holy Ghost. Was it an endowment of spiritual gifts, as tongues, miracles, etc.? These might be, and were at times shared in by some who had received the Spirit. But in truth it was far more. It was the Holy Ghost that was received. And nothing less than this is the common privilege of believers since the day of Pentecost. To the multitude, who were pricked to the heart that day, Peter announced that, on certain and specified conditions, they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38.) For this same gift Peter and John prayed on behalf of believers in Samaria. (Acts 8:15; Acts 8:20.) The company in the house of Cornelius received it. (Acts 10:47.) The twelve disciples at Ephesus were asked if they had been recipients of it. (Acts 19:2.) And this gift was shared in by all who obeyed God, as Peter asserted before the rulers assembled in council at Jerusalem. (Acts 5:32.) The Galatians too had received the Holy Ghost, (Galatians 3:2.) To the Romans God had given the same gift (Romans 5:5); and the Spirit had been given to the saints at Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:12), and at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 4:8), as well as to those to whom James (James 4:5), John (1 John 3:24), and Jude (ver. 19) severally wrote. In short, apostolic testimony on this point is uniform, clear, and decided, that believers received nothing less than the Holy Ghost, which was the gift of God. (Acts 8:20; Acts 11:17.) Hence they received all that the Spirit could be to them, and might, if He pleased, share in all that with which He could endow them. Receiving the Holy Ghost they had the earnest of the inheritance, for the Spirit is the earnest. (2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14.) They were sealed too, for He is the seal. (Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30.) They were anointed also, for He is the unction. (2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27.) Again, receiving the Holy Ghost, the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts (Romans 5:5), and they could know the things that were freely given to them of God. (1 Corinthians 2:12.) The Spirit of sonship too was theirs, for He is the Spirit of God's Son; hence they could cry 'Abba, Father.' (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.) Moral likeness to Christ they could seek after, for they had the Spirit of Christ. (Romans 8:9-10.) Members of Christ they each and all were (1 Corinthians 6:15 — 17; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 12:27); and their mortal bodies would be quickened, they were taught, for they were indwelt by His Spirit, who had raised up Jesus from the dead. (Romans 8:11.) All this was theirs through receiving the Holy Ghost.

Here it may be well to point out the distinction between the gift of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-31 :), and the gifts bestowed on men by the ascended Christ. (Ephesians 4:8.) The first of these called dorea, intimating that it is freely bestowed, is the gift of God. The second, termed charismata "favours," the Holy Ghost divides to every man severally as He will. The third, spoken of as domata gifts, are from Christ in glory. The two former were given only to Christians, the third is bestowed on men. The first, dorea, is given by God, and is common to all believers. The second, charismata, are various, and were divided to different individuals. Thus, as believers, some might have one of these gifts, some another. Some more than one. But probably it was a rare thing to meet with one Christian endowed with them all. Perhaps, we may rightly question the existence at any time of such an individual. At Corinth some had the gift of tongues, others that of interpreting tongues. A man might have both (1 Corinthians 14:13), but it is clear, that at Corinth all who were endowed with the former, did not possess the latter. (1 Corinthians 14:28.) All however had the gift of the Holy Ghost, dorea, (1 Corinthians 6:19), but His gifts, charismata, were divided amongst them. So, whilst of some it was true that they had a gift of tongues, others that of prophecy, others the power of working miracles, we never read that one had the earnest, and another the unction. A believer could not have the earnest without the unction also, for the Holy Ghost is both; so having the Spirit he had both. All such then were sealed, all such had the earnest, all such had the unction, all such had the Spirit of sonship, whereby to cry 'Abba, Father.' The third, the gifts of Christ are quite distinct from the gift of God, which is the Holy Ghost, and the gifts of the Spirit, for they are individuals, apostles, prophets, etc., given by the Lord to men for the furtherance of His work here below. So an apostle, or an evangelist was a gift of Christ to men. That same servant might have the gift of tongues, or some one or more manifestations of the Spirit, to enable him to labour effectively amongst men. But, though himself a gift of Christ to men, and partaking of the gifts of the Spirit, he had also received the gift of the Holy Ghost. In one labourer then as Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or others, we could have traced out these three, the gift of God, the gifts of the Spirit, and the gift of Christ, and distinguished them.

Leaving aside however the gifts of Christ as foreign to our subject, we would direct special attention to the difference between the gift of God, which is the Holy Ghost, and the gifts of the Spirit, for where this is not seen, confusion is apt to be engendered. But scripture makes things clear; and, from the language uniformly used, it is evident, that receiving the Spirit must be something different from having divided to us of His gifts. Into this confusion however Mr. Govett has fallen, as he tells us, "The gift dorea is a general term, including all varieties of the gifts." (Page 16.) Again he writes, "What was received (that is, in the house of Cornelius)? The gift of tongues? Do we receive them? Did any one ever know an assembly called to hear the Gospel, which broke forth in foreign languages?" (Page 8.) "Apostles then ask for this gift of God and bestow it, that is, the gifts of tongues, prophecy, etc." (Page 18.)

Now scripture says, that what was received in Samaria, and in the house of Cornelius, was the Holy Ghost. (Acts 8:17; Acts 10:47; Acts 11:17.) How the reception of the Spirit at Samaria was manifested, the sacred historian does not inform us. On such a point we then may well be silent. What, however, took place in the house of Cornelius Luke has recorded, and the manner of its manifestation he has carefully noted. While Peter was speaking to them (having just mentioned the universal testimony of the prophets, regarding forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus

Christ for all who believed on Him), the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word, and they spake with tongues and magnified God. By the illapse of the Spirit they were empowered to speak with tongues. But of what was that gift, charisma, a witness? Let the historian tell us: "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." (Acts 10:45-46.) What then had taken place? An illapse of the Spirit? Granted. But there was more. On these believers the Spirit had been poured. They had also just received the Holy Ghost, of which the manifestation through His falling on them, so that they spake with tongues, and magnified God, was on the present occasion the outward demonstration. Concerning them four things are affirmed. The Holy Ghost was poured on them, they were baptized with the Spirit, they received the Holy Ghost, and He fell on them. At Pentecost cloven tongues of fire had appeared, which sat upon each one in the house, besides which they spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. At Ephesus the Spirit came upon the twelve disciples, on whom Paul had laid his hands, and they spake with tongues and prophesied. The manifestations, therefore, of the Spirit were not exactly the same on each occasion; one manifestation was common to all these three, and the reason of it the word makes apparent. They all spake with tongues, which was a sign that would commend itself even to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22); for there were, as the apostle tells us, what may be called sign-gifts and edification-gifts. Of these, speaking with tongues is an example of the first, and prophecy an illustration of the last. There was a propriety, then, on these occasions in marking the Spirit’s power in a way every one could understand, so those who received the Holy Ghost also spake with tongues. But at Pentecost, besides that, cloven tongues as of fire appeared, and sat upon each of them. Of the like of this we never read again. At Caesarea they magnified God; at Ephesus they prophesied.

Here, then, naturally arises the question, on the right answer to which a great deal depends, is the term, receiving the Holy Ghost, identical in meaning with the Spirit falling, or coming upon, saints? Can we have the first without participating iii the second? Is the latter a needful prelude to the former? We must answer the former of these questions in the affirmative, and the latter in the negative. Receiving the Spirit, and the falling of the Spirit on any one are very different. The Spirit is given by God. He is never said to give Himself. The Spirit is given to believers — that is an act on God’s part. The Spirit might fall on the same believers — that would be an act on His own part. In apostolic days both actions could, and did, at times take place, yet they are not to be confounded. We say at times, because Paul’s question to the disciples at Ephesus would surely have been superfluous if the Spirit had fallen on them, or had come on them. Why ask them whether they had received the Holy Ghost, if they could not have the former without the latter? For, wherever the Spirit fell on souls, or came on them, those around them, in some way or other, were made sensible of it. (Acts 2:1-47 :; Acts 8:16-18; Acts 10:46.) But if, as indeed is the case, receiving the Spirit is one thing, and His falling on people quite another, we can well understand the question put, and its propriety likewise. For the fact that the apostle put it suggests this very forcibly, that souls in apostolic days could receive the Holy Ghost without sharing in any illapse of the Spirit. The former is the common privilege of all true believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and is treated of, where no falling of the Spirit on individuals is so much as hinted at. Witness the Romans, the Thessalonians, and those to whom John wrote. All these had received the Spirit, yet we have no authority for supposing that on any of them had He fallen. But was there not more in

that question than some may perhaps have surmised? On those to whom it was addressed the Spirit did subsequently come; in order, however, for Him to come on them they had first to receive the Holy Ghost. This seems pretty evident from the evangelist's statement about those in Samaria to whom Peter and John went down, and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, "for as yet," Luke adds, "he was fallen upon none of them." Had He already fallen on them, it would have been evident that they had received the Spirit. But He had not. How, then, were they to share in all the fulness of blessing, and manifestation of it, in common with their brethren ill Judea? They must receive the Holy Ghost before becoming instruments for the display of His power. The apostles therefore prayed, not that He should fall on them, but that they might receive the Holy Ghost. To uninstructed minds it might have seemed, that what was wanted, was an illapse of the Spirit. Peter and John, taught of the Spirit, prayed for something else, namely, that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus the narrative of events in Samaria throws light on the fitness of the apostle Paul's question at Ephesus. That question suggests that there may be the receiving of the Spirit without His coming on the individuals; and Peter and John's procedure at Samaria intimates, that no illapse could be looked for, till believers had been made partakers of the gift. Believers might receive the Holy Ghost without sharing in any illapse of the Spirit. To share, however, in the latter it was necessary for them to be recipients of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

How, then, can we receive the Holy Ghost? Our author tells us that it cannot take place unless the Spirit falls on us, or apostolic hands are laid on us. We trust it is made sufficiently clear that it was not by an illapse of the Spirit that souls received the gift of God in apostolic times. By the imposition of apostolic hands we cannot receive the gift — on this point we are agreed. Can we not, then, receive the Spirit? Must we be, and continue to be, deprived of this gift unless new apostles are vouchsafed us? To this Mr. Govett answers, Yes. We answer, No. There was a way by which the Spirit was received in the earliest days of Christianity; that way is available still. At Jerusalem Peter indicated it. At Caesarea it was exemplified. In Galatia it was found to be sufficient. The obedience of faith, submission to God's word and truth about His Son, is the available way to which we refer. To the multitude, pricked to the heart, Peter declared that if they repented, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38.) No hint is there here of the need of laying on of hands, nor of any illapse of the Spirit being requisite. Their part was to believe God's announcement, and submit to it, and they would receive the Holy Ghost. The company at Caesarea heard the word, and believed it (Acts 10:44; Acts 15:7), and received the Holy Ghost. By the hearing of faith the Galatians had received it. (Galatians 3:2.) To those, in short, who obey God this gift is given. (Acts 5:32.) By the laying on of an apostle's hands the Spirit, it is true, was on two occasions given, but were not these exceptional cases, and for special reasons, as has been pointed out by another? The Samaritans had to see they were not independent of Jerusalem, as they and their fathers had so long pretended, so from two who came from Jerusalem they received the Holy Ghost. Paul's apostleship was evidenced at Ephesus to be in nothing inferior to that of any of the twelve, for by him believers could receive the Holy Ghost. But neither Paul nor Peter, both of whom were used in that remarkable way, ever bade disciples to look to such a channel in order to receive it. As far as light is cast on the subject from the written word, and there only can we learn about it, the conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of apostolic hands was an exceptional manner of bestowing it. The conferring of a gift

(charisma) seems to have been part of the ordinary apostolic service. (Romans 1:11; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6); the communication of the gift (dorea) of the Holy Ghost was an unusual act. But Mr. Govett joins issue on this point, and adduces, as he thinks, scripture warranty for the supposition, that the normal way of receiving the Holy Ghost was by the imposition of an apostle's hands. For scripture warranty he turns us to Hebrews 6:1-2. For scripture examples he points to 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 1:11. Now the reference to Hebrews 6:1-2, assuming that his translation, "baptisms of instruction," could stand, is quite beside the point. The apostle is here writing of truths common to Jews and to Christians, called by him "the word of the beginning of Christ," that is, doctrines known and accepted when the Lord was upon earth. On these he would not then dwell, his object being to get those believers on to full and distinctive christian ground. So he tells them he would then leave aside such truths as they held in common with Jews. But was the gift of the Holy Ghost a truth known and shared in by Jews? It never was enjoyed till after the Lord had risen. So that scripture, it is clear, cannot apply to the matter in hand. A reference to it, to substantiate Mr. Govett's position, is clearly inadmissible. Besides this, the word baptismos, baptism, found in this passage is never elsewhere used for baptism, either of water or of the Holy Ghost. When that which we understand by baptism is treated of, we meet uniformly with the word, baptisma. Baptismos, wherever else it occurs, is applied to the washing of cups, etc. (Mark 7:4; Mark 7:8); and to ceremonial cleansings (Hebrews 9:10), carnal ordinances with which all Jews were familiar. Hence, on exegetical and etymological grounds, we must demur to our author's use of that passage in Hebrews 6:1-20 : Similarly, for reasons already stated, we cannot accept as pertinent the illustrations to which he would turn us.

Many other points in his pamphlet might be remarked on; but we must forbear, and will conclude with noticing just two, which Mr. Govett presses strongly on the attention of his readers. The first is the use of a hymn-book; the second is the scriptural meaning of prophesying. As regards the hymn-book, he asks, "Is the Spirit grieved at being thus confined to these five hundred hymns, and these two hundred tunes? Is it scriptural to come prepared with hymn-books and tune-books? or is it not?" (p. 38.) Again, "Why, then, must God's free Spirit be tied to the letter? Were not the hymns of Zecharias, of Mary, and of Elizabeth, inspired and extemporaneous? How is it the church has none? How is it she is confined to the same printed selection?" (p. 40.) Again, "We want to know, if singing by book is right, why praying by book, and preaching by book, are not right also?" (p. 38.) In these remarks there is a fallacy, and there is a confounding of things that surely differ. It is assumed that the assembly is restricted to the hymn-book. And hymn-singing is here treated of as if it were similar to prayer or preaching, from both of which it is very different. To sing together, we must acquaint one another with that in which all are to join. We listen to one who preaches; we follow one who leads in prayer, so as to say Amen to that which he rightly utters. But we sing together. The exercises, then, are distinct, and that of singing most markedly different from the other two. Need we also point out the incongruity of calling attention to the song of Zecharias, and the utterances of Elizabeth and Mary, when writing on such a subject as congregational singing? Zecharias, we read, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied; his was an inspired communication. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, gave vent to her thoughts by addressing Mary the virgin. Mary, in the fulness of her heart, poured forth her praise alone. It is difficult to understand anyone seriously referring to these three when writing on such a subject. Zecharias was uttering inspired predictions. Is that congregational singing? Elizabeth addressed Mary, whose visit formed the theme of her communication. Is that the character of congregational psalmody? Mary, in the

presence of Elizabeth, poured forth alone the Magnificat. Is that, we ask, an instance or illustration of congregational singing? But further. As all sing together, it is necessary to communicate to all the words about to be sung. Hence we must know before we utter it what it is we are to sing. Does this, then, necessitate an assembly being restricted to a certain selection of hymns? By no means. If any one was led to give out words to be sung not in the collection — and such a thing has been done — there is nothing to hinder it, provided the scripture rule is observed, "Let all things be done unto edifying." (1 Corinthians 14:26.) This rule, and the other, "Let all things be done decently and in order," are to be observed when the church comes together. That they did sing psalms in the assembly is clear. There was room for singing, and that exercise is regarded as suited to the assembly. The apostle does not forbid it, nor does he say it was wrong to have a psalm; he only lays down principles to direct those who would teach or lead the rest. It is clear, moreover, from his notice of the practice, that the psalms commonly sung were not inspired communications, for he writes of each one having a psalm, etc., the pressing of which on the attention of the assembly, without reference to the edification of all, induced a state of confusion, against which for the future they were to watch, as well as to correct the bad habit into which they had fallen. But was God the author of confusion? Paul distinctly asserts He was not. And surely Mr. Govett would cordially agree in this. Then He could not have inspired each one to have a psalm, and sing it, for that was productive of great confusion. Nay, more, as there is but one Holy Ghost, we know that He does not, and would not, so act on different people at once as to produce discord instead of harmony, confusion instead of order, strife and contention instead of peace. The edification of saints is that which He aims at and provides for. Psalms might then be sung, and prophesying be in exercise, subject to the rules already referred to, and the only allowed interruption was on the occasion of a revelation then and there vouchsafed. That was to take precedence of all regular prophesying. If therefore the psalms were inspired, it was right, according to this direction, to bring them out as they did; Paul, however, blamed them for their practice, because, he knew, and they knew, they were not singing by inspiration. But this leads naturally to the consideration of the question, what is the prophesying of which the apostle here treats? Mr. Govett affirms "that it always supposes God’s inspiration, whether spoken of Old or New Testament prophets." (Page 53.) Here again we are compelled to differ from him. Prophesying might be the utterance of an inspired communication — of course it often was. But nothing can be more certain from the tenor of the word than this, that a prophet was not of necessity inspired of God. For, first, the apostle distinguishes in this chapter (1 Corinthians 14:1-40 :) between prophecy and revelation. The prophet was to give way, and be silent, if a revelation was vouchsafed to another man in the assembly. Secondly, we are not left to elaborate for ourselves a definition of inspiration. God, by that same apostle, and in the same epistle, has furnished us with an explanation of what it is. It is the setting forth God’s mind in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. (1 Corinthians 2:13.) Now, keeping this in view, let us see in what terms prophets are addressed in the New Testament. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." (Romans 12:6.) How could such an exhortation be addressed to one who was speaking in words which the Holy Ghost taught? How could he do otherwise, as the mouthpiece of the Spirit, than prophesy according to the proportion of faith? Again, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." (1 Corinthians 14:29.) Does the Holy Ghost authorize men to sit in judgment on God’s word? A rationalist might claim for man the possession of a verifying faculty, whereby he could distinguish, as he would say, between what

was of God and what was of man in the written or spoken word. But are we to believe God sanctions that? We must, if our author's statement be correct. Such injunctions, however, show pretty plainly that God did not regard all prophets as inspired. Nor must we. Mr. Govett complains that Mr. Kelly gives no proof that Romans 12:1-21 : does not apply to inspired prophets. We should have thought none was needed. Surprise we should have felt had Mr. Kelly taught otherwise.

Here we must stop, citing only one more extract from the pamphlet. "You have no other gifts than Christians in general. But Christians in general confess they have not the anointing and sealing of the Spirit. So then neither have you." (Page 64.)

We must confess to a feeling of amazement as we read these words. Truth there is in them certainly, for we have no gifts which are not common to Christians. But is the experience of Christians in general to be taken as the standard by which to estimate what is truth? Surely our author did not think what it was he was writing. Who, too, deputed him thus to answer for his brethren in Christ? We must leave it with them to repudiate or not his statements on their behalf. For ourselves, believing Peter's words, who spake when filled with the Holy Ghost, "The promise is unto you, and unto your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39), we would ask, has God failed in His promise? If this pamphlet teaches correctly, He has. But what if its doctrine is wrong? The subject is confessedly of great importance. Let Christians look to it, and learn about it from the word for themselves. C. E. Stuart.

Letter on Receiving the Spirit.

1876 170 Mr. Editor, Will you kindly allow me to give some reply to the paper of C. E. S. upon my tract?

I agree with him that the question of which it treats is a great one, and hope that my brethren in Christ will study it. Having found difficulties in getting a London house to sell my tract, I here offer to send to any one willing candidly to study the subject during the next three weeks, a copy of the tract by post.

I would first observe, that the paper of C. E. S., only touches here and there upon the tract, omitting often to answer the proofs from scripture which I give.

I next observe, that he has once or twice singularly misunderstood me. He says, that I deny the present possession of the Spirit of sonship. It is not true. I assert its present possession. (p. 17.) 'What then do you say with regard to your words, cited by him from page 17 of your tract?' I was there arguing against Mr. Kelly's views. He affirms that 'the gift of the Spirit' means settled rest and liberty in the Saviour. This I deny. The laying on of an apostle's hands produced not the Spirit of sonship, but supernatural energies. But if the laying on of hands produced the Spirit of sonship, then we of this day need apostles to lay on hands.

He supposes me to affirm that believers now cannot attain edification. This is a part of the same mistake. I was showing that Mr. Kelly's theory led to these consequences, which seem to me absurd.*

[*It is Mr. Govett, whose theory is as inconsistent with the statements of scripture as with the conviction of all sober Christians. There was no real distinction in the gift of the Spirit whether with

or without the imposition of apostolic hands; the difference was in the mode of conveyance, and owing to special circumstances, which scripture principle explains, but there was none in the Spirit received. In early days outward signs accompanied, with or without such imposition of hands; but the great fact was the Spirit given to believers. The signs of whatever moment were of far inferior importance, and the Spirit thus given was of sonship, as well as of power in other ways according to the sovereign working of God. Compare Acts 2:1-47 : Acts 8:1-40 : Acts 10:1-48 : Acts 11:1-30 : Acts 19:1-41 :; Romans 8:15-16; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:2; Galatians 3:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:6. It is false so to divide between them as to attribute supernatural energies only to the laying on of an apostle's hands; equally so to suppose that both these and the Spirit of sonship were not given without it. Mr. G. argues, as all errorists do, on a partial view of scripture against the full truth. The reception of the Spirit does not mean but imply rest and liberty in and by the Saviour, and that He is also a Spirit of sonship or adoption. Mr. G. separates unscripturally the Spirit of sonship from the gift of the Spirit, restricting the last apparently to supernatural or miraculous energies. It is not only absurd, but unbelief of the gravest kind, to deny that all real Christians of this day since Pentecost have received the Spirit and are thereby members of the one body. Reception of the Spirit in every true sense follows the new birth. Mr. G. counts the new birth to be "'brethren's' sense" of receiving the Spirit; but this is the common confusion which Mr. G. holds and we repudiate. He denies the gift of the Spirit. — Ed.] I now address myself to the main question: What is receiving the Spirit? To think of any man with his Bible open before him denying that Christians of our day have received the Spirit! What a strangely blind man that Mr. Govett must be!

Well, friends, the key to this mystery is hanging before the door. I had said, "In the sense which 'brethren' put on the words 'receiving the Spirit,' he is now received, but not in the scripture sense." (p. 22.) What then is the sense which 'brethren' put on the phrase?

It is the same sense which is put upon it by C. E. S.

1. "Now to receive the Holy Ghost is to be indwelt by Him (Romans 8:9), and hence such are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and their bodies become His temples." (1 Corinthians 6:19.) (p. 102.)

2. "Believers received nothing less than the Holy Ghost which was the gift of God. (Acts 8:20); 11: 17.) Hence they received all that the Spirit could be to them." (An unscriptural inference.)

3. "A believer could not have the earnest without the unction also, for the Holy Ghost is both: so having the Spirit, he had both." (This is the point to be proved.)

Now I had granted from the first that believers of our day have in this sense 'received the Holy Ghost.' He has wrought on them to regenerate them, to make them sons of God, to dwell within them, and to make them members of Christ and make their bodies His temples. But I affirmed and do still affirm, that this is not the scripture sense of the phrase — 'receiving the Holy Ghost.' The path of C. E. S. then was plain enough. He had to show that the 'brethren's' sense of 'receiving the Holy Ghost' is the scripture sense. It was for him to cite passages in which the phrase, 'receiving the Holy Ghost' occurs, and to show that it refers to the regeneration, indwelling, and sanctification of the Spirit. This he has not done! 'If we have received the Spirit in one sense, we have received

Him in all!' That is his theory and yours. And now will you prove it? It cannot be done as C. E. S. has attempted, by citing without distinction scriptures which speak of blessings enjoyed by believers then as the 'work of the Holy Ghost.' Are these all ours now in possession? is the question. All those which were the consequences of simple faith, are ours now, as they were theirs then. But was there not an operation of the Spirit subsequent to faith, imparting gift and power, which we have not? My object is to present to 'brethren' this great truth: that 1. There are two operations of the Spirit quite distinct from one another. The one is now possessed; the other is not.

[They are distinct, but both included in the gift of the Spirit. — Ed.] 2. The one is internal and sanctifying.

3. The other is external, and communicates power. (Acts 1:8.) [The difference between 2, and 3. is falsely stated. — Ed.] 4. The one is begun to be wrought when a man believes.

[The Spirit of sonship is as much after one has believed as any other form of the Spirit's power. See Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:13. — Ed.]

5. The other was wrought only by illapse of the Spirit, or by imposition of hands after faith. [No doubt it was after the Spirit was given that the believer received Him; but imposition was only in special cases, and in no way the rule. Acts 10:1-48 : proves the contrary, not to speak of Acts

Let us then look at the scriptures which contain the phrase in question, and see whether this view is borne out, or whether the 'brethren's' sense is the scriptural one.

1. John 7:37-39. This receiving of the Spirit was to be bestowed after faith, and after Pentecost. It is not then the first operation of the Spirit, but the second.

[Quite true that it is after faith, perfectly absurd that it is "external." "Out of his belly," etc. Is this external? It is false that this is lost now. — Ed.]

2. John 20:22. Jesus breathes on the ten, and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This was not the operation of the Spirit which communicates faith, but one coming after it.

[It is false that this is "external" or gone now. — Ed.]

3. The Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost. Peter says, "Repent, and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise [of Joel] is to you," etc. (Acts 2:38.) Here the reception of the Spirit is the promise to be realised after faith and baptism. And the apostle had already spoken of it as described by Joel. It is gift and not grace, but gift after grace received.

[It is false that it was not grace as well as gift. — Ed.]

4. We come to the critical case, that of Samaria. (Acts 8:1-40 :) Philip preaches Christ, with miracles in proof of his doctrine. Many believe and are baptized. (Ver. 12.) Is not that enough? No! The apostles at Jerusalem send to them Peter and John, who pray for them that they may receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet he has fallen on none. They have had the baptism of water only: not that of the Spirit. "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." "When Simon saw that through laying on of the apostle's hand the Holy Ghost is given," he offers money, saying, "Give me also this power that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."

Now is not this passage decisive? In the ’brethren’s’ sense these Samaritans had already received the Spirit. In the scripture sense they had not.* They were baptized believers; men and women whose ’hearts were right with God.’ The Holy Spirit was dwelling in them as His temples. C. E. S. says, ’If I have the indwelling Spirit, I have the Holy Ghost in every sense.’ That is proved [?] to be erroneous by this example. Apostles prayed for them, that they might ’receive the Holy Ghost.’ Philip the evangelist was unable to impart the gifts of the Spirit. Therefore apostles are sent. Till the laying on of apostles’ hands, they had not ’received the Holy Ghost.’

[* This too is "’brethren’s’ sense;" and it is hard to understand how Mr. G. did not know this when he said the reverse. What brother ever said that the Samaritans had already received the Spirit? In the Lectures on the N. T. Doctrine of the H. G. the direct contrary is urged at length. Such is the "’brethren’s’ sense" invariably according to scripture. It is Mr. G. who, like people generally in Christendom, does not understand and will not learn. It is not true that they had received the Spirit in any sense, (though born of the Spirit) before Peter and John came down. Till they received the Spirit, the Holy Spirit was not dwelling in them as His temple. The only thing proved erroneous is Mr. G.’s interpretation. There were special reasons for guarding against independence then; and the apostles by laying on of hands identified them with the work of God at Jerusalem. They were one assembly by one Spirit’s baptism; but it is a mistake that we are not baptized into the same body by that one Spirit, though there are no apostles to lay their hands on us. As to this Mr. G. reasons like an Irvingite rather than a Christian, confounding as ever birth of the Spirit, which is in no sense receiving the Spirit, with His indwelling. Then too outward signs accompanied the gift; but it is the merest assumption that it was to be so always. Mr. G.’s dilemma is therefore only ignorance. The Samaritans did not receive the Spirit till after they believed any more than we or any do. At the beginning there was care taken especially to hold fast unity and guard against independence, Jews and Samaritans being mutually jealous. It was not so when the Gentiles were first called; on them no hands were imposed. The Samaritans received the Spirit both as power of holiness (not merely new nature) and in the way of sign-gifts, as all did at the beginning. So do we after believing receive the Spirit, though the sign-gifts be no longer vouchsafed, and we have not apostolic hands laid on us any more than Cornelius or his household. It is wholly unscriptural to view, as Mr. G. does, the baptism of the Spirit as "external" and to deny it to us all in the face of 1 Corinthians 12:13. Ed]

If C. E. S.’s argument be good, and these believers had not yet received the indwelling of the sanctifying Spirit, but needed the prayer and laying on of apostles’ hands, then we who are at the best only baptized believers whose hearts are right with God, have not yet the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, for we have no apostles, and none have received the Spirit save they on whom He has fallen, or who have received the imposition of apostles’ hands. [What reasoning! — Ed.]

It is evident that something which was communicated was visible even to the eye of unconverted Simon. He could not see the inward communication of the Spirit of holiness, nor could Peter impart it. Nor did Simon desire to impart sanctification to whom he would. But he did desire to impart gift of miracle; and offered money to purchase the power.

Let me put the point as a dilemma. The Samaritans received the Spirit by imposition of hands, either as the Spirit of sanctification, or as the Spirit of power. If they had not received the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of holiness before apostles laid on hands, then neither have we. But they had

the Spirit's indwelling, for they were men of faith [!], whose hearts were right with God. Then they received through the apostles' hands the Spirit of power, and my case is proved. [!!] There are two operations of the Holy Ghost; one of which we possess, and the other we do not; because the Holy Ghost has never fallen on us, nor have apostles laid hands on us. Apostles before Pentecost were renewed, but had to wait for the Spirit of power. (Acts 1:8.)

5. We come next to the preaching to Cornelius and his friends. Peter preaches to them Christ. At once "the Holy Ghost fell on all that heard the word." (Acts 10:44.) It was "the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Ver. 45.) It brought the power to speak with tongues.

It was the baptism of the Spirit. It emboldened Peter to say, "Can any one forbid the water that these should not be immersed, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we?" As they had received the baptism of the Spirit at God's hands, how could man refuse them the baptism of water, which it was in his power to bestow? 'But it is not called the baptism of the Spirit.' Not in Acts 10:1-48 : but it is in the next chapter. Peter, defending his entering into persons uncircumcised, says, "The Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning." (Ver. 51.) Then he remembered the Saviour's promise of the baptism of the Spirit, and saw that the baptism of water received in this its true completion. John the Baptist testified the incompleteness of the immersion in water ministered by him, and pointed all believers onward to the better immersion in the Spirit and in power. This Peter saw was the fulfilment of that word.

Here then is another reception of the Spirit. Is it such as we who believe now experience? Nay! It was external, the bathing of believers in the Spirit; their being anointed, clothed upon, and gifted. It was something which appealed to the senses of Peter and the six brethren of Joppa who accompanied him. Yet in one respect it was an exception. Ordinarily the Spirit was received after faith. Here both operations of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit and the other reception of the Spirit, took place at once. [This is not correct. The operations might follow ever so closely, but they are never at once. It is unbelievers who need to be born of the Spirit. Believers receive the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit in "brethren's' sense" as well as in that of scripture, is always after faith. Luke 11:13; John 4:10; John 7:32; John 10:16-17; John 15:1-27 : John 16:1-33 :; Acts 5:32, etc., etc. — Ed.] To these Gentiles "was granted repentance unto life." (Acts 10:18.) It was God who knew the faith of their hearts, bearing witness to them as His by the outward sign. They occupied the same level with the apostles and the saints of Judea. They had the indwelling of the Spirit; they had also the anointing of the Spirit, bestowed through direct illapse of the Holy Ghost.

C. E. S. says, "The last illapse of the Holy Ghost by which believers were baptized with the Holy Ghost, took place, our author tells us (m. 1:) at Caesarea." Can C. E. S. inform us of any illapse of the Spirit after this? Does he mean that in consequence I suppose there was no baptism of the Spirit after this? I do not. By laying on of hands the baptism of the Spirit was received, where there was no illapse. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) [It is merely begging the question, and in fact false, that the baptism of the Spirit necessarily required the imposition of hands. In Acts 2:1-47 : not a word implies it; in Acts 10:1-48 : what is said disproves it; and these were the two principal occasions, for Jew and Gentile. Mr. Govett's basis is unsound. — Ed.]

6. We proceed to Acts 19:1-41 : At Ephesus Paul finds certain disciples. He says to them, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" They replied, that they had not heard of the existence of any Holy Spirit. His next question is of much import, "Into what then were ye

baptized?" This supposes that the baptism of the Spirit by the laying on of apostles' hands followed as a usual and proper thing, upon the baptism of water. Their answer that they had received only John's baptism at once explained the matter. Paul then instructs them, that John was only sent to lead Israel to faith in Christ. Thereupon the twelve at Ephesus were immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus. "And when Paul had laid his hand on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spake with, tongues, and prophesied."

What is the sense of 'receiving the Spirit' here? It is not any receiving upon believing, but after it, and as the consequence of faith, as Paul's question shows, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" He dwelt in them already, for they were believers.[?] Wherever any reception of the Spirit after faith is spoken of, it is always the reception of the Spirit of power, as here. This passage explains therefore to us Paul's word to Ephesian believers, "In whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Ephesians 1:13.) The Holy Ghost's coming on them left an abiding mark, the seal of God. [It is always of power and of love and sound mind, that is sanctifying power, but not at all necessarily of miraculous power. It is absurd to deny this to any Christian. — Ed.]

7. The next occurrence of the expression, 'receiving the Spirit,' occurs in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13. "Now we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

There is no difficulty with regard to its meaning in this place. It has the same sense as in previous ones. The apostle is speaking of the Spirit as the inspirer of believers, and revealer of secrets. This epistle at some length discovers to us the manifestation of the Spirit in the various forms of gift. [It is no difficulty to "brethren," but insuperable to Mr. Govett, unless he go so far as to deny to the Christian the mind of Christ, which hangs on receiving the Spirit. His dismal theory would deprive us of this. — Ed.]

8. The next occurrence of the expression is found in 2 Corinthians 11:4. "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." This passage exhibits the same signification. Paul was troubled by false apostles. They infested the church of Corinth. He says then, 'If these coming apostles can preach to you as good news as I have preached, and can bestow on you such gifts of miracle and inspiration as I did, you may well listen; but not otherwise.'

9. The ninth occurrence of the phrase is in Galatians 3:2-3 : "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that is imparting to you the Spirit (see Greek) and working miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Here is the same signification. Paul enquired of the misled Galatians believers on what ground they received the miraculous gifts. Was it because they had become disciples of Moses, or because they were believers in Christ? Law cannot impart gift to those under it: the gospel did.

Herein then is a decisive ground of superiority to the law, on which Paul was ready to rest the whole question between him and them. There was some one even in Paul's absence who was both working miracles and bestowing the gifts of the Spirit on believers. Let them inquire of him, on what ground he was so doing? Was it as a disciple of Moses, or as a believer in Jesus? This reception of the Spirit then is not the indwelling of the Holy Ghost which belongs to faith, but a something imparted after faith and by imposition of hands. No human agent can impart converting and sanctifying grace. Here then we are on the same ground as in Acts 19:1-41 : "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" These had received Him, and from the hands of the same apostle that uttered the question at Ephesus. [It is manifest that Mr. Govett errs altogether in imagining that the indwelling of the Spirit belongs to faith; instead of being included in the gift of the Spirit to the believer. No one denies apostolic impartation. The apostle himself shows that it was not invariably needful. — Ed.] This passage gives an answer to another question, "Could any but Jesus baptize in the Holy Ghost?" Directly and meritoriously, none but Christ could; but instrumentally, apostles both could and did. (Acts 8:18; Galatians 3:5.)

I have now gone over all the passages, as far as I know, in which the naked expression 'receiving the Spirit' occurs in the New Testament. And I suppose I have proved that not one of them takes the sense which the brethren' give. [Every case on the contrary is in the sense of 'brethren' as opposed to Mr. Govett, whose delusion is not only to hold himself the indwelling without the gift of the Spirit, but to misread every known brother's writings, and to impute a sense which they all reject. This is strange in a man of any ability. — Ed.] In no instance as yet does 'receiving the Spirit' mean, that indwelling of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of holiness, which believers of our day possess. They all refer to the communication of the Spirit of power after faith by the illapse of the Holy Ghost, or by the laying on of apostles' hands which we have not. In the scripture sense then we have not received the Holy Ghost. [Quite untrue. — Ed.] But here is one passage which may be alleged as an exception, which I now proceed to adduce.

"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. (Romans 8:15.) Now I gladly admit, that believers now have the Spirit of sonship. But, be it observed, here we have not the absolute phrase receiving the Spirit,' but a qualification is added to it by way of distinguishing it from the other reception. This was said to a church not yet visited by an apostle; and to that church Paul says not, that since believers had the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, therefore they had all that the Spirit could bestow; or that this Spirit of adoption would develop into the Spirit of power. But he tells those who had received the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of sonship, that they lacked yet the Spirit as the Spirit of power, and that he hoped to visit them, and to communicate this distinct operation of the Holy Ghost. "I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." (Romans 1:11.) [See the disproof in Romans 12:4-8. Ed.]

Two distinct givings of the Spirit are then mentioned in the New Testament. The one is ours by faith; the other is a giving which we of this day have not, communicated after faith.

Let me cite the passages; and first those relating to that communication which we possess.

1. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Romans 5:5.

2. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any have not the Spirit of Christ, lie is none of his. Now if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall give life to even your mortal bodies because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Romans 8:9; Romans 8:11, Greek.) "God hath put into us his Holy Spirit," says Paul to the Thessalonians. (1 Thessalonians 4:8, Greek.) In the passages which follow is something given which we have not now. "God bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." (Hebrews 2:4.) And after naming baptism and the laying on of hands we find, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened [by faith], and have tasted of the heavenly gift [after faith], and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God [by faith], and powers of the age to come" [after faith.] (Hebrews 6:4-5.) [All agree as to this. — Ed.]

There is a passage which may perhaps be said to include both forms of giving the Spirit. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:6-7.) [Clearly against Mr. G. who feels it. — Ed.] But what say you to such passages as these? C. E. S. may say.

1. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John 3:24.)

2. "Hereby we know that we dwell (abide) in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John 4:13.)

These passages refer to the miraculous gifts; for the gift here is made the proof of something invisible. Now the medium of proof must be clearer than the point to be proved. The visible possession then of these divine gifts proved the invisible indwelling of God, to the conviction both of friend and foe. How do we know that the Spirit of God dwells in us? Not in the way they of old did; but by the testimony of the scripture. When her Majesty is residing at Windsor Castle, a flag is hoisted. The flag is the proof of her unseen residence. We have lost the flag, though the Spirit of God dwells in us, the world does not perceive it, and it does not believe the scripture testimony.

Believers in John’s day had, as he tells them, the Spirit’s anointing which rendered them independent of the written word. We are not. John gave them too tests whereby to discriminate between persons inspired by the Holy Ghost, and those who spake by evil spirits and so were "false prophets." (1 John 4:1-6.) These do not apply now, for we have no inspired men.

How was the Spirit of power received? Only in two ways. 1. Either by direct illapse of the Holy Ghost as at Pentecost and Caesarea. Or 2. By imposition of hands. ’How did Paul receive the Spirit?’ By imposition of hands. (Acts 9:17.) Ordinarily, it was by the laying on of apostles’ hands. This is the one exception, and here it was due to a direct commission from Christ Himself. "The Lord even Jesus . . . . hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." We can see a very sufficient reason for this exception. It was that Paul might be able truly to assert his independence of those that were apostles before him. Of the proofs given in my tract on this point, Hebrews 6:2 has alone been met. That the rendering "baptisms of instruction, and of laying on of hands" is the true, is to my mind certain. There are two substantives joined together, both in the genitive case. Which of them is to come first can be learned only by their position, as

first and second. Nothing but impossibility of making sense could excuse a deviation from this order. But taken in their present order they make excellent sense. But granting that C. E. S. says, that "the word of the beginning of the Christ" means 'truths common to Jews and to Christians,' does not C. E. S. know when the burden of proof lies on him? I deny that these words have any such meaning, and denial is enough. But I will advance beyond what I am called to prove. The phrase (tes arches) is used as an adjective, 'the word of the beginning,' means 'the commencing doctrine.' The addition "of the Christ" presents the object of which these first principles treat, the elementary principles relating to Christ, that is, the first elements of Christianity. The scope of the argument proves the same. The writer is urging onward to deeper views of christian truth those who had already for years received and professed it. They ought to be able to be teachers: they were needing in reality to be taught the first principles of the faith of Christ. (Hebrews 5:11-14.) He then specifies some of those elements. That the expression means 'the first principles of Christianity' has been held and taught by a majority, I suppose, of critics. But baptismos in other cases is not the word used for 'baptism,' or the christian rite. Baptisma is 'the word used.' The reason why baptismoi is here used is, I suppose, because two different immersions are intended. It is the word employed where different immersions are spoken of. (Hebrews 9:10.) 'But those there spoken of were fleshly ordinances.' But these are spiritual. Whether the ordinances are of the law or of the gospel cannot be learned from the word 'immersion,' but only from the context. My other proofs are called "illustrations," and are bowed out of court.

'But the Holy Spirit came upon holy men of the old covenant: while the receiving of the Spirit was something not enjoyed till after Pentecost.'

It is true. As the result of the Spirit's coming upon them, they had miracle and inspiration. (1) But they had not the Spirit as a gift abiding, capable of being used at their will. There were prophets in Israel, but they were few and far between. (2) Here every one of the family of Christ might become a prophet, and those who were possessed of some supernatural gift (3) are directed to ask for more, and to abound, in order to edify the church. Under the old covenant there was no visible source whence these gifts of power might be derived to all. (4) Under the gospel, as long as there were apostles there was an open door at which to apply for and receive gift. 'Then we cannot in the present state of things obtain the Spirit in power.' We may! we are commanded to desire and pray for it, and God is able to give. (1 Corinthians 12:31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-12.) 'Will there be apostles again?'

I had quoted in proof four texts, Luke 11:49-50; Matthew 23:34-36. These first two are set aside, because Jesus is in them 'speaking to Jews, not to the church.' And what then? Are apostles no apostles, if Jesus tells the Jews that apostles shall be sent to them? Was Peter no apostle because he was sent to the circumcision? Was Paul no apostle because Christ sent him both to Jew and Gentile? (Acts 26:17.) But I quoted also Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46. Here our Lord is speaking to His disciples. These are set aside, because they 'treat of the Lord's servants, and not of any company of apostles as such.'

They are addressed to "disciples," who afterwards constituted the church. By the name "disciples "the constituents of the church are called even in the Acts. (Acts 11:26; Acts 11:29; Acts 13:52.) The parable included in Luke 12:42-46 refers to apostles, as our Lord's reply to Peter's question shows. Jesus had spoken of His coming in reference to His servants generally. Peter therein

inquires whether His previous words were to be taken generally, or in regard of apostles alone? The Saviour then gives a parable relating to apostles specially, describing them as the "steward set over the household to rule and feed them." (Ver. 42.) Can this refusal of texts be called subjection to God's word? [Again, what reasoning! — Ed.] A few words on the Hymn Question. Do books of pre-arranged and printed hymns and hymn-tunes grieve the Spirit? or do they not?

C. E. S. answers, as his predecessors, 'No they do not!' Thereon we say, 'Then preparation for worship and ministry does not grieve the Spirit.' Then the Spirit is not grieved by using prayer-books and reading sermons out of a book! 'Ah, but,' C. E. S. replies, 'what different exercises praying and preaching are in their nature from singing!' Very true, but nothing to the point. We are inquiring whether preconception, preparation and use of books in ministry and worship grieve the Spirit or not. If in one arm of ministry and worship they do not grieve Him, show cause why they should in another! [It is enough to show scripture. Hymns and psalms were in use among early saints, and recognized in the New Testament; not so, for the church, written prayers and sermons. — Ed.]

We inquire next, Are these hymn and tune-books scriptural? We get as answer, 'They are quite necessary, if we are to have congregational singing at all.' And I reply, 'Very true,' but that does not show that they are scriptural. To prove scripturalness, you must point out not hypothetical necessity, but some passage of the New Testament. [This has been done from 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 : for the assembly, and from other scriptures in a general way, as Mr. Govett well knew, if not convinced. — Ed.] Then comes another question, 'Is congregational singing scriptural?'* [* Meaning by that, united singing of the believers who can read and have books, and know the tune]

I cannot find that it is. C. E. S. says, that in order to congregational singing there must be the knowledge before we utter it of what is to be sung. And in our assemblies some one gives out a hymn marked with a certain number, so that all may turn to it in their books. This is quite necessary, it is true, in order to the exercise as in use now among us. But was it so then? Had they books of hymns and hymn-tunes? Will any assert it? I suppose not! What becomes then of congregational singing in apostles' times? The only singing I read of in the assembly was individual, extempore, unwritten, both the music and words given of the Holy Ghost, and generally in a foreign tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:26.) Hence none could join in it. There was also responsive singing, which must in like manner have been individual. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.) [Mere imagination! not a word supposes extempore hymns; and a foreign tongue is blamed unless under special circumstances. — Ed.]

Thus then an answer is furnished to C. E. S.'s question. 'What have the songs of Zacharias, Mary, and Elizabeth to do with congregational singing?' What indeed? But then Mr. Govett was not advocating congregational singing, but only showing how we of this day have fallen from inspired songs given of the Holy Ghost to uninspired and oft erroneous hymns written by men. Had they inspired hymns under the law? And is the church which occupies so much loftier a standing to have none?

Mr. Kelly had said that the church, unlike the Jew, has within her the ever-springing fountain. Yet, strange to say, she is confined to a selection of so many hundred printed hymns. As I said, 'this is the well, not the fountain.' But it seems, I have assumed more than I ought. I have assumed that 'the assembly is restricted to the hymn-book.' Herein it appears, I was in error. "Does this

necessitate an assembly being restricted to a certain selection of hymns? By no means! If any one was led to give out words to be sung not in the collection — and such a thing has been done — there is nothing to hinder it, provided the scripture rule is observed, Let all things be done unto edifying."

Now is not this evasion very far-fetched? 'The brethren' have existed as a denomination about 45 years, and during that time recourse has been had, suppose five times, to a hymn out of another than a chosen selection. It is so rare a thing that, I suppose, most of the 'brethren' never heard of it, and it was quite needful to assure us that it has been done. This shows, that there is a good deal to hinder it; and if any one not very well known and accepted among 'brethren' were to attempt it, he would soon find plenty of hindrances. 'Why cannot he be content with the many hymns we have? we must get new books if this is to go on.' But let us accept the correction. And then the matter stands thus: 'The Spirit is not grieved with printed hymn-books, and printed tune-books, provided that once in 100,000 times it good hymn out of another selection be given out.' Then still we say if the Spirit be not grieved by the use of printed books in singing, neither is He grieved by printed prayers and sermons read out of a book! [No real analogy. — Ed.] Has God failed that we have not the gifts of old? says C. E. S. Man certainly has through evident unbelief. "A brother guilty of such folly [as to pretend to be inspired] would be put out forthwith, as led of Satan." In conclusion, has not evidence been adduced sufficient to prove that there are two receptions of the Spirit: the one internal, producing holiness, which we believers of this day possess; the other which we have not, external, sensible communicating power, received through the Holy Spirit falling on a man, or by the imposition of apostolic hands after faith, and usually after baptism? Have we received the Spirit of adoption on believing? Yes! Have we received the Spirit since we believed? No! (Acts 1:8.) [Mr. G.'s fundamental fallacy lies in separating the indwelling from the gift of the Spirit. This gift was not always, nor on the chief occasions, by apostolic imposition of hands; and wisely and graciously was it so ordered; for otherwise we could not have received the Spirit, nor consequently be Christians or members of the one body. "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." Why dues Mr. Govett pretend to be a Christian if he takes the ground of not having its distinctive mark and power, the gift of the Spirit? How be a member of the body without His baptism? The claim of the relationship is vain without the power and seal; but the truth is that the hypothesis is a mere blunder and the reasoning no better, however pretentious. If we have not received the Spirit since we believed we have not the Spirit of adoption at all, any more than the Ephesian disciples before they were baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus. At Pentecost the Spirit was given, and not merely powers. The powers in many respects may be withdrawn, but not the gift of the Spirit who was to abide for ever. — ED.] Believe me, Yours truly in Christ, R. Govett.

Reply to the Letter on the Spirit.

1876 190 Dear Mr. Editor

Just a few remarks on Mr. Govett's letter in your periodical. And first, as to the term, 'receiving the Holy Ghost;' for in any discussion to be productive of beneficial results, we must be clear and precise in our use of a term, the meaning of which forms the subject of our inquiry.

Now it will surely be granted, that, since scripture, and scripture only, can teach us authoritatively about 'receiving the Holy Ghost,' to that book we must go for all our instruction regarding it. Hence

the only admissible sense in which we can use the term in question must be that in which scripture uses it. But when we peruse Mr. Govett's pamphlet, and his letter, written to correct wrong thoughts about it, as he thinks they are, we learn that he writes of souls receiving the Holy Ghost in a sense unknown to the word. These are his words, "Now I had granted from the first that believers in our day have in this sense 'received the Holy Ghost.' He has wrought on them to regenerate them, to make them sons of God, to dwell within them, and to make them members of Christ, and make their bodies His temples. But I affirmed, and do still affirm, that this is not the scripture sense of the phrase 'receiving the Holy Ghost.'" Mr. Govett then evidently for himself is willing to declare, that souls do receive the Holy Ghost in a sense not warranted by the word. On what ground, it might be asked, is he authorized to make such a statement? Again, he writes, "In the sense which 'Brethren' put on the words 'receiving the Spirit,' He is now received, but not in the scripture sense." Where are we to learn what receiving the Spirit means but from the written word? We must refuse therefore to admit any such elasticity in the phrase in question.

Next, Mr. Govett does not leave his readers in the dark, as to what he conceives your correspondent ought to have written. "The path of C. E. S. then was plain enough. He had to show that the Brethren's sense of receiving the Holy Ghost is the scripture sense. It was for him to cite passages in which the phrase 'receiving the Holy Ghost' occurs, and to show that it refers to the regeneration, indwelling, and sanctification of the Spirit. This he has not done." With these five last words we cordially agree. To have gone on the line thus traced out would have been wrong, and, if scripture is really our guide, impossible. One could not class together regeneration, indwelling, and sanctification of the Spirit, as results of receiving the Holy Ghost. You must eliminate from the present discussion the first and the last of these three important subjects, which he has bracketed together. Regeneration, by which one concludes Mr. Govett means being born again, and the sanctification of the Spirit, in the only passages where I believe it occurs, 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2, are operations of the Spirit antecedent to the bestowal by God on believers of the gift of the Holy Ghost. For by believers it is, scripture teaches us, that the gift of the Spirit is received. (John 7:39; Ephesians 1:13.) It is because we are sons, that God bath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. (Galatians 4:6.) If Mr. Govett is so clear as to what I ought to have done, it would have been considerate to his readers to have pointed them to the scriptures on which he bases his statement. This he has not done. For it is evident, though one regrets to have to say it, that Mr. Govett has frequently in his letter out-stepped the bounds of scripture, and affirmed things for which he has no authority in the word. He tells us that the Holy Ghost was dwelling in the believers at Samaria before the visit of Peter and John. The sacred historian takes pains to inform us that the two apostles prayed for them after their arrival that they might receive the Holy Ghost, which, after they had laid upon them their hands, they then and there received. (Acts 8:15-17.) How, it may be asked, could Mr. Govett make such a startling statement? His pamphlet explains the phenomenon, in which he refers us (p. 7) to the last clause of Romans 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his (or, he is not of him)," houtos ouk estin autou. The words of the apostle have reference to one who is not a Christian in reality, and the indwelling of the Spirit is brought up as evidence, that those addressed were not in the flesh but in the Spirit. The apostle is proving what their condition was from what they had received. Mr. Govett's application of the passage is just the opposite of this, seeking to establish from the fact of their being believers, that the Spirit dwelt in them, a conclusion which scripture teaches us we are not authorized to draw. For to believers only is the Spirit given. Of one who has

received the Spirit, one could of course say that he is a believer. But to state as truth the converse is not what scripture warrants. Again, he asserts that by laying on of hands the baptism of the Spirit was received, where there was no illapse. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) The scripture to which he refers us is entirely silent about any imposition of hands. Further, he tells us, but, for reasons which all may understand withholds any authority for the statement that Paul, by his language in 2 Corinthians 11:4, told the Corinthians that he had bestowed on them the gift of inspiration; and that the same apostle inquired of the misled Galatians, on what grounds they had received the miraculous gifts. The apostle really wrote to them, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Again after quoting 1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:13, he, thus comments on them, "These passages refer to the miraculous gifts; for the gift here is made the proof of something invisible. Now the medium of proof must be clearer than the point to be proved. The visible possession, then, of these divine gifts, proved the invisible indwelling of God to the conviction of friend and foe." Surely he might have spared himself and your readers all this comment, and more which I do not reproduce, for one word in the original upsets it all. "We know," ginoskomen, John wrote in both these verses. He did not write of something visible, but of what believers themselves knew.

Such statements are evidence that the writer of them is not subject to the teaching of the written word. Proofs of this abound in the letter from which I quote. Mr. Govett makes the astounding announcement that "believers in John’s day had, as John tells them, the Spirit’s anointing, which rendered them independent of the written word." Why then did John write to them? But this is all a mistake. John never made such a statement in any epistle of his, which forms part of the canon of scripture. Mr. Govett, however, tells us, that we me not independent of the written word. Here we are at one with but on that very account must refuse to assent to his teaching about the reception of the Holy Ghost. And what shall we say of his method of interpreting, or rather interpolating, as applied to Hebrews 6:4-5, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened (by faith), and have tasted of the heavenly gift (after faith), and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God (by faith), and powers of the age to come (after faith)." One might ask, Is this sober interpretation? Is this sound doctrine?

Let us now turn to what Mr. Govett calls the critical case, that of Samaria, which in his eyes is decisive. "In the ’brethren’s sense,"’ he writes, "these Samaritans had already received the Spirit." Indeed! Not content with putting his own sense on scripture, Mr. Govett would take upon himself to be the exponent of what he calls the ’brethren’s sense’ of "receiving the Spirit." With what success one may leave others to see. But to proceed. "They were baptized believers," men and women, "whose hearts were right with God." The Holy Spirit was dwelling in them as His temples. C. E. S. says, ’If I have the indwelling Spirit, I have the Holy Ghost in every sense.’ That is proved to be erroneous by this example." Letting pass the inaccurate way in which he quotes what I wrote, I would observe that his whole case rests on a gratuitous and unscriptural assumption, namely, that the Holy Ghost was dwelling in them as His temples before the visit of Peter and John to Samaria. What proof has he of this? None. The word tells us they had not yet received the Holy Ghost.

Again he writes, "If C. E. S.’s argument be good, and these believers had not yet received the indwelling of the sanctifying Spirit, but needed the prayer, and the laying on of apostles’ hands, then we who are at best only baptized believers, whose hearts are right with God, have not yet the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, for we have no apostles, and none have received the Spirit, save

they on whom He has fallen, or who have received the imposition of apostles' hands." This is assuming what has to be proved, and then arguing from it. Again he writes, "The Samaritans received the Spirit by imposition of hands, either as the Spirit of sanctification, or as the Spirit of power. If they had not received the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of holiness before apostles laid on hands, then neither have we. But they had the Spirit's indwelling, for they were men of faith, whose hearts were right with God. Then they received through the apostles' hands the Spirit of power, and my case is proved."

Now not only does Mr. Govett assume what has to be proved, but he has allowed himself to do that which, judging from his remarks on Romans 8:15, in his letter, he would readily object to in the statements of an opponent. He introduces qualifying words when treating of Acts 8:1-40 :, for which he has no authority, and of which, one would have supposed, his critical and decisive case could have no need. He writes of the Spirit as the Spirit of 'holiness,' 'of sanctification,' 'of power.' Scripture throughout that passage speaks only of the Holy Ghost. Is this, it may well be asked, fair dealing with God's word? This critical case, then, must be in itself far from a decisive one, if, in order to present it to his readers, he has to assume what ought to be proved, and to modify the language of scripture to make it, as he thinks, bear out his teaching. And further, what the historian does not tell us, Mr. Govett boldly asserts: "Simon," he says, "desired to impart the gift of miracles, and offered money to purchase that power." The historian relates that he asked for power to give the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands. But why assume that he desired to impart the gift of miracle? Is that the only manifestation of the Spirit? In none of the accounts in Acts of the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, is the gift of miracles even mentioned. On this occasion we are quite in the dark as to any particular manifestation of the Spirit. What then Luke does not mention Mr. Govett boldly asserts. What the historian does state Mr. Govett qualifies, and really alters. And then, after indulging in what he must pardon one calling pure imagination, he triumphantly exclaims, "My case is proved." It may be to his satisfaction, it is not to that of your correspondent.

Scripture however is clear. Receiving the Holy Ghost means what it says: nothing more, nothing less. The written word too distinguishes between the gift dorea of the Holy Ghost which is bestowed of God, and the gifts charismata which He the Spirit divides to each believer severally as He will. And in the list appended of gifts so bestowed, that of working miracles is distinguished from both prophesying, and the speaking with tongues. If then the reader keeps in mind the difference between the gift and the gifts of the Spirit, he will see that Mr. Govett's ground is untenable. Little wonder is it, if one who thus deals with scripture misunderstands the statements of those who have really set forth scriptural teaching on the subject. Nor will a bare denial as to the meaning of Hebrews 6:1-2, avail with any who would draw from the word what that passage really means. Distinctive christian teaching is not to be found in it. Truth common to Jews and Christians known and acknowledged when the Lord was upon earth, is found in it. Any reader, if he has not understood it before, may be helped, if he remarks, that it is faith in God which is spoken of, not faith in Christ. A few words in conclusion on what may be called more personal matters.

Mr. Govett remarks that I had only touched here and there upon his tract. This is so far true. For my purpose was to draw from scripture an answer to his question, "What is receiving the Holy Ghost?" That, if done, makes plain the correctness or otherwise of his teaching. And having gone somewhat at length into scripture about it so recently in your periodical, that must be accepted as a reason for not travelling at present over the same ground. He further observes that I have

singularly misunderstood the purport of his remarks in pages 18, 19, of his pamphlet. I would wish to express my regret if I have misunderstood what he there wrote. On the subject of congregational singing little need now be said. He tells us he was not advocating it. He was however writing about it. It was therefore quite within the bounds of criticism to point out the irrelevancy of the instances of singing in the New Testament to which he sought to turn the attention of his readers. Mr. Govett tells us that the only singing he reads of in the assembly "was individual, extempore, and unwritten, both music and words given of the Holy Ghost, and generally in a foreign tongue (1 Corinthians 14:26): hence none could join in it." I, sir, fail to perceive all this in the verse to which he refers. Others may have more penetrating powers of vision. C. E. Stuart.

S. A Test and a Confession.

A Test and a Confession.

Revelation 5:1-14.

God appeals to His people in the prophet Isaiah to remember the former things of old, for He is God and there is none else. He is God and there is none like Him, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, "my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah 46:9-10.) None then can frustrate His counsels, however long Ho may delay their execution, nor will His purposes fall through from change of mind on the part of Him who has conceived them.

"The earth hath he given to the children of men" (Psalms 115:16) is a thought which will comfort the remnant when taunted by the heathen with the non-appearance of their God, announcing to them and to us God's purpose about this world. Generation after generation has passed away; but the earth was formed for man, and man shall yet enjoy it as a grant from God. This purpose, first disclosed when Adam appeared on the scene as the lord of creation, Psalms 8:1-9 : assures us God has not foregone. And that which John witnessed through the door opened in heaven tells us under whom, and by whom, it will be made good. In the hand of God on the throne was seen a book, written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals, which when opened disclosed the destiny of the earth. Beheld by John as a sealed book, who should open it? To this a strong angel now addressed himself, proclaiming with a loud voice, "who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" The proclamation met with no response from any of the children of Adam. Had God's purposes as regards the earth changed? He is unchangeable in His purposes. Why then was there no response? The angel had asked "who was worthy:" hence all were silent. And this silence was most expressive, proclaiming the irremediable condition, as far as man was concerned, into which Adam and his descendants had got by the fall. That Adam had forfeited his place by the fall all will admit; but is the unwelcome truth accepted by all, that none can rescue themselves from the condition in which they are placed by it? Why then do we hear of attempts to merit God's favour, or to earn a title to stand in His presence? Whence spring the thoughts of regenerating the race by education and intellectual culture, but from the unwillingness of the natural man to believe that he is hopelessly corrupt, and utterly ruined by the fall? Have not most of the children of God found this lesson a very difficult one to learn? There is however a time when all must be truthful. So the angel's question no one answered. Had he asked if any wished the book to be opened, surely multitudes would have responded in the affirmative; but the question being who was worthy to open it, and to loose the seals thereof, the silence which succeeded the loud voice of the angel remained unbroken. Man is a fallen creature; his conscience, if allowed to act, tells him of his condition; his efforts at amelioration only attest its continuance. Man in his nature is no better than he was when Adam and Eve passed out from the garden of Eden, for a nature cannot be changed, and the flesh cannot be made subject to God's law. (Romans 8:7.) All heaven heard the challenge, yet no one took it up. The elders, symbolical of redeemed souls who

will walk with Christ (Revelation 3:4) arrayed in fine linen white and clean, expressive of their righteous acts (Revelation 19:14; Revelation 19:8), and whom John saw seated on thrones, and unmoved at the tokens of God's majesty, were unable to stand the test to which the one who should open the book must conform. John the beloved disciple heard the angel's words, and was silent. For "no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." How completely man was silenced by these simple words of the angel, "who is worthy!"

Man, whether sinner or saint, is equally unworthy as regards himself to disclose earth's destiny; could an angel then take the book and open it? No, for unto the angels hath God "not put in subjection the world to come." (Hebrews 2:5.) It was never God's intention that angels should lord it over this creation, and such a sight would never have been witnessed had man continued faithful to God. It was Adam who opened the door to Satan, to have power over the scene, in which the Lord God had placed man. It is therefore, and must be, an abnormal condition of things on earth, so long as Satan is the god of this world; for, when things shall get into their right places, man, not angels, will be found ruling here below. But where could be found the man worthy of this place, which Adam had forfeited and no saint could acquire? John wept, and we can surely understand it, because no one was found worthy to open the book, neither to look thereon. Amongst those represented by the elders will be apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, all of whom had failed to come up to the required standard, for the taint of the fall had infected them all. How Satan had apparently triumphed! Man's ruined condition was here acknowledged. A man, but one not involved in Adam's guilt, alone could answer to the challenge. This one the elder introduces, as he speaks to the apostle who wept, "weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book" (or as some would read, "hath overcome, who opens the book) and the seven seals thereof."

Let us mark well the language. The angel had asked, "who was worthy:" and the elder introduces One who had overcome: a term most significant, telling of victory over Satan who had assumed domination over the earth. It is not what He was in Himself, His intrinsic excellency, of which the elder speaks, but of what He had done, and of His relation to the government of the earth. He had overcome, enikesen. Such language applied to Adam before the fall would have been unsuited, and surely unintelligible. He had to maintain his position by obedience; this one had to contend with powers arrayed against Him. He had done so, and was victorious. All Satan's efforts to get this earth for himself had been baffled. He, who had overcome Adam, was overcome by the woman's Seed. This designation, the overcomer, tells of His work, but tells of the fall likewise. This characterizes the man of God's purpose, and it will characterize all who shall be associated with Him in His kingdom. To this characteristic the elder links two titles, descriptive of His relation to earth, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the root of David. But these names are suggestive of the unchanging purposes of God, for they carry us back in thought to scenes of ancient date. The lion of the tribe of Judah recalls to our remembrance Jacob's dying bed, and the root of David, Nathan's visit to the king. Under the protecting shield of Pharaoh's rule Jacob found a resting place and was fed, whilst the famine pressed sore on the land, and, led by the Spirit of God, he looked beyond things present, and spoke of One to spring from Judah, to whom should the gathering of peoples be (Genesis 49:10). To sense nothing seemed more unlikely, to faith all was plain. Indebted to Pharaoh's kindness for a place of sojourn in Goshen, he predicted that one

descended from himself should lord it over Egypt, the powerful kingdom of that day, and be the acknowledged centre for the whole world. The lion of the tribe of Judah speaks to us of power, which man cannot withstand, for What, said the Philistines to Samson, is stronger than a lion? But it is power, called out against enemies for their destruction, when opposed to Him who will wield it. This then takes us on to the future, whilst the root of David takes us back to the past. As the first of these titles tells us what He will do, the second takes us, as it were, behind the curtain to disclose to us the source of kingly power at Jerusalem. He will sit on David's throne as David's son (Psalms 110:1; Luke 1:32), yet He is the root from which that kingly power sprung. Just the opposite of Isaiah 11:1 is this announcement of Revelation 5:5. There He is described as a rod out of the stem of Jesse, that which He will appear to outward eyes; here we learn the real nature of the sovereign power which David was the first to wield. Thrones on earth are overturned, and dynasties change, but on David's throne no dynasty but one will ever sit, and He who is its last occupant in point of time is the root of David in reality. For years that throne remained untenanted, to the eye of sense it is still vacant; but we know to whom it belongs, and where He is who will openly sit upon it. John saw Him in heaven, and the elders proclaimed Him as its occupant, and the source of its power. Unchanging then are God's counsels, and, while we wait, their accomplishment, we know that the Lord Jesus awaits in heaven the hour for His reappearance on earth. Are men satisfied with the balance of power and arrangement of sovereign rights as they now exist on earth? God, we may say, is not; for, till His Son occupies the throne of David, which He has given to Him, the due adjustment of things on earth will not be effected. Are we then to wait for an unknown person to rise up and do this? No. God's king is now in heaven, and those whose hearts are in unison with God's thoughts will own it and wait for Him. The second man has been on earth, and is in heaven, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. The words of the elder gave a new direction to John's thoughts. "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, 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." The elder had spoken of the relation of the Lord Jesus to earth as God's king. John tells us of His intrinsic excellency. From each comes the suited testimony. The description of the elders, as crowned and on thrones, connects them with the kingdom of which they naturally speak, but the saint, whilst still on earth, should discern the excellency of Him who is both God and man. "A Lamb as it had been slain" speaks of His humanity, the horns and the eyes are connected with His divinity. Perfection of power and perfection of vision, suited to take in all that goes on on earth, belong to Him. The four living creatures were full of eyes within, but the Lord Jesus has seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God. Nothing can escape His sight, and none can withstand His power. Universal supremacy therefore belongs to Him, and He will maintain it. But is this what men think of, and what the world looks for? John in Patmos was a witness to the power of the Roman Emperor, to whose decree he had to bow; but whilst there he saw One in heaven, whose power all on earth shall one day feel and acknowledge; nor those on earth only, for Satan too will be subject to Him who is characterized by the possession of seven horns. How different are God's thoughts and ways from those which man would connect together! How often have pride and ungoverned temper been found in those entrusted with power over their fellow-creatures! Gentleness and a subject will are here associated with perfection of power and of vision. The One who bore the horns and had the eyes John saw "as a Lamb which had been slain."

Here too may we not ask ourselves, Are our thoughts in unison with those of God? The great events which occupied men's minds when the Lord was on earth who now thinks of? The grandeur and wealth of the Caesars have long passed away, their remembrance survives only in history. Who is now grateful to them for favours received? who speaks of them as those in whom they are personally interested? Their works may some day be quite forgotten, but a work done when Tiberius was on the throne will never fade from the memory of those in heaven; one born, when Augustus ruled at Rome, will be had in everlasting remembrance. John beheld a Lamb as it had been slain. The marks of His passion were seen even in heaven, for what He suffered on Calvary will for ever and ever be remembered. Surely one must feel in the presence of such a fact as this, how trifling are the great events which men commemorate in comparison with that which they well nigh forget; another witness to the condition of man's heart; for what God remembers and His saints will ever celebrate, is just that in which man often feels no interest. As creatures, things around will make some impression, but as immortal beings; should not the Lord's death for sinners make the deepest impression? May it be that, what in heaven is always remembered, is that to which we can always respond! From the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, the Lamb came and took the book out of the hand of Him that sat on it; and all heaven was moved to worship. The angels pronounce Him worthy to receive all power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing, for He has been slain; all creation joins to pay Him divine honour in company with the Lord God Almighty sitting on the throne; but the elders speak in a different key, for they own Him as the Second man, to whom it belongs to disclose the destiny of this earth. The first Adam had failed. To the challenge of the angel none could reply. By silence man's ruin was admitted. Now the elders speak of His fitness to open the book, and thus become witnesses, by their language, of what the fall has done, as well as of the unchanging purpose of God. All eyes and thoughts are directed to the Lamb, who stands out by the admission of the elders as the acknowledged head, under whom alone, and because of what He has done, God's plans for this universe shall be carried out in all their completeness. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign on the earth."

Here again we may note how all is in keeping. For as the government of the world was not originally committed unto angels but to man, the angels say nothing about the opening of the book. That comes from the elders, and rightly so. The faithfulness of the Lord Jesus to God the elder had spoken of, for He had overcome: of the result of His obedience, as it affects man, the elders in a body bear witness. All of them had been involved in the consequences of Adam's transgression, all of them share in the fruit of the death of the Lamb. "Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood" is a plain acknowledgment of their condition by nature, and of their standing by virtue of the atonement which He has effected. If we retain the pronoun "us," in Revelation 5:9, we have two classes of saints referred to; those already in heaven, and those on earth, not forming part of the Church, but destined to share in heavenly glory, whose prayers the elders hold in the golden vials full of odours. "Thou hast redeemed us, and made them." If we omit the pronoun "us," the elders must be understood as occupied wholly with saints in trial on earth. All here, however, is ascribed to the Lamb. Honour, wealth, dignity, belong to Him, because He was slain; dignity and power the redeemed ones in heaven will enjoy, because of His finished work for them. No works done on earth have earned them this dignity of kings, or this place of priests; the Lamb has done it all.

"Thou hast made them kings and priests unto our God." From Adam, from themselves, they look away, and, proclaiming what the Lamb has done, put their seal to God’s judgment of us all as descendants of the first Adam, begotten after his likeness, and await the full accomplishment of all His counsels by the man of His choice, His own well-beloved Son, the Second man, the Lord from heaven. C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 66

S. Barzillai: His Service and Reward.

Barzillai: His Service and Reward. When the king is firmly settled on the throne, and no rebel rises up to dispute his right to fill it, it is easy enough to appear loyal, and to cry with the multitude, "God save the king!" But, where rebellion has made great progress amongst the masses, and the popular idol is no longer the king, but some aspirant to regal power and honour, then the sovereign, but lately perhaps welcomed wherever he went with acclamations, discovers who are his real friends, and discriminates between the flattering courtier and the loyal subject. The day of the king’s rejection is the day for the subject to declare himself. Thus it was with the aged Barzillai and those who were with him at Mahanaim.

Fickle indeed are the masses of any nation. The idol of today may become the object of popular hatred on the morrow, and the benefactor of a people find himself a wanderer in the very country over which he has reigned. Such was David’s experience when Absalom’s rebellion broke out. "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," had been the song of the women of Israel as they returned from the conflict with the Philistines. He had known what it was to be the man whom Israel delighted to honour. He had received the homage of the twelve tribes of Israel at Hebron, when they went there to anoint him king over all Israel. Now he was au outcast with a company who remained faithful, a fugitive too from the face of his own son Absalom. The warrior and benefactor of his country, who had raised her to a pitch of glory, prosperity, and influence never before enjoyed, was rejected for the king’s son, remarkable for nothing but his personal appearance, unbridled will, and immense powers of dissimulation. Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel. It was true David had sinned grievously in the matter of Uriah’s wife, and the cold-blooded murder of his faithful soldier. But of what could Absalom boast except the treacherous murder of his own elder brother Amnon? God was now punishing David for the sins by which he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and at the same time was testing the loyalty and fidelity to His anointed of all the children of Israel: and with what result? The king had fled from Jerusalem, Shimei had manifested what he was as he cursed him, the people of Israel showed what they were as they clustered round Absalom, and David and his followers had at length crossed the Jordan, and so passed out of the true limits of the land of promise. At this juncture, when the fortunes of David were at the lowest ebb, Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai declared themselves on his side, as they met him and his company at Mahanaim, and brought with them what they felt must be needed. David had not summoned them to entertain him: no superior force compelled them to yield up to the king what they possessed. They brought of their own accord such things as were suited for the occasion. David was at Mahanaim, but Machir belonged to Lo-debar, and Barzillai to Rogelim. What distance there was between these two places and the Levitical city, the scene of Jacob’s meeting with the angels of God, has not been ascertained: but this at least is clear, these three men made advances to David, and Barzillai apparently surpassed them all as he "provided the king of sustenance whilst he lay at Mahanaim." Very marked then was their attitude at this time, most acceptable to David, and we may surely add, pleasing to the Spirit of God, who has seen fit so fully to notice it.

Shobi was an Ammonite, the son of Nahash, David's friend, but a former enemy of Israel, defeated at Jabesh-gilead by Saul. He was also Hanun's brother, whose capital, Rabbah, the armies of Israel had taken, and whose crown of gold had adorned David's brow. Machur had been the firm friend of the family of Saul when David ascended the throne, in whose house Mephibosheth had found shelter till his father's possessions were restored to him by the man his grandfather had persistently persecuted. Of Barzillai's earlier history we read nothing. These three however, who once probably had trodden different paths, were now united in succouring David and his men. The Ammonite, and the friend of Saul's house, agreed with Barzillai in this. But what made them thus unite? David deserved his punishment, that all men must have admitted. Was it simply the son of Jesse they saw? Was it not rather the Lord's anointed? As such they combined to show kindness to him.

Obliged by prudential motives to put the Jordan between himself and Absalom, backed by the masses of Israel, he meets in the midst of the general defection with substantial tokens of loyalty from these three men. They saw in Iii In the Lord's anointed: so for them the popular idol had no attraction. What others might do they stopped not to think. They did not calculate the chances of success, nor wait to learn which side appearances favoured. Had they looked at the matter in this light, would they have befriended David? Would not the hosts which followed Absalom have determined their place in Israel? With them, however, surely, the question was a most simple one, Should they side with the Lord's anointed or not? Such an alternative admitted then of but one answer. Can it admit of any other than one now? Worldly caution might have counselled delay before they committed themselves so irrecoverably as they did; but, had they delayed, all opportunity of manifesting their loyalty and devotion would have passed away. It was with them now or never. Reason might have suggested further consideration, and a conference with the leaders of Absalom's party, before they took this bold step and occupied so prominent a place. Should they not hear both sides before they took the part of the fugitive king? Had not Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, actually espoused Absalom's cause? and did not all Israel acknowledge that his counsel was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God? Would they pit their wisdom against his? Besides, had not David dishonoured the throne, and perverted the fountain of justice? That was true of the man David, but he was the Lord's anointed. So they ministered to his need, and thus openly sided with him before all. It was a noble act on their part, as all must acknowledge. It was also a right act, as it was in accordance with God's thoughts; and the Spirit of God surely delighted to dwell on the tokens of their faithfulness, as He has recounted the different items of refreshment thus furnished for the king, and those with him in the wilderness. They "brought beds, basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness." (2 Samuel 17:28-29.) Nothing that the people could want seems to have been forgotten; nothing that they brought, it would appear, has been overlooked in the account.

Events rolled on. Absalom crossed the Jordan with the hosts of Israel under his command. The issue of the battle is well known. David was to be chastised, but not deposed. He had been chastised, and now Absalom's turn came. That on which he had especially prided himself became the means of his capture. Suspended by his hair between heaven and earth, the fratricide, and

would-be parricide and regicide met with the due reward of his deeds. Thus ended the rebellion and David's temporary exile. Preparations were now made for his return. The tribes of Israel spoke of it, the tribe of Judah, at first cold-hearted towards him, stirred up by Zadok and Abiathar sent word, "Return thou, and all thy servants." "And all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel."

Now again owned by all as king in Israel, David acted as such by disposing of the life and possessions of his subjects. He spared Shimei's life who had cursed him, he restored in some degree to Mephibosheth the possessions of his father, hastily bestowed on Ziba in the day of his flight, and offered to reward Barzillai. Life to Shimei, possessions in the land to Mephibosheth, but nearness to the king's person and feeding with him for Barzillai, were what he meted out to each. "Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me at Jerusalem." Barzillai had served David when beyond Jordan, David would have Barzillai beside him ever after, beholding his royal state, blessed with the favour of the Lord's anointed. "With me" — nothing less than this — was what he desired for Barzillai: with himself, and that in Jerusalem. Most fitting was this reward. When outside the land of Canaan it was Barzillai's place and duty to own and serve the rejected king; again in power and in the land, it was David's place to reward his faithful adherent. And, as the words "with me" fall on the ear, do they not recall similar language used by David's Son in the presence of His disciples, when addressing His Father? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," etc. Little did Barzillai think of the honour in store for him as a reward for his service, and of which he only heard after the time of such service was over, and the day for rewarding those faithful to David had arrived. But we know, whilst the Lord Jesus Christ is absent from the earth, rejected by His people Israel, and especially His own tribe Judah, what will be the future place of privilege and blessing of all, who side with Him during the time of His rejection by the world. To this offer Barzillai interposes an objection. He had not worked with any view of reward, richly though he deserved it. He had thought of the king in his rejection, and had done what he could to succour him; he had come too to do honour to David now returning to his capital; but, to be at the court was unsuited to such an one, for his age forbad his enjoyment of the pleasures of the king's house. When David was in need in the wilderness, Barzillai's age was no hindrance to the bringing it in person. When the king was to recross the Jordan, he suffered not the infirmities of age to be a reason for his absence. He would testify his delight at the king's return, as he had proved his devotion to him whilst he lay at Mahanaim; but, to go to Jerusalem as a reward for his service was what he felt himself unequal to undertake. In how different a manner do men too generally act, putting forth an excuse to avoid the service, but grasping eagerly at the reward! Barzillai was not like this, he thought of the king and acted at once. Much as he, and all Israel, had enjoyed of comfort under the king's reign, he did not stay at home counting up the blessings he had shared in; for, self-interest or self-ease be knew nothing of, when the Lord's anointed was driven out of his land, and obliged to take refuge across the Jordan. As to the proffered reward, Chimham his son might accompany David; he desired to stay and die among his own kindred. Old age, with the prospect of death not far off, thus effectually opposed the fulfilment of the king's wishes. "Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But, behold, thy servant Chimham: let him go over with my lord the king: and do to him what shall seem good unto thee." Who could refuse such a touching request? The king answered, "Chimham shall go over

with me, and I will do unto him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee." "Do thou to him what shall seem good unto thee" had been Barzillai's prayer. "I will do unto him what shall seem good unto thee" was David's promise, reaching beyond the modest request of his servant. And more than this, he told him he had gained the king's ear. What a place was this to occupy! Honour, wealth, rank, are nothing compared with this. To be with the king was David's wish for him, to have the king's ear was that of which David now assured him. Thus they parted, but not before David had kissed him and blessed him, and that on the right side of Jordan. The river had been recrossed, the king was again as sovereign in the land of Canaan, when he kissed him and blessed him. All Israel could see that day whom the king delighted to honour. The multitude were right in escorting back king David, but Barzillai had done what others had not. These were around the monarch in the day of his return, Barzillai had been with him when they had cast him out. Hence the difference between them and this devoted servant of Rogelim. In time Barzillai died, and perhaps this scene and all connected with it was blotted out before long from the remembrance of many in Israel. There was, however, one heart from which the remembrance of Barzillai's service was never effaced; the king never forgot it, and Solomon his son was ever to remember it. Occupied after his return, as David was, with many important concerns, he with his latest breath yet spoke of this service at Mahanaim, and commended his sons to Solomon's special care. (1 Kings 2:7.) Before David and Solomon, types of the Lord on His throne, the sons of Barzillai had a place, not of distance but of distinguished nearness, for they ate bread at the king's table, and feasted in the king's presence. Never, then, whilst David lived, was this service forgotten, nor, whilst Solomon reigned, was it to sink into oblivion. David as king had portioned it out, Solomon, who ascended the throne without David's death intervening, was charged to continue it. To Rehoboam nothing, we read, was said about it, for he was not a type of the Lord on His throne, the Solomon character of whose reign will continue to, the end. Faithfulness to the Lord's anointed in a time of general defection was never to be forgotten, such devotion was never to be unrequited. For how long did the remembrance of all this last, attested by the reward bestowed on Chimham the son? As long as the kingdom lasted in Judah, so long was there a witness of the king's approval of such conduct. For not only did David give Chimham a place before him, but he assigned him a portion in the city of the king's birth. In the city of his father's house Chimham owned a possession (Jeremiah 41:17). Barzillai was of the tribe of Gad, the eldest son of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, but Chimham had henceforth a portion in Judah, the fourth son of the first wife Leah. And, till the kingdom of Judah was terminated by the Babylonish captivity, Chimham's portion by Bethlehem was an abiding witness of Barzillai's faithfulness, and of David's acknowledgment of it. The application of all this history is plain, and we understand the reason that it has been preserved. Very evident are the points of resemblance, but marked too are the contrasts. David was hindered by Barzillai's age from acting as he would toward him, and his hasty action regarding Mephibosheth tells us we have only a man like ourselves before us. But nothing can hinder the Lord Jesus rewarding as He will all who have followed Him in His rejection, and none will suffer injustice at that day. He will confess them before His Father, and before His angels, and the company of heavenly saints, who have served Him whilst absent, shall be with Him on high, as those of earth shall be before Him, when He reigns over the house of Jacob for ever. (Luke 12:8; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 7:15; Revelation 14:1.) He will have been found to have been in their thoughts, they shall be before His face when He takes to Himself the power and reigns. C. E. Stuart.

S. Discipline and Restoration to Communion Part 2

Discipline and Restoration to Communion Part 2 BUT this work of restoring an individual to outward communion with God’s saints, is one for which we must be indebted to the ministrations of others. "Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." " Confirm your love toward him." So the leper stood by whilst the bird was killed for him, and he was sprinkled with its blood. But, this service performed, he was, able to act, and the first thing he did was to wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he might be clean; after which he could enter the camp. This was the work of the first day, and this the happy result. Thus, as exhibited in type, the death and resurrection of the Lord and the individual’s identification with Him being acknowledged, cleansing himself is the next and proper work.

Thus far, as regards the sacrifices to be offered up, the cleansing of the leper as well as of the house are accomplished in the same manner. To both what is the real standing-is thus typified, as well as the need of that death, and the application of the word by the Spirit, to cleanse from the unclean, which necessitated such stringent measures of isolation.. For the individual other sacrifices had to be offered up, as he typified one who had transgressed. But the house, as we here see, though there were none but clean stones in it, because the disease had manifested itself in the wall, the sacrifice of the bird was necessary ere it would be acknowledged as clean.

Turning back to the leper, he is in the camp a clean man, yet not at home there, having to tarry abroad out of his tent seven days. Whatever might have been his thought of the leprosy God shows what He thinks of it, and of that of which it is the figure. So, besides the recognition of the standing, there must be typified the acknowledgment of the trespass, and how alone that can be forgiven. This work began on the seventh day, as the man, manifested his willingness to cleanse himself by shaving all the hair from his head, beard, and eyebrows, emblems of natural strength and personal comeliness, and by washing his clothes and his flesh in water. That done the special sacrifice of the eighth day remained to be offered up. On the first day the priest went out to the leper, on the eighth day the former leper takes his place at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, hut only with the appointed sacrifices. Without them he could have had no business there, for on the ground of sacrifice, and on that alone could he again stand at the place where the people assembled to meet with God. Had he presumed to come there on the ground of having washed his flesh, and shaved off all his hair, would he have been received? Assuredly not. Without he had washed and shaved it would have been presumption to have drawn near; but without the sacrifices as well he had no right to approach; and even with this he needed the priest to present him before the Lord. Now, however, rightly presented he stood where he might often have stood before without the need of the sacrifice, or any priestly presentation, and learned that a way back into God’s presence there was, but death alone could open it. A trespass offering, a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering, the Lord appointed for his cleansing. "And the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass-offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord. And he shall slay the lamb," etc. The significance of the order of these sacrifices we can well understand, since the trespass-offering takes the

precedence. The significance, too, of the action of the priest we may note, as he brought near the trespass-offering with the log of oil, and waved them, the animal whole and still alive, before the Lord. After this it was killed. Nowhere else have we such an action as this, the waving of the whole animal alive before the Lord. Can we not interpret its meaning! The leper typifies one who has failed to own himself belonging to the Lord, as a man on earth, 1:e. on this side the grave. This failure is a type acknowledged in the waving of the animal before death. Its death next took place, and the sprinkling of its blood prefiguring to us in the waving what the redeemed ought to be, and in the death of the animal shadowing out the death of the substitute, and the atonement by His blood. The failure requires the death of the substitute, that restoration may take place, but that same death God uses to reconsecrate, as it were, to His service the one who has been acting after the energy of his own will. Therefore the priest took of that blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of him that was to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot; and then anointed each place, where the blood had been put, with the oil. " And the remnant of the oil that is in the priest’s hand he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord." How richly God provides for the one who has so grievously sinned does the leper’s offering teach us. Consecrated, as it were, afresh by the remembrance of the sacrifice, the full divine energy of the spirit of service is seen in the type graciously poured out on the head. After this the other offerings were offered up as prescribed, the work of restoration was complete, the leper was clean. Healed by God outside the camp, the way for re-entering pointed out and conformed to, full restoration to his tent took place, with perfect competency for service. The leprosy itself was removed, and every disqualification it had entailed was removed likewise, and the man could feel himself at home in the camp; but only on the ground of sacrifice. To the sin-offering the words were, " It shall be forgiven him;" here it is, " He shall be clean "-each in their place significant of what they prefigure.

But, whilst we see God’s mercy portrayed, which will not rest satisfied till the leper is completely reinstated in his tent and position among the people, we also learn in the subsequent verses how God took knowledge of the circumstances of the individual. If he could not get all that was prescribed, God would receive smaller offerings for the meat, sin, and burnt offerings. None should be kept outside because they had not the means of being fully reinstated. Yet all had to bring the sacrifice appointed for the first day, and the lamb for the trespass-offering. These could not be dispensed with, for all alike had to own by the type what the ground of standing is, and the need of a sacrifice for restoration. How true are the words of the woman of Tekoah-and this ordinance of the leper reminds us of them -" God deviseth means that His banished be not expelled from Him." (2 Samuel 14:14.) C. E. S.

S. Drink-Offerings.

Drink-Offerings.

1874 149 Drink-offerings, like burnt-offerings, were known amongst men before the giving of the law. At what period they were first introduced, or on what occasion a drink-offering was first poured out, are facts shrouded in obscurity; for we read not of them till the days of Jacob, and then not till his return to Bethel from Padan-aram, where God had on a former occasion spoken to him. There, on the stone he set up for a pillar, he poured out, as far as we know, his first and only drink-offering. In this action however there was method and perception. He knew evidently when to erect a pillar, and when to pour out a drink-offering thereon.

He set up pillars several times in his life — a favourite practice, it would seem, with him. He erected one by Galeed, east of Jordan, to stand as a witness of divine intervention on his behalf, and which served with the heap, raised by him and his brethren, to point out the boundary, across which neither he nor Laban were to pass to the injury of the one by the other. (Genesis 31:1-2; Genesis 31:15; Genesis 31:52.) He set up another on Rachel's grave, in the way to Ephrath (Genesis 35:20), an abiding memorial to point out the spot where the body of his beloved was laid. But neither at Galeed, nor at Rachel's grave, did he pour out a drink-offering. It was not the fitting time, nor were they the places for such an expressive action, and doubtless he understood that. His action in erecting a pillar at Galeed betokened his sense of the propriety of having a monument pointing heavenwards, to remind all whom it might concern of that eventful passage in the history of Isaac's younger yet favoured son. The pillar on Rachel's grave, erected by her sorrowing husband, attested his deep concern in what had there taken place. Years however before he had thus left his mark at Galeed, a pillar had been erected by him at a place afterwards to be known by the name of Bethel, that is, God's house; a name which he on that occasion gave it, where God had just bestowed on the benighted traveller (Genesis 28:11) promises of the land, of a numerous seed, and of divine protection. Here he did not content himself with raising up the stone for a pillar, but he anointed it likewise, owning thereby that to him it was holy and consecrated ground. Yet he did not then pour out a drink-offering thereon. Had he trusted God implicitly, he might have done that; but evidently, from the compact Jacob made with Him, to be fulfilled if He really brought him back to his father's house in peace. Rebekah's son manifested a want of trustfulness in the promises of God.

Galeed and Rachel's grave were places he over remembered; so was Bethel, but with this difference, not only was it henceforth to be connected with the fortunes and history of the patriarch, but he had learnt to look on it as God's house, where He had unexpectedly to Jacob discoursed with him. Years passed away before he re-visited that spot in Canaan. The sanctity of the place however was indelibly impressed on his mind. It was to Jacob like no other spot on the whole earth. His act of anointing the stone on the first occasion that be visited it makes clear what he thought of the place; and his command to his household, and to all that were with him, to put away the strange gods that were among them, and to be clean, and to change their garments,

when he was about to re-visit it, showed that his thought about it had remained unchanged.

Arriving there he built an altar, which he had not done before, and during the night God appeared to him, and confirmed and even amplified in detail what He had on the former occasion promised him. So now, his heart being full, the patriarch sets up again a pillar; but this time, before anointing it, he poured out a drink-offering upon it. It was one thing to start forth on his journey from Bethel to visit lands to him unknown, with God's promises given, but as yet unfulfilled; and quite another thing to be there on his homeward journey with wives, children, and a plenitude of earthly possessions, such as one engaged in pastoral pursuits would most value. What then he did not do before that be does now. It was fitting to erect a stone for a memorial, of that he felt sure. It would be proper, too, to repeat his former act, and to anoint the pillar in token of the place being to him and his family a holy one. But more than that was needed. God had confirmed promises made on the occasion of his first visit to Bethel, and the patriarch could see in his altered and improved outward circumstances proofs in a measure of the fulfilment of that which awaited its complete accomplishment. Hence in his eyes the time had come to pour out a drink-offering in token of his joy in that which God had so graciously bestowed on him. So be poured out his drink-offering on the stone, and that before he anointed it. On his first visit to Bethel, the holy character of the place struck him — God was in it. On his second visit the grace and faithfulness of God were prominently before him; so his first action after again erecting the pillar was one expressive of the feelings of his heart, called forth by what God had just said to him.

Many years intervened between that visit to Bethel and Jacob's dying communication to his children in Egypt; but we never read of a similar act on his part to express the feelings of his heart. Halting on his journey to Egypt at Beersheba, he offered sacrifices there unto the God of his father Isaac (Genesis 46:1-34 :); the number and the character of which are to us unknown. It is evident however that be sacrificed with no niggardly hand, for more than one animal must have been slaughtered by him that night; but, though blood flowed freely, no drink-offering, it would seem, was brought by the patriarch on that occasion. He sacrificed at Beersheba before God spake to him; he raised up the pillar at Bethel after God had appeared to him. A drink-offering with the sacrifices would have been, judging from the order at Bethel, an anachronism. For he poured it out, not to ask for a favour, but in token of his joy at receiving one.

Then too he had returned to the land, now he was about to leave it; so, though starting forth on his journey to Egypt by divine permission, with promises of divine protection and assurances of a return to the land given to him and to his seed, we can understand from the character of Jacob, as previously developed, that even after he had received God's gracious communication he was not in that condition of spirit which required for its manifestation, and to give itself vent, the pouring out a drink-offering, which told not less plainly what was in the heart, than the clearest enunciation of the human voice.

Turning over the pages of the word in chronological order, we read next of what Job was accustomed to do in the way of sacrifice for his children after their festal celebrations, each one of his day, and what God commanded his three friends to offer on their own behalf. (Job 1:1-22 :, Job 41:1-34 :) In neither chapter however are drink-offerings mentioned. Nor is this surprising; for as we learn from the ordinance about them, subsequently given to Israel, they were never commanded to be brought when men sacrificed on account of And it was on account of sin that

burnt-sacrifices were provided by Job for his sons, and were offered up by his friends. The patriarchal period ended, we next meet with sacrifices on the occasion of the visit of Moses' father-in-law to the camp of Israel at Sinai. That time Jethro officiated as priest (Exodus 18:12); but neither then nor subsequently when by the law-giver's command the young men offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace offerings under the hill, at the ratification of the covenant with the Lord by the congregation of Israel, have we any hint of the patriarch Jacob's example at Bethel having been followed by those encamped in the wilderness of Sinai. Certainly on the latter occasion, when the people had the blood of the covenant sprinkled on them in token of what they deserved and incurred if they failed in the performance of it, a drink-offering would have been quite out of place. From the time of Jacob, then, till the erection of the tabernacle, and the consecration of Aaron and his sons to minister at the altar, that simple but telling rite is never mentioned in the word. From the date however that the Aaronic priesthood was fully established, no day was to pass on which a drink-offering could be omitted. It was always in season in connection with the morning and evening burnt-offering (Exodus 29:40-42); for there was that in type offered up every day on the brazen altar, which was fitted to cheer the heart of everyone who understood anything about it. And now we are taught of what the drink-offering was to consist — strong wine, to be poured out unto the Lord (Numbers 28:7); and wine it is, as Jotham in his parable expresses it, "which cheereth God and man." (Judges 9:13.) And surely there was that in type on the altar, which was eminently fitted to do this, the lamb of the burnt-offering, fore-shadowing the perfect surrender of the Lord Jesus Christ to do His Father's will.

Let us pause here a moment to contrast the action of Jacob with the injunction of the law. Jacob out of the fulness of his heart, of his own voluntary will, without any divine command, poured out his drink-offering on the stone. God on the other hand enjoined the drink-offering as an invariable accompaniment of the daily burnt-offerings. Jacob's action was dictated surely by what he felt at the communication made to him, and the favour he already enjoyed. But the drink-offering under the law, being commanded by God, could not be considered as the measure of the people's joy in the sacrifice on the altar. It did surely portray what those concerned in the sacrifice might feel; but their measure of apprehension, and their joy in that which the lamb prefigured, fell doubtless far short of the mark. And we must admit that our apprehension of the work of Christ, and the joy therefrom derived, falls far below that which God discerns and has found in the sacrifice of His Son. The measure of the offerer's joy did not then govern the measure of the drink-offerings; but the drink-offering expressed the full measure of joy, which could be found in that which the burnt-offering prefigured. But as none but God could fully estimate that, He it was who prescribed in the law how much wine was to be poured out each morning and each evening in connection with the daily burnt-sacrifices. Jacob's drink-offering was unconnected with a sacrifice. Under the law the drink-offering with a meat-offering was the invariable adjunct to the morning and evening oblation, and we never read of a drink-offering commanded apart from a sacrifice. Jacob then gave expression to what he felt, the drink-offering under the law typified what those concerned in the sacrifice on the altar aught feel.

Turning back to the law, we learn that, though at times we may concentrate our thoughts on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in one or other of its aspects as set forth in the different sacrifices which typified it, yet to have a just estimate of its value, so as to share in the joy which flows front it, we must ever remember His life as manifested on earth before the cross. Of this the

meat-offering, which accompanied the daily burnt-offering was a type. His death we should remember; but who it was who died, as evidenced by His life, must over be kept in view. When both are before us, His life and His death, the drink-offering finds its place. But no drink-offering was commanded apart from the sacrifice. No drink-offering was enjoined in connection with the meat-offering by itself. No drink-offering would the sons of Aaron have poured out in connection only with the animal on the altar. A whole Christ, as it were, must be before the worshipper before a drink-offering would be in place. When that was before the eye and the heart, the drink-offering was not to be withheld; the wine which cheereth God and man could then be poured out in token that in the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and died, there was that which gave joy to God, and in which those by whom it was offered could share. And as redemption by blood had in type been accomplished, God made known that men could have joy in common with Him, though only in connection with, and with reference to, that which the sacrifice on the altar prefigured. And this was to hold good for Israel, for those born in the land, and for the stranger which sojourned with them as well. (Numbers 15:13-15.) Yet, never, let it again be observed, was this offering commanded to be brought apart from the sacrifice on the altar, though Israel, it would seem, did separate the two in their idolatrous rites. But not only was the drink-offering to accompany the daily oblation, for in Numbers 15:1-41 : we are instructed that, after the children of Israel had entered their laud, as often as any one, whether of the race of Israel or not, brought a burnt-offering of the herd or of the flock, a sacrifice in performing a vow, or a free-will offering, and at Israel's solemn feasts, a meat-offering and a drink-offering were to be the accompaniment for every animal offered up. In Exodus 29:1-46 :, where the daily burnt-offering was spoken of, the measure of the drink-offering was fixed at the fourth part of an hin of wine. In Numbers 15:1-41 : however we learn that the measure of the wine varied with the size of the animal. But, though it varied with the size and character of the animal offered up in sacrifice, it always corresponded to the amount of oil appointed to be used in the accompanying meat-offering. The offerer knew that he had to increase his drink-offering the larger the animal he brought; but the measure of oil, appointed for the accompanying meat-offering, was the measure of wine, which he must provide for the drink-offering. From this rule we read not of any deviation, and its propriety we can surely discern. For if the wine was the expression of joy to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ in His life and in His death, the measure of joy derived therefrom corresponded to the measure of the Holy Ghost within Him, of which the oil in the meat-offering was typical.

Thus corn, wine, and oil, products of the earth, were all called into requisition with the slain animal, either to delineate what He was, or to express what was found in Him. In Christ, and in Him alone, of all who ever trod this earth, was there no failure. His life, His ways, His acts, fully corresponded to the Holy Ghost in Him. Hence joy in Christ was, and is, exactly proportionate to the Spirit which dwelt in Him. In His life, and in His death, He acted throughout only as led of the Holy Ghost.

Such then was the drink-offering under the law, foreshadowing the joy which God and man could find in the man Christ Jesus. A common subject of joy then there is between God and us, but its measure varies not with our apprehension of what there is in His Son to delight the heart. God has told us what the measure is which can be found in that perfect, spotless One, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. What an idea of God's delight in His Son do the sacrifices of sweet savour bring before us! Noah was a perfect man in his generations. Job had none like him in all the earth. Abraham was called the friend of God, and on him, to order his house aright, God

declared He could count. David was the man after God’s own heart. But each of these, though thus described by God, fell short of answering perfectly to what a man on earth should be. The Lord alone has done that; and the measure of the drink-offering, varying, but always commensurate with the oil of the meat-offering, tells it us in type, as His life and His death afterwards exemplified and proved it. Thus what the Lord was, as made known by the New Testament, sheds a bright light on the types and shadows of the Old. And now for a time all such offerings as the law enjoined have ceased, to be renewed however when God again takes up Israel as His earthly people. Then sacrifices will be offered up afresh on the altar, and drink-offerings of wine be poured out again to the Lord. (Ezekiel 45:17.) And Israel surely will have understanding as to their meaning, and partake intelligently in God’s joy in Christ, as derived from His life and from His death. And then too will they see, as we can now, how abhorrent it must have been to the Lord, when that action, which expressed joy in the Lord Jesus, was made use of in connection with idolatrous rites, of which Jeremiah so often complains. They burnt incense, he tells us, and poured out drink-offerings to the queen of heaven, and to the false gods. Incense spoke of the merits of Christ, drink-offerings (as we have seen) of the joy to be found in the life and death of the Lord Jesus; yet the people by the incense they burned to idols, and the wine they poured out (Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 19:13; Jeremiah 32:29; Jeremiah 44:17), professed by their action to have learned the merits attaching to false gods, and to have found joy in a rite which, little as they knew it, was really the worship of demons. (1 Corinthians 10:20.) W hat an insult to God, and to Him who was represented in the sacrifice, it was for Israel to give drink-offerings to idols! We understand the heinous character of such a practice, when we learn what the offering, as appointed by God, really expressed. And we can enter into Joel’s sorrow, when the meat-offering and drink-offering were withheld from the house of the Lord. It was true, as he exclaimed, "Joy and gladness are cut off from the house of our God." (Joel 1:16.) C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 69

S. Epistle to the Galatians

Epistle to the Galatians.

Galatia was evangelized by Paul during his second missionary journey. (Acts 16:6.) He revisited it on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23), strengthening all the disciples. On the first occasion he entered that province from Phrygia; for he started from Antioch to revisit first the assemblies established in Cilicia and Lycaonia. On the second occasion he passed through Galatia before he entered Phrygia, taking these provinces in the inverse order.

Probably it was after the second visit that he wrote his epistle to the assemblies of Galatia. We must say probably, because there is nothing known by which the exact date can be determined. But his language in Galatians 4:13-16 seems to throw some light on it, where he speaks of the warm way in which they had received him at the first, and how he had become their enemy because he told them the truth. Visiting the churches of Galatia a second time, his purpose was to establish them in the faith. Assuming that he found the germs of the evil, against which he writes, then working, his language in Galatians 4:16 would be plain. He had evangelized them on the first occasion. (Galatians 4:14.) He had warned them on the second occasion against the teachers and the doctrines, which they had now openly espoused and accepted; and he was in consequence regarded as an enemy where once he had been hailed as a true friend. But if we cannot fix definitely the date, we see clearly the purport and the need of this epistle, addressed, as was no other of Paul’s writings that we possess, to the assemblies of a province - the churches of Galatia; and differing from most, if not all, his other epistles, he wrote this with his own hand (Galatians 6:11), a proof of his love and earnest longing for their welfare; for he often employed an amanuensis to write for him. (Romans 16:22.) "Ye see," he writes, "with what large letters" (not how large a letter) "I have written unto you with mine own hand." Another marked feature of this epistle is the style in which he introduces himself "Paul, an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." (Galatians 1:1.) He writes with all the authority of an apostle, or sent one, but not of men; for he carried to the Galatians no message from men, however pious or eminent in the church, as he afterwards shows. He was an apostle, but not by man. His official position was conferred on him by no human authority whatsoever. Apostles there were whose appointment dated from an earlier day than that to which Paul could point (Galatians 1:17); but from those, whom he owns fully, he received not his apostolic commission, nor the gospel which he preached. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ, one sent by Him, and by God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. An apostle of Christ he often styles himself, but here only does he add "of God the Father" also, and this addition is not without significance; for if the Judaizing teachers would attempt to draw a distinction between Christ and God, and to insist on the Galatian converts conforming to that which God gave to Moses, and through him made known to Israel (we refer now to circumcision - John 7:22), Paul would remind then that he was sent by God the Father as well as by the Lord Jesus Christ. He was an apostle from both. Hence no earlier revelations of the divine mind could override that communicated to him by God (Galatians 1:15-16) and preached by him among the Gentiles. But whilst writing as an

apostle, and so in that position here standing alone, he connected all the brethren that were with him in his salutation to these saints, showing that his doctrine was such as others held. He then wishes them grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this "present evil age, according to the will of God and our Father." The Galatians were hearkening to Judaizing teachers, whose doctrines we read of in Acts 15:1-5. The apostle reminds them at the outset of this letter that they had to do with Christ in resurrection, who had, therefore, no longer any connection with Judaism or ordinances suited for men in the flesh. He had risen out of it all, having first died on the cross, there giving Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of the present evil age. They were putting themselves under law to be made perfect in the flesh (Galatians 3:3), whereas deliverance from sin's power and the influence of the present evil age, as well as deliverance from guilt, was only to be effected by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. These few words at the opening of the epistle dealt a death-blow to all that teaching, which they were so readily and injuriously, imbibing. But he would develop this, so he commences with reminding them first how he had received the gospel, beside which there was no other, whatever might be said or thought. What was now preached to them as gospel was different indeed from the glad tidings they had heard from him. It was a different heteron gospel, but it was not another allo; for there are not, there cannot be, two gospels of the Christ. The Judaizing teachers were perverting the gospel. But if an angel from heaven, or Paul himself, were to preach anything contrary to that which they had already received, all that the apostle could say was, "Let him be anathema." The full gospel he had preached to them. There was no other, nor could it be supplemented. In the gospel, then, which Paul preached we have the full gospel of God, the glad tidings concerning His Son, and in Paul himself the example of an uncompromising servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10.)

Now whence did he get his gospel? He received it not from men, nor was he taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ; and this statement he verifies by a chapter out of his early history as a Christian. (Galatians 1:13-24.) Further, he acquaints them with the results of his conference with James, Peter (called here Cephas), and John, when he went up to Jerusalem fourteen years after his first visit.* He went up on this occasion by revelation, and conferred privately with the three above-mentioned, communicating to them the gospel which he preached, which they fully endorsed, adding nothing to it, only desiring that he should remember the poor, which, writes Paul, he had been forward to do. Conference, then, with those who seemed to be pillars added nothing to his gospel. Nor this only; they endorsed what he preached, and fully recognized that his field of service was the Gentiles. Besides this, he had taken with him on that occasion Titus, a Greek, and uncircumcised, and who was not compelled at Jerusalem to be circumcised, whatever the false brethren said. Now this historical relation puts the matter in a clear light. Was Paul an inferior apostle to the others? God had revealed His Son in him. He had received his gospel direct by revelation of Jesus Christ, and James, Peter, and John fully endorsed what he preached, and admitted that he was an apostle of the Gentiles, and allowed with him, the presence of Titus at Jerusalem being proof of it, that converts from amongst the nations had no need to be circumcised.

*This seems the most likely meaning. He had spoken of a set time after his conversion, when he visited Jerusalem to see Peter. (Galatians 1:18.) Fourteen years after that visit he went up there again. As far as credentials could be adduced on behalf of any apostle Paul had them, and others

of the apostles owned them. Further, at Antioch, in Syria, when Paul, and Peter, and Barnabas were there together, Peter having failed to maintain the truth for which he had contended at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-41), was rebuked by Paul in terms which the apostle here recalls. (Galatians 2:14-21.) Peter, born a Jew, had lived as the Gentiles, the revelation made to him on the housetop at Joppa having taught him to call no man common or unclean. Why, then, did he now Judaize? Had he not, learning that a man is not justified by works of law, but by faith of Christ, believed on the Lord Jesus to be justified by faith of Christ, and not by works of law? For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Now if, in seeking to be justified by Christ, they became sinners, as Peter's retrogression at Antioch would imply, Christ was the minister of sin; for He had taught them to do what Peter now by his conduct declared was wrong. The folly of Peter's act is thus clearly evidenced; for building the things he had destroyed he made himself a transgressor. Besides, as the apostle adds, "I through law have died to law, that I may live to God." So the truth for which Paul contended did not frustrate the grace of God; for "if righteousness come by law, Christ has died in vain." Into what grave peril had the truth been brought by Peter's weakness. Barnabas too was carried away. Paul alone stood firm. Just one strand of the rope preserved the whole from giving way. At that moment the testimony of God upon earth, humanly speaking, depended for its continuance on the faithfulness of one man. With Galatians 2:1-21 the historical details needful for the matter in hand come to an end. Paul now addresses himself to the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in Spirit, are ye now made perfect in flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3.) They had received the Holy Ghost. The fullest Christian blessing was theirs. On what principle had they received the Spirit, the attestation as God's seal that they were His? They knew. This at once should have settled the question for them. But as with them, so often with us, spiritual intelligence does not keep pace with the grace bestowed on the believer. So the apostle does not rest there; he proceeds to expose the error still further in a threefold manner.

First (Galatians 3:6-14) he contrasts faith and law, showing the principle on which God justifies. Next he contrasts law and promise, showing the ground on which the inheritance is secured. (Galatians 3:15-22.) Then he contrasts the condition of a saint under law with that of one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:23-29; Galatians 4:1-7.) If they would be justified by law, they never could be in the company of Abraham, nor be reckoned as his children; for he was justified on the principle of faith. But more, they put themselves under a curse, from which the Lord Jesus Christ by His death had delivered those believers who were once really under law. If they put themselves under law to obtain the inheritance, they would never get it; for God gave it to Abraham by promise. If they would put themselves under law, they put themselves under that from which all believers from among the Jews had been redeemed, in order to receive sonship; and only if they were Christ's could they be Abraham's seed. The doctrine, then, that they were imbibing was all wrong, and senseless too, and subversive of the spirit and teaching of the gospel. It is instructive to remark how the apostle rests on the written word in Galatians 3:1-29, making good his points, as far as they could be substantiated, from the Hebrew Scriptures. It is equally instructive to learn that a believer on the Lord Jesus as such has the Holy Ghost, is justified by faith, will share in the inheritance, is of Abraham's seed, and a son and heir of God. The Galatians knew how they had received the Spirit. Paul here lets them know how those formerly Jews had received it. Turning then to Jewish ordinances to be justified was in principle a return to the

condition of things out of which they had been brought by the gospel - weak and beggarly elements to which they desired again to be in bondage; for it was to principles suited to men in the flesh to which they were returning, who were really in the Spirit. But what proof was there of their departure from the faith? He tells them, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you," he adds, "lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain." (Galatians 4:10.) What a change too in their spirit towards him had come over them. (Galatians 4:11-20.) Would they wish to be under law? Let them read Abraham's history aright. If such was their desire, they must be thrust out of the house with Ishmael, instead of remaining inside with Isaac. But in truth they were, if Christians at all, children of the free woman, and on the burgess roll of the heavenly Jerusalem. Let them stand fast therefore, and not be again held in a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1.) Accompanying this exhortation are three most solemn warnings - 1. "Behold, I say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."

2. "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law."

3. "The Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by law; ye are fallen from grace. For we by the Spirit, on the principle of faith, wait for the hope of righteousness." In Galatians 2:20 Paul had spoken of being crucified with Christ. In Galatians 3:27 he wrote of those baptized as baptized unto Christ. In that same chapter he had stated (Galatians 3:28) that all believers were one in Christ. Now (Galatians 5:6) he teaches them a little more of what being in Christ really involves: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love;" 1:e. producing fruit by the activity of the divine nature. Now, was that seen in them? Alas, no! The results of their doctrine, for doctrine does produce results, was painfully evident. For the teachers of it he desired that they would cut themselves off; they were troubling the saints. Was that uncharitable, unchristian? How could it be unchristian to desire the real welfare of the saints? As for the Galatians, he desired that they should walk in the Spirit, by which means they would not fulfil the desires of the flesh; and the Spirit, he reminds them, was given for that purpose. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, in order that ye should not do those things that ye would." (Galatians 5:17.) In connection with this a contrast is drawn out between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:19-23.) Now, those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. So if we live in the Spirit, we should walk in it likewise; and so doing, there would be care manifested for those overtaken in a fault, and thoughtfulness for those who are burdened. (Galatians 6:1-2.) Thus they would fulfil the law of Christ. Putting themselves under law, self became rampant. Walking in the Spirit, the opposite effect would be produced, and charity or love abound. Let them care for those who taught them the truth, find do good to all, but especially to those that are of the household of faith.

Now he closes. Those false teachers boasted of their converts, whom they had influenced to be circumcised, glorying in their flesh. Paul would only boast in the cross of Christ, through whom the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. "From henceforth," he adds, "let no man trouble me." He bore in his body from what he had suffered for Christ - the evidences of what he had preached. "Brethren," for they were really Christians, is the salutation, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

Thus he exposes the baneful error of putting oneself under law to be justified. It upsets the gospel, would separate the soul from Christ, and does not produce holiness.

C. E. Stuart.

He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The day may be one of trial, a hot day; the way weary - not a green thing there on which the eye can rest; the land a dry and thirsty one where no water is - not a single spring for the new man from the ground; but at the same time there is the rain from heaven - nothing can intercept that. God, who commands the heavens, can make the valley of Baca a well, and the rain also to fill the pools. "All our fresh springs are in God." The object of the enemy is that the Christian should be as little of a Christian as possible.

S. First Epistle to the Corinthians

First Epistle to the Corinthians. The assembly at Corinth was founded by Paul (1 Corinthians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 4:15) during his second missionary journey. At the outset of his labours there he met with great opposition from the Jews, but was especially encouraged by the Lord, who spake unto him at night in a vision, promising protection for his person, and assuring him of success in that city. So Paul continued to labour there for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Opposition increasing on the part of the Jews, who led Paul to the judgment-seat of Gallio, the pro-consul, the Lord's promise to His servant was fulfilled: "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee." Gallio declining to interfere, the attempt to stop the work failed, and Paul remained there some time longer. (Acts 18:1-18.) In these few verses is summed up all that we know of the work at Corinth, except that which Paul supplies by his remarks in the two epistles to the Corinthians. To work in Corinth was evidently in Paul's eyes no ordinary task. It was highly civilized, noted for its wealth and commerce, and, as may be the case where civilization and wealth abound without the restraining power of the grace of God, it had earned a most unenviable reputation for licentiousness and all that ministers to the natural man. Into that city the apostle, led by the Holy Ghost, and knowing the character of the people, had determined from the outset, surely guided of God, as to the spirit in which he should there labour. Anything which would have pleased the natural man, and thus attracted people to hear him, he carefully avoided. We quote his own account of himself: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:1-5.) The results were great, and a special feature of God's work in the assembly there formed, was the rich endowment of spiritual gifts enjoyed by the converts. "In everything," writes Paul, "ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of the Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:6-8.)

After he had left that city, endeared to him by so many ties formed between himself and his converts, for households embraced the truth (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16), it was no wonder that communications were kept up between them and him; and when questions arose in their midst which they did not seem able to solve, it was not unnatural that they should write to Paul respecting them. (1 Corinthians 7:1.) Private friendships had been formed, which bore fruit, as evidenced by the visit to him of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17), who personally ministered to his need. But they were not the only people who visited him, or brought him news about the assembly at Corinth. There were those of the house of Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), whom he mentions, from whom he had heard of the sad state of the assembly. That moved him to write this letter to them whilst he was at Ephesus. (1 Corinthians 16:8.) It is a letter dealing with the state of things among them, and divides itself into two great parts. From 1 Corinthians

1:1-31 to 1 Corinthians 6:1-20 we have certain disorders of which he had heard, exposed, and corrected. From 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 to 1 Corinthians 16:1-24 Paul is chiefly occupied in answering questions which they had put to him in writing.

Commencing with a reminder of his apostleship, he connects Sosthenes with himself in the salutation here addressed "to 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 on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, theirs and ours." No other epistle of Paul has an address so wide in its application as this, which embraces every professing Christian throughout the world, and through all the time that the Church of God shall be upon earth. No one therefore, even in these days, who bears the name of Christ, outwardly calling on the name of the Lord, which expresses profession, whether real or not, can excuse himself from submission to the teaching of this epistle. It is most catholic in its application. To it let us turn.

Beginning with the acknowledging of every good thing in them that he could, and counting on God's faithfulness to accomplish His purposes of grace towards them (1 Corinthians 1:4-9.); Paul first treats of those evils rife amongst the assembly of which he had been informed. "I beseech you, brethren," he writes, "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." (1 Corinthians 1:10-11) Schism had begun its work, and heresies would appear to test them. (1 Corinthians 11:18-19.) Schools of teaching they had fostered, which engendered divisions, pupils ranging themselves under different teachers, calling themselves after their names. But who were the teachers they ran after who allowed this, and, worse, fostered it? We may ask, but ask in vain. Their names, then familiar as household words, have perished; whilst those of God's faithful servants of the same date, as Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, remain to this day. What a lesson to any who would gather round themselves and encourage such a practice in our day! Such forget, or, at all events, by their action contravene, the teaching of this epistle.

How, then, did the apostle deal with this? He reminds them that he had not laboured with any such intent, and asks the pertinent questions, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized unto the name of Paul?" How carefully he had worked at Corinth, baptizing very few, lest any should say that he had baptized unto his own name. His work was to preach the gospel, not to baptize; to call on souls to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to make disciples to be surnamed after him. John the Baptist had disciples called after him. Paul avoided all that for himself; for what was right in John's day would have been wrong in Paul's day. (1 Corinthians 1:13-17.) He preached too, but not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For he had understood the principle on which God was working; viz., to bring down all high thoughts of man, as evidenced: first, in the subject preached, the cross, and the person exalted, Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:18-25); next, in the people called, and the instruments used for the preaching of the truth (1 Corinthians 1:26-29); and thirdly, in the way of blessing provided for souls, for the Corinthians and all others. "Of God," he writes, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30-31.)

Now in the spirit of all this Paul had laboured at Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), as a vessel feeling his weakness, but as a faithful servant refusing to resort to any methods of working attractive to the natural man. Such might have made the truth appear more palatable, but they would not have been of God. Now he worked that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. How dim had been their perceptions, that all this had escaped their observation! Evidently they had perceived neither the principle on which God was working, nor the spirit in which Paul had laboured in their midst. Was all his labour, then, in vain? No. He had begotten them in the gospel, however little many of them understood the preaching of the cross and the deep teaching of Christ crucified, whom alone Paul had desired to know among them. Some, however, had perceived it, and to them it was wisdom, for they were perfect; 1:e., souls come to manhood in Christianity. But the natural man, psychikos; 1:e. one unconverted, understands not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man, pneumatikos, discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no one. Did this last term fitly describe the saints of the Corinthian assembly? Alas! no. Taken up with their teachers and schools of doctrine, the apostle still had to speak to them as he had always done, as to fleshly sarkinoi, even as to babes in Christ; for in them the Spirit, though they had received that gift, was not really working. That a quickened soul can be described as fleshly yet not carnal, Romans 7:14 really teaches, and that characterized the state of the Corinthian saints. (1 Corinthians 3:1.) So he had fed them with milk, not with meat; for they could not have profited by the latter, neither yet, he added, were they in a condition to receive it. "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men (anthropoi)?" he asks. (1 Corinthians 3:4.) Their strifes and divisions proved they were carnal (sarkikoi), the flesh being at work in them. Their spiritual condition was that which he described as (sarkinoi) fleshly.* Hence they not only stood in the way of their own spiritual growth by encouraging the formation of parties, but they were robbing themselves of the value and profit of gifts which the Lord had given for edification. If we take up exclusively one line of teaching, following one teacher, we deprive ourselves of the benefits we might derive from other gifts to men. "Therefore," he writes, "let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s." (1 Corinthians 3:21-23.) How foolish were they! how shortsighted!

Observe, he says as fleshly; for they really had received the Spirit, but their spiritual condition was practically like quickened souls which had not received that gift. And what were the labourers in truth? In what light ought they to view them? Paul, and with himself he here joins Apollos, would have them remember that such are but ministers (hyperetas) of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Corinthians 4:1.) It is not the servant whom men in general exalt, but the master. But what was it at Corinth? What has it been in the Church of God? In the absence in person of the Master, and from ignoring the presence of the Holy Ghost, the servant (lit. here, the underling) has been exalted and made much of. How foolish on the part of the saints! how wrong on the part of the stewards! for stewards the labourers were, and are. (1 Peter 4:10.) Now it is required in a steward that he should be faithful to his master; for to him he must render his account. They were forgetting that. A faithful steward remembers whom he has to serve. His master’s approval is that which he seeks after, whatever others may say or think of him. In that spirit Paul had worked and would work. But what were the leaders of parties at Corinth doing? What sense had they of their responsibilities as builders? (1 Corinthians 3:10-19.) Things were out

of course in that assembly, and, as was natural, the fruit produced was in keeping with the seed sown. The teachers gloried in their gifts, unmindful of the One to whom they were indebted for whatever they had. The rest were reigning, as it were, then as kings, full, wanting nothing, though "without us," as Paul writes; their hearts' affections becoming estranged from him who had first brought to them the truth. Had those schisms made them better Christians? 1 Corinthians 4:8 supplies us with an answer. Hence he wrote, not to shame them, but to warn them, his beloved children, and sent Timothy to them, he himself hoping to revisit them, when he would know, not the speech of those which were puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power; that was the proper test, and he would apply it.

* Servant (hyperetes), really an under rower, an underling. Such was ever Paul in relation to Christ. This puts the labourer in his right place. Would that all such remembered this.

Thus fully does he enter into this question of parties and schools of doctrine. It was the early introduction of a sectarian spirit, which has done so much harm in the assembly of God. Now the reader may remark how throughout these chapters the apostle traces all up to God. Some might make a party name of the Lord Jesus Christ, none could of God; for there is but one God. They were God's assembly, and God had called them. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 1:9.) It was God's testimony which Paul declared, and God's wisdom in mystery which he spake, and which God had revealed (1 Corinthians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 1 Corinthians 2:10); and the result was, that whilst Paul planted, and Apollos watered, it was God who gave the increase. And the Corinthian saints were God's husbandry, God's building, and God's temple too, by the Holy Ghost; and the teachers were God's fellow-labourers, called by Him for His service. (1 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16.) Furthermore, the labourers were but stewards of the mysteries of God, and by-and-by each would have his praise of God. (1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Corinthians 4:5.) What was there in this way of presenting the truth to encourage the formation of parties among them? There were many and weighty objections against it then, are there not such still? But other disorders were rife. An incestuous person was in their midst, with their full cognizance, the sin unrebuked, the guilty party being unjudged, and the assembly unconcerned about it. (1 Corinthians 5:2.) In decided language he writes about this. They were unleavened. Let them be a new lump by purging out the leaven that had come in. Watchful should they be against any introduction of evil into the assembly; and as for the guilty person, they were to put him out from among themselves. (1 Corinthians 5:13.) The responsibility of the assembly in cases which call for discipline is here distinctly asserted.

Passing on from that, he next takes up the unrighteousness practised amongst them, some doing wrong and defrauding their brethren, others resorting to law before the heathen, the world, about matters which the least esteemed in the Church might easily have settled. Let such, he tells them, decide those cases. And what truth does he bring to bear on these saints? They were going to judge the world, and angels too; could they not judge such small matters, things which pertain to this life? Besides, they were inheritors of the kingdom; their conduct then ought to be in harmony with that which befits the kingdom. Now all this proceeded from their natural will being in action instead of being kept in subjection; a will which when checked in one outlet will make a way for itself, if permitted, through another channel. If I may not act unrighteously to my neighbour, I may at least do what I like, a man may say, with my body. This liberty is for the Christian negatived at once. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. It is also a member of Christ, and indwelt

by the Holy Ghost; and he adds, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20.) Here the apostle really stopped; for his thesis was the proper treatment of his body by the individual Christian. How low morally and socially have men sunk through sin that such directions should be needed! How great the grace in which the Christian capable of sinning, really shares! His body is both a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Ghost. With this the first part of the epistle ends.

Paul now turns to answer certain questions which they had written to him. The change from heathenism, with its vices, was immense; the change, too, from Judaism was great; questions therefore might well arise on which the Corinthian saints desired the mind of the apostle. To answer such he now sets himself. And first about marriage, and about virgins; for these were two questions, as his language implies.* No one was compelled to marry, but it was God's institution in Eden for His then unfallen creature's happiness and comfort; and since the fall it has become a provision against uncleanness as well. The sanctity, and for the Christian the inviolability, of the tie once formed is here insisted on. No Christian is to break it. That is God's distinct command. (1 Corinthians 6:10) If an unbeliever left a Christian, well and good; the Christian was not in bondage in such a case. "Let him depart," is the advice of the apostle; wise advice, in full accordance with the mind of God, though not set forth as a command from the Lord. If the unbelieving partner consented to remain with the Christian, the latter was not to put him or her away; for herein lay a difference between Judaism and Christianity, the unbelieving partner being sanctified by the believing one, else were their children unclean, but now, he adds, are they holy. Under the law no marriage was legitimate, nor could be legitimized, where one of the partners was of a race with which Israel was forbidden to intermarry, and the children of such unions were unclean. With Christians it is different. Hence separation on the part of the believer from the unbeliever was not called for. So the children now of such marriages are holy; 1:e. they are not by reason of birth incapacitated from entering into the congregation of the Lord, to use the language of the Old Testament; for holy in this sense, we need scarcely add, is spoken of them as living on earth, not of their souls' standing before God. The difference between the unbelieving parent and the children should be noticed. The unbelieving partner was sanctified (hegiastai) whilst the believing one lived, but the children were holy (hagia). Circumstances could not change their condition, which flowed from their birth; whereas if death took away the Christian partner, the unbelieving one would be sanctified no longer.

*"Now concerning (peri de) the things whereof ye wrote unto me." In this way does he commence this part of the epistle, and each question referred to is marked in the same way, peri de, now concerning. See 1 Corinthians 7:25; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 12:1; 1 Corinthians 16:1. But these directions only applied to those who were united in wedlock before conversion. Hence he adds a few remarks, to guard the saints against the thought that with conversion a change in their outward condition should necessarily be effected. Such a thought, if entertained, might make some restless and dissatisfied, so he says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called;" and "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." (1 Corinthians 7:20; 1 Corinthians 7:24.) So, to put an extreme case, but then a common one, a converted slave was to go on quietly in slavery until, if it should please God, emancipation was permitted him. That he was free to accept; but he was not free to run away, or to refuse to serve his master. Of this Onesimus was an example, How carefully did the apostle guard the rights of

Philemon, and maintain the duty of a slave, preserving to the master the right and privilege of manumitting his brother in Christ.

Concerning virgins (1 Corinthians 7:25) - the term here applies to both sexes - Paul had no commandment; but he gave his judgment. "It was good for the present distress," he writes, "so to be." The advantages of that condition he sets forth (1 Corinthians 7:32-35), the approach of the end he recalls to mind (1 Corinthians 7:29-31); but celibacy he does not enforce. Marriage is not wrong; a second marriage was not forbidden, if in the Lord; but, he adds, here writing of a widow, "She is happier if she so abide after my judgment (gnome). (See 1 Corinthians 7:26) And I think also that I have the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 7:40.) The next question taken up was that concerning the eating of things offered to idols, raised, it would seem, by the conduct of such as pleaded for their liberty or right (exousia) in such a matter. The apostle, while examining this plea, and dealing with it, raised a point which they had evidently overlooked. The inanity of the idol he fully admitted (1 Corinthians 7:4), yet knowledge in such matters is not all; for knowledge puffs up, but love edifies, lit. builds up. A Christian was to act in this matter out of care for his brother. Due regard for a weak brother's conscience was to be shown, lest, emboldened by the act of the one who had knowledge sitting at meat in the idol-house, the weak brother, having conscience still of the idol, should partake of the food as of a thing sacrificed to idols, and thus his conscience be defiled, and he perish, a brother for whom Christ died. (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Acting in such a way they would sin against Christ. Would they then plead for the exercise of their liberty? Why did they deny Paul the exercise of his in the preaching to them without charge? In this they showed their inconsistency. (1 Corinthians 9:1-27) Of course his right to be supported was incontestible; he affirmed it. The principle of it all men owned. (1 Corinthians 9:7.) God's word too recognized it (5: 9), and the Lord upheld it. (1 Corinthians 9:14; Luke 10:7.) But Paul did not claim it, desiring rather the welfare of others among whom he laboured. What were they doing? How great the difference between them and him! But his example was evidently lost on them. They were gratifying themselves, ministering to their bodies. He was deeply conscious of the need of soberness and watchfulness. He, whilst preaching to others, kept his body under, lest he should be a castaway; for one might preach most attractively to others, yet not submit oneself to the truth; be, after all, not really a Christian. His practice proved he was not such an one. Liberty was a plea which should, in such matters as they pleaded for it, be carefully examined; and Paul's example it was well to keep in mind. Care for others should characterize them, and a walk like Paul's should instruct them.

Now the importance of watchfulness over oneself the history of Israel exemplified. How many came out of Egypt! How few of them entered the land! Had they forgotten that history, written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come? Watchfulness became them, and a taking heed to themselves, lest they should fall. Wherefore let them flee from idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10:14.) Would they make the question raised simply one of the exercise or not of a right? Had they forgotten that he that eat of the sacrifice was partaker of the altar? Now they were partakers of the Lord's table. Between that and the table of demons there was, there could be, no fellowship. If the former was their place and privilege, they could not be partakers of the latter. Our right, our liberty, is not all that we have to think of; another question has to be remembered, Is such a thing expedient? All things are lawful; but all things are not expedient or profitable. All things are lawful; but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but another's welfare. (1

Corinthians 10:23-24.) Yet there was to be no bondage in such a matter. Whatever was sold in the shambles they might freely eat, asking no questions about it for conscience' sake. The earth and its fulness are the Lord's. An invitation even to a heathen man's house to dine they need not refuse, if minded to go, and there they might freely eat of all that was set before them. But if told that food set before them had been offered to an idol, they were not to eat of it for the person's sake who told them, and for that one's conscience. Let them show real care for their brother's welfare, and that communion with demons must at all cost be refused; and let them do all to the glory of God, putting no stumbling-block in the way of any, but seeking their welfare, thus becoming imitators of Paul as he was of Christ.

Amid all that he had to blame there was one point, however, on which he could speak with approval. They remembered him in all things, and kept the ordinances which he had delivered to them. A practice, however, it would seem, was springing up amongst them, or at all events was pleaded for, of women praying or prophesying before others with their head uncovered just like men. In Christ, it is true, there is no distinction between the sexes. In creation, and in the assembly there is. Women were to remember that, and to show it by a covering on their head, if they prayed or prophesied. "The head of every man," writes the apostle, "is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." Thus creation order is to be maintained, and the teaching of nature to be hearkened to. (1 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.) Would any gainsay this? We, says Paul, have no such custom, nor the assemblies of God. (1 Corinthians 15:16) Then passing from the subject as to what became women in the circumstances indicated, he proceeded to deal with the disorders rife in the assembly when gathered together for the Lord's Supper. The scandalous conduct allowed by these saints he reproved and corrected, reminding them in the most touching way of that which might have checked such grave disorders; viz., that the showing of the Lord's death was the avowed purpose for which they met. What became them at such a time? Then giving them that revelation about the supper which he had received, he points out what apparently they had not perceived, how the Lord had been dealing with them for those gross and scandalous goings on. Sickness and even death had come in amongst them, the Lord thus judging because they had not judged themselves. Now, what did the supper set forth? The surrender of the Lord to death on behalf of others. What did their ways at it indicate? Selfishness of the grossest kind, in the presence of that which spoke of His dying for them. From correcting the disorders at the supper, he goes on, as was natural, to treat of the exercise of gift in the assembly. (1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40) Endowed richly with spiritual gifts, and living in a day when revelations were vouchsafed by the Spirit, it became necessary, since the enemy was counterfeiting the working of the Holy Ghost, to guard the saints against being misled by the activity of demons. Hence at the outset of this question he gives a clear rule, by which a Christian could judge who was speaking in the power of the Spirit of God, and who was energized by a demon. No one speaking by the Holy Ghost would say, "Cursed is Jesus." No one could say "Lord Jesus" but by the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 12:3.) No demon is allowed to declare the dignities and exaltation of the Lord Jesus. God has thus provided a test by which the presence and energizing power of a demon can be detected.

Now, if the Holy Ghost is working, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations or services, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God which worketh all in all." (1 Corinthians 12:4-6) The Corinthians, unmindful of these truths, were desirous of exercising the gift of tongues to their own exaltation and self-glorification; yet what was it but a gift given them, and by the Spirit just as He would? In truth, every gift was, as its name implied - charisma - a favour bestowed on its possessor by the Holy Ghost according as He chose. The individual had not deserved it, nor could he claim it; he only received it; and each endowment of the Spirit was for the profit of all. Further, by the Spirit, who had bestowed the gifts, they were all baptized into one body, so were members one of another, being Christ's body.

Let them learn then from the ordinary treatment of the human body what became them who had received such gifts as members of Christ's body. (1 Corinthians 12:14-16) The more abundant honour is bestowed on the uncomely parts. Was that their thought about others? and did they think that the exercise of supernatural powers were the highest gifts to be desired? God had set the gifted ones in the assembly in an order of His selecting, in which such as could exhibit miraculous powers were far removed from being in the front rank. (1 Corinthians 12:28-30) Would they desire gifts? Let them desire the best. Howbeit there was something better than any spiritual gift; viz., the activity of the divine nature, love, in which they were sadly deficient, and without which the person, however richly endowed with gifts, was nothing? (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

After this he treats somewhat at length of the difference between speaking with tongues and prophesying, and lays down rules for their exercise, pointing out that if they would glory in speaking with tongues, he valued most the ability to prophesy, so as to speak to men to edification, to exhortation, and comfort. Then he ends this part of the subject with directions concerning women - what became them when all met together in assembly. There might be those of them who could prophesy, but such were not to do it when the assembly was gathered together.

Looking back on all that we have gone through, one governing evil principle we plainly see was at work in Corinth - the gratification of the natural man in one way or another. Varied were the manifestations of it, from the indulgence of the grossest licentiousness to the enjoyment of intellectual pleasure. Self really ruled, whether at the table of the Lord, in the house of feasting, before the heathen tribunals, or in the assembly of God; and that evil so strongly noted at Corinth was at the bottom of the false doctrine which some of them (1 Corinthians 15:12) were imbibing, which denied the resurrection of the body. (1 Corinthians 15:32-34)

Now, the gospel which Paul preached, by which they were saved, made resurrection of the body a fundamental part of its teaching. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4.) And the Lord Jesus, who had really died, had been seen by many after He rose, and of witnesses to His resurrection Paul was one, who had seen Him as risen, though only in glory. The attesting witnesses to His resurrection were many and various. (1 Corinthians 15:5-11) But if there is no resurrection, Christ was not risen, and the consequences, if that was true, were serious. The testimony of God in that case was not true. The Corinthians, too, were yet in their sins. Those who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished, and Christians such as Paul were of all men most miserable. Doubtless they had never intended to surrender all that. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." (Proverbs 1:17.) But self so rife among them was thus producing disastrous and deadly fruit. Christ was risen, so a

resurrection is not only possible, but the resurrection of all who die is thereby made certain. He, the risen One, is the firstfruits of those fallen asleep. Yet all will not be raised at once; His own will be raised at His coming; and by-and-by, since death is to be annulled, all the ungodly dead must rise too. The consequences therefore of Christ's resurrection are traced out to the end. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28) How stupid as well as wrong was that new doctrine! Why were gaps in the ranks caused by those who died filled up, as others came forward and made a profession of Christianity by being baptized? If their new doctrine was true, "Let us eat and drink," says the apostle; "for tomorrow we die." Responsibility we may fling to the winds, and let self-gratification be the guiding star of our life. (1 Corinthians 15:29-34)

Then addressing the man who would argue it out, and would ask in a cavilling way, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" he calls such an one a fool. The operations of nature could teach him that resurrection is not impossible. The revelation of God would teach him that it is certain, and the study of God's works would show him that there are different kinds of flesh, and there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The body then will be raised, and a change will pass over it. Sown a natural body it will be raised a spiritual body. We have born the image of the earthy man (choikos); we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one - epouranios (1 Corinthians 15:35-50); and in a moment will that take place, so the suddenness of the Lord's coming is here dwelt on. Therefore, he concludes, "be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58) In 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 Paul dwells on service, and it may be read somewhat as a commentary on the verse just quoted; and surely part of it must have been a rebuke to many there who were glorying in gifts instead of caring for others. Directions for the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem were first given. (1 Corinthians 16:1-9.) Then Timothy, a worker for Christ, as Paul was, is commended to their care and consideration, should he visit them. The servant's responsibility to the Master is fully owned in the case of Apollos. Next those who devoted themselves to the saints, exemplified in the house of Stephanas, they were to acknowledge and submit to; and besides this they were to own servants, such as the three from Corinth, who had ministered to Paul's temporal necessities. No service too small, too commonplace, to be noticed, recorded, and remembered.

Then with a salutation from the assemblies of Asia, and especially from that in the house of Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus, Paul appends his own salutation, and pronounces a withering curse on any one who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ: "Let such an one be Anathema Maranatha;" 1:e. devoted to destruction at the coming of our Lord.

He had written strongly, but faithfully; and his last words attested that it was all in love: "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus." Having despatched the letter, he waited with intense anxiety to learn its effect on them. He did not wait in vain. C. E. Stuart.

S. Heave-Offerings and Wave-Offerings.

Heave-Offerings and Wave-Offerings. The heave-offering (t'rumah) and wave-offering (t'nuphah) formed part of the provision made by the Lord for the priests and their families. By a grant, everlasting in its duration, God thus endowed the house of Aaron: "And this is thine, the heave-offering of their gifts, with all the wave-offerings of the children of Israel. I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons, and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it." (Numbers 18:11.) To this law there was annexed one exception: "If the priest's daughter be married to a stranger, she may not eat of an offering (t'rumah) of the holy things. But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat thereof." (Leviticus 22:12-13.) Whilst the people were in their land, before the captivity as well as after it, the priests received these offerings (Nehemiah 10:37-39; Nehemiah 12:44; Nehemiah 13:5); and when faithfully surrendered by the people, they were found to be a plentiful provision. (2 Chronicles 31:10.) When the nation shall be restored, never more to be exiled from the land of their fathers, this grant made in the wilderness shall be again acknowledged; and in God's holy mountain, the mountain of the height of Israel, there will He require their offerings (t'rumah), and the people shall bring them, "that the priest may cause the blessing to rest in their house." (Ezekiel 20:40; Ezekiel 44:30.) The need of bringing the offerings Malachi 3:8 makes plain. The returned remnant had robbed God of tithes and offerings: so the announcement of the prophet follows, "Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The tithes and offerings were God's; though the portion of the priests. Defrauding the priests of their just due, they robbed God and lost the blessing. When finally restored to their country, the law being written on their hearts, they will bring all the appointed offerings, and the priests provided for will cause the blessing to rest in their house. The terms in which this grant was made distinguish between the heave-offering and the wave-offering. The heave-offering was a portion of their gifts — "heave-offering of all their gifts;" the wave-offering might be the whole of the thing offered. The idea conveyed by a heave-offering was the taking up a part to offer it to God; whereas the idea of the wave-offering is more general, implying consecration to God, for it was waved before the Lord. A gift might therefore be termed both a heave-offering and a wave-offering; but every wave-offering could not be also called a heave-offering. To heave, required a residue from which it was lifted up; to wave, the gift itself only was requisite. When the people were permitted to contribute of their substance for the tabernacle, their gifts were called heave-offerings (Exodus 25:2-3; Exodus 35:5; Exodus 35:21-24; Exodus 36:3-6), for they offered of their possessions; but, in Exodus 35:22, Exodus 38:24-29, the gold and the brass which they brought were called wave-offerings, because consecrated to the service of God. Again, in Leviticus 9:21, we read of the breasts and right shoulders of the peace-offerings of the congregation, at the consecration of Aaron and his sons, being waved before the Lord. But in Exodus 29:28 the breast and right shoulder are termed a "heave-offering from the children of

Israel of the sacrifice of their peace-offering, even their heave-offering unto the Lord;" for looked at as a part of the sacrifice of their peace-offering they could together be called a heave-offering. The distinction between these terms is clear, and always kept up; for whilst, as above, the breast and the right shoulder could together be called a heave-offering, Scripture, when describing them as separate portions, with one exception noticed lower down (Numbers 6:19), speaks of the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder; for the whole breast was waved, but only one shoulder was heaved. A portion of that which the shoulders symbolize was thus claimed by God, whilst all that the breast shadowed forth was declared to belong to Him. By the shoulder, capability for service seems to be symbolized; and by the right shoulder, that that which was best able to bear the burden should be yielded up to Him. See Genesis 49:15; Joshua 4:5; Psalms 81:6; Isaiah 9:4; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 10:27; Isaiah 22:22. Compare also Nehemiah 9:29; Zechariah 7:11, where disobedience is described as "withdrawing the shoulder." By the breast, affections would appear to be symbolized. The heave-offering included the right shoulder of the peace-offering (excepting in the case of the Nazarite referred to below), and one cake out of the whole, but which accompanied the animal offered up as a peace-offering; the first of the dough (Numb. 15: 20), and all the tithes (Numbers 18:24) including the corn, wine, and oil for the priests' use. (Nell. 10: 39.) Besides these regular heave-offerings, the atonement money when the congregation were numbered (Exodus 30:13-15), the Lord's portion of the spoil of Midian (Numbers 31:21), and the king's present, and that of his counsellors, with the offering of the children of Israel for the second temple (Ezra 8:25), are called heave-offerings. And when the land shall be divided among the tribes afresh, the portion to be set apart for the Levites and the sanctuary will be regarded as a heave-offering. (Ezekiel 45:6-7; Ezekiel 48:1-35 :) Differing as these offerings do, the one from the other, they have one feature in common, viz., that they are all portions taken out of a residue, whether of fruits, of animals, of money, or of land, and as such are called heave-offerings.

Turning to the wave-offerings, beside the breast of the peace-offering, and the rites at the consecration of Aaron and his sons already referred to, there was the sheaf waved before the Lord, the firstfruits of the harvest, on the morrow after the sabbath in the passover week; and the two wave-loaves with their accompanying sacrifice offered in the feast of weeks. (Leviticus 23:10; Leviticus 23:17-20.) In addition to these were the offerings of the leper on the eighth day of his cleansing (Leviticus 14:1-57 :); the jealousy-offering (Numbers 5:1-31); that of the Nazarite at the completion of his vow (Numbers 6:1-27 :); and the taking of the tribe of Levi for the service of the priests in lieu of all the firstborn of Israel. (Numbers 8:1-26 :)

Understanding by the act of waving before the Lord consecration to Him, the breast of the peace-offering was waved in token that the affections should be in Him whom the sacrifice prefigured — would be consecrated to God. So also the waving of the sheaf on the morrow after the passover sabbath, typified the sanctification, or consecration, as risen from the dead, of Him who is the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:23), and who rose on that day. At the expiration of the seven weeks, the two loaves baked with leaven were brought out of their habitation, and were waved before the Lord with the prescribed offerings. But here we meet with a most significant injunction. They were waved with the sacrifices still entire, though killed. Death had taken place, but not dismemberment. The whole animals were waved with the two loaves. (Leviticus 23:19-20.) Remembering what these two loaves typified — the Jew and Gentile together offered to God as the firstfruits of the harvest (James 1:18), we can see the reason of this peculiar feature in that

day’s ritual, the whole animals waved, but waved after death. It is the Church publicly, as it were, consecrated to God as a whole. But since the Church was only formed after the resurrection of the Lord, and has its standing in resurrection, the animals were first killed and then waved. Death took place before the significant act of consecration was performed. Then death having taken place, the animals were waved whole before the Lord by the priest, presenting thus in type the Church as a whole consecrated to God, belonging for evermore to Him. The sacrifices of the leper on the eighth day of his cleansing bring before us another thought, beautiful surely because true, and clearly shadowed forth in the act of the priest. In the leper cleansed we have an individual formerly redeemed, now restored to communion with God’s people. The disease which had its seat in his flesh having broken out, he had been put outside the camp — was healed, the priest had looked on him and pronounced him clean, and his offerings had to be completed on the eighth day of his cleansing. "And he shall take two he-lambs without blemish, and one ewe-lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering mingled with oil, and one log of oil, and the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass-offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord: and he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin-offering and the burnt-offering, in the holy place; for as the sin-offering is the priest’s, so is the trespass-offering: it is most holy." (Leviticus 14:10; Leviticus 14:12-13.) On the day of Pentecost they waved the sacrifices after they had been killed, here the trespass-offering was waved with the log of oil before death. Why this marked difference? In both cases the whole animal was waved, to show that all connected with or typified by the sacrifice should be held as consecrated to God. In the case of the leper, however, the living animal was waved, to show that man as alive on earth should be really given up to God. Redeemed by blood, a member of the assembly which had God dwelling in their midst, all his life ought to be consecrated to God. In this he had failed, so the offering waved was a trespass-offering, not a peace-offering. The peace-offering spoke of communion enjoyed, the trespass-offering, of communion interrupted by sin on the part of the offerer. With the trespass-offering there was waved a log of oil, with which the quondam leper was to be anointed on the tip of his right ear, his right thumb, and the great toe of his right foot, and the rest of the oil in the priest’s hand was poured over him, in token that now his ear must hear, and his hand act, and his feet walk as directed by the word of God, and the rest poured over him to show that whilst he had failed before, he was to remember he had been consecrated to God, because redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The jealousy-offering, too, was waved. The charge against the woman was one of unfaithfulness to her husband, so the offering (a tenth part of an ephah of barley meal) was waved before the Lord. Consecration to her husband as his wife should characterize her: this the offering spoke of, and this her husband had charged her with violating. So the priest was to take the jealousy-offering from her hand, and wave it before the Lord. (Numbers 5:25.) In the Nazarite we have special consecration, separation unto the Lord. When that time of special dedication was ended, the Nazarite presented himself at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and brought his sin-offering, his burnt-offering, and his peace-offering with the accompanying meat and drink offerings. The sin and burnt-offerings having been properly offered up, he presented his peace-offering, a ram, with the basket of unleavened bread. The rain was brought because it was a question of special dedication to God, just as in the consecration of the priests the ram of consecration was enjoined to be offered up. When the ram had been killed and dismembered, the right shoulder sodden, with one unleavened cake and one unleavened wafer, was placed in the Nazarite’s hand by the priest, and then waved by him (i.e.,

the priest) for a wave-offering before the Lord. (Numbers 6:19-20.) In the ordinary peace-offerings the shoulder was heaved with the cakes, here it was waved; for this offering did not spring from a thankful heart rejoicing in its blessings, and desiring to present something of its substance to the Lord in recognition of His goodness: but it was the public declaration that the time of special separation to God had ended, so the right shoulder with the cakes was waved before the Lord. The man had been wholly separated by his vow to God; now he was to pass out of that state which he had voluntarily entered. Hence all was waved not heaved, and the shoulder symbolizing service was the portion commanded thus to be offered.

One more wave-offering has to be noticed — that of the Levites, taken for the Lord's service, instead of the firstborn in Israel. When that was done in the wilderness, the Levites did not bring a burnt-offering and sin-offering, but were waved by Aaron as an offering themselves. "And Aaron shall wave the Levites before the Lord for a wave-offering of the children of Israel that they may execute the service of the Lord." (Numbers 8:11; Numbers 8:13; Numbers 8:15-21. See marginal reading.) On that day all the Levites were publicly consecrated to God's service — all the firstborn in Israel belonged to him (Exodus 13:2), but He accepted the Levites in their stead as far as they would go man for man. A heave-offering here as in the other cases would have been out of place. It was not some of the firstborn whom God claimed, nor some of the Levites that He accepted. He claimed all the firstborn, but took all the Levites as far as they would go in their stead, a wave-offering of the children of Israel.

Comparing the different passages then in which the heave-offerings and wave-offerings are mentioned, the distinction between them comes out, and the teaching regarding more especially the latter is made plain. We see that the language of scripture is indeed accurate, and may note, in this, as in other things, that the substitution of one term for another (often found in the writings of men) would introduce confusion in the things of God, and mar the beauty of the lessons intended to be conveyed by the divine author of the book. C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 72

S. Naaman: or God Glorified, Part 4

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3. From God’s grace we are led on to God’s government. These two we must never confound. God will show grace to sinners; He will carry on His government among His people. Gehazi is an instance of this: He could not understand the refusal of Elisha. "Behold," he says, "my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him." It was not to spare Naaman that Elisha refused the present. It was because grace was free, and the time to receive from the Gentile had not arrived. Gehazi could not understand either the one or the other. Had he possessed a right perception of grace, he would have gloried rather in the presents returning home, a witness that the God of Israel could give even to an enemy of Israel without receiving anything from him in return. Had he imbibed the true spirit of the time, he would have learned the incongruity of their being enriched by the Syrian. But he understood neither. The evil desire stimulated him, and he ran after Naaman till he reached the object of his Search. To the salutation " Is all well he responds, " All is well." Why then this haste, why this pursuit? Eager to get something from Naaman, he has a lie ready, which again reveals how he had failed to understand the right adjustment of things. Two children of the sons of the prophets were in wants and Elisha had sent to request something for them. Could not God have provided for His own servants without spoiling a Gentile? Could not Elisha look to God, and not to Naaman, for what they might need? Gehazi sees not the inconsistency of his story. He tells it-he gets what he asks, and more. Naaman is ready to give-that was right. Gehazi was desirous to receive-that was wrong. Bound on two of the young men, the presents are carried back, and Gehazi stores them away. He has perfectly succeeded in his plan, and he stands before his master. Another lie is now told. He forgets now before whom he stands. Could not the prophet search him? Could not he test most severely the accuracy of his statements? Blind to everything, he utters another lie when questioned, "whence comest thou?" He might deceive Naaman-he cannot deceive Elisha "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee." An eye had seen him. The prophet’s heart knew everything. Gehazi stood before him convicted, and sentence goes forth: " The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed, forever." He should be, and his seed after him, standing witnesses of what it was to forget the character of his day.

"Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants." Gehazi had forgotten the character of his day. Israel had before that time spoiled the Gentiles. They spoiled the Egyptians before they departed from Egypt. They enriched themselves with the spoil of Midian just previous to their entrance of the land: This was in keeping with the times. The jewels of gold were applied to the service of the sanctuary, such of them as had not been used for the golden calf. The plunder of the Midianites was apportioned out as God had directed; but Gehazi had no command to receive from Naaman, and had no intention of enriching the sanctuary with his gifts.

Besides, all this was out of keeping with the character of his day. Elisha’s presence in Israel, as prophet, was in consequence of their departure from God. The servant should have discerned this. The prophet’s presence was a constant protest against the condition of the people among whom he dwelt. Were those, who professed to know this, to act as if the time of rest and enjoyment had arrived? It was the day for protesting against the settlement of Israel as wine on the lees, unconcerned about God’s glory, and indifferent to the claims of His holiness. Were the professed servants of Jehovah to act as if the warfare was over? Under an idolatrous king in Samaria there could be no rest for those who had understanding of the times. A king in Samaria, with David’s heir sitting on his throne at Jerusalem, showed at once all was not right, nor the time for enjoyment arrived. The condition of things around them, God’s servants might not be empowered to alter; but they must not acquiesce in it, Elisha knew this, and acted accordingly. Gehazi was blinded to this, and thus fell under the exercise of God’s government. For Israel the day will dawn, when they shall sit each man under his vine and fig tree. But the time for repose, and making themselves at home in the land, was not then. Gehazi forgot all this. Need we show how this has teaching for believers now I May we show that, like Elisha, we have the mind of God, and know the character of our day, and what is suited to it. " There remaineth a rest for the people of God." It is future, not present. It will be enjoyed above, not on earth.-C. E. S.

S. Noah, a Type of Christ

Noah, a Type of Christ

" CHOSEN in Christ before the foundation of the world," tells us of God's thought about the work of His Son, ages before the cross was borne by Simon the Cyrenian, on which the Son of Man was lifted up. As time went on, and events took place on the earth when peopled by Adam's race, we have clear evidence that the sacrifice of His Son, though future in fact, was ever present to God's eye. For, living as we do after the cross and the descent of the Holy Ghost, who guides into all the truth, distinct shadows of Him that was to come, and the work He was to accomplish, are found to have been cast at different times across the page of man's brief history. Before the flood and after, during the patriarchal era, in the history of Israel in the wilderness and in the land, we have frequent illustrations of this in the lives of several of God's saints. There are what may be called historic parallels as well as types. We may trace a parallel in certain portions of the life of a child of God between him and the Lord Jesus as He appeared on earth; and we may find this same servant of God filling a position which is a figure of that afterward occupied by Him who was to come. But in all typical personages of the Old Testament who shadowed forth the Lord, we have two sides as it were of a picture presented to us which must never be confounded. We see the man as he is a child of Adam needing a Savior, and we see him portraying some character which the Savior was afterward to fill. Thus, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, &c., were types of the Lord as they occupied positions similar to any He has, or will yet be found in. Joseph was a type when rejected by his brethren he became their preserver in the land of Egypt; but he was not a type of Christ when regarded as the prime minister of the Egyptian monarch.a Moses and Aaron were types of the Lord when, as king and priest, they came out of the Sanctuary and blessed the people on the eighth day of Aaron's consecration; but they sustained no typical character when they mutually shared in the efficacy of the blood shed on the great day of atonement. So with others, and with Noah, to whom the reader's attention is now to be directed. Noah was a type of the Lord, as is sought to be pointed out, before he entered the ark, as well as after he came out of it; but he was not a type of Him when looked at as inside it. Before he entered, as after, he filled positions which correspond to. those the Lord has consented to be in: when safe inside. the ark, with the door securely closed by the Lord, we see him as a Unless it were as Head of the Gentiles.-ED. a man indebted to God's salvation for deliverance from God's wrath.

Between the history of Noah and that of the Lord we may likewise trace parallels. With the first mention of Noah in the genealogy of Adam's descendants we have something peculiar-prophecy burst forth afresh at his birth. Enoch had years before prophesied of the Lord coming in judgment with ten thousand of His saints; but no fresh prophecy is recorded till Lamech predicted a new era for man on earth, as he called his son's name Noah (1:e., rest). " This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed" (Genesis 5:29). The sterile earth would be fruitful. The very ground would share in the blessings to be expected in connection with this new-born babe. Man and earth were both interested in the son of Lamech. Centuries passed away before another was born in whom both man and earth had a

special and common interest. At His birth as at Noah’s, prophecy, silent for ages, again was heard. Lamech’s prophecy was fulfilled; but the blessings to earth from the Lord’s birth have yet to be displayed. Noah was a husbandman, and under him, in the then new world, men enjoyed the fruits of. the trees, which after Adam’s sin had been withdrawn from him and his descendants. In Eden he had the herb bearing seed for meat, and every tree in the which was the fruit of a tree yielding seed. After the fall he was to eat the herb of the field, and the ground, then cursed, was to yield thorns and thistles. After the flood there was a lightening of the curse, and the earth does yield in some degree her increase. But its fullness is yet withheld, though not forever. It will surely be one day given to man, as set forth in the glowing descriptions of the future in the prophecy of Isaiah. To Adam it yielded thorns and thistles; to men of another epoch it will yield useful produce. " Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Is. 55. 13). Where cultivation has been scanty and vegetable life has not flourished, the face of nature will be changed, and barrenness give way to _luxuriant growth; for "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with’ joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon "(Isai. 35. 1, 2). Under Noah there was partial relief; under the Second Man there will be full deliverance. In this creation is directly interested as well as man. It groans and travails in pain, made subject to vanity not willingly; but the incubus will be lifted up, the curse removed, and earth with man rejoice in the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Lamech looked forward to the future under Noah; we, in this respect similarly situated, look forward to the future under the Lord. But judgment came ere Lamech’s prophecy was fulfilled, and judgment must come before Isaiah’s predictions can be made good.

About 480 years rolled by before anything fresh is told us of the patriarch. All had been going on on the earth as usual, except that the wickedness of man, we may well believe, had increased, and even the sons of God had been seduced into alliances with the daughters of men, taking wives of all that they chose. Left to themselves, unfettered by any law, unrestrained by a power which enforced obedience whether man liked it or not, they acted as they chose. Such is the inspired record of the acts of the sons of God of the antediluvian world. Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and took them all away, is the Lord’s description of that age, manifesting its unconcern and unbelief of its impending doom, little thinking in the midst of their giddy round of pleasure that One was weighing them in the balance, and pronouncing them as He did the King of Babylon at a later day, " weighed and found wanting." " 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." How extensive and yet how minute was this scrutiny. It took in the life, character, and thoughts of man. The general habit of man as man, and the particular characteristics of individuals of the race passed under the all-seeing eye of God; the thought concealed, perhaps, from the bosom-friend, was read accurately by Him, and every imagination (or formation) of the thoughts of man’s heart was found to be only evil continually. It was one vast scene of moral ruin, degradation, and lawlessness. Once, when He surveyed man as He had formed him, His eye rested with delight on all that He saw, and He pronounced it very good. Now, surveying man as he had degraded himself, a fallen being getting deeper and deeper into the mire, " He repented that he had made him on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." " The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" tells a further tale, and attests the polluting power of sin. Man was a corrupt and a

corrupting being. " God looked on the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Contact with man was defilement; his very touch was pollution. Is there a germ of goodness in man? It had surely time as well as occasion to show itself. Upwards of 500 years had passed between Enoch's translation, and consequently, since his prophecy of judgment and God's inspection of man on the earth, and yet there was no improvement manifested. The fear of judgment had not wrought a change him; the mysterious disappearance of Enoch had not permanently affected him. What he had been in Enoch's day, that he was in Noah's. And what we read of is not some extraordinary display of Satanic power sweeping everything before it, though surely Satan was actively at work (the great display of his power is reserved for a yet future epoch); but it was man left, as we might say, to himself, showing the natural bent of his corrupt heart. "All flesh had corrupted his way on the earth." Corruption and lawlessness characterized the period. In the midst of this picture of wide-spread and deeply rooted ungodliness, one man, and one man only, is brought before us with whom God had communion: "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God"; just the opposite to those around in. his walk, and in the desires of his soul. To him God communicates His mind and announces the coming judgment; yet not all His mind, for He did not tell him at first when that judgment would come. Man had corrupted his way on the earth, and the earth was corrupt; so man, every living thing on the earth, and the earth itself must be destroyed. " The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold I will destroy them with the earth were the words which told Noah of God's determination to put an end to that for which there was no remedy. Noah thus learned the end would come; but knew not, that we read of, what God had said to Himself (6. 3). This is God's manner of acting. There are times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power (Acts 1:1-26). The day or the hour of the coming and announced judgment" knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father " (Mark 13:32). So with Noah. He warned him of the coming destruction, told him what to do to escape it, but did not communicate to him the exact time of its approach till the ark was ready, and the last week of the old world was commencing. " They knew not until the flood came." During that day of long suffering, a period of 120 years, Noah was a preacher of righteousness, with what success the number saved in the ark testifies-seven souls beside himself preserved for the new world. Need we wonder at this small result? Another one could say, " I have preached righteousness in the great congregation, lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation, I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation ' (Psalms 40:9-10). And after all He had to turn and say,, as regards Israel, " I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain" (Isaiah 49:4). Little wonder is it then that the first preacher of righteousness should be accompanied into the ark by his own immediate family only. Where were his brethren and sisters? Had he to feel, like One greater than himself, that even his brethren refused to give credence to his message? "Ye would not" was the Lord's charge against Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37), and her present desolation is the consequence. His testimony was rejected. So Noah entered the ark in the midst of a scene of life and gaiety, and passed out, as it were of the sphere of his labors before his predictions were verified, shut in by the Lord, separated from all he had preached to, with his family only around him, a rejected messenger of the Lord Jehovah. But not only does the history of our patriarch furnish parallels between his own and the Lord's history while on earth; he is also a type of the Lord both before

and after the flood: before the flood a type of Him as a Savior, after it of Him as a ruler, thus preserving the historical order.

All flesh had corrupted its way on the earth, so all flesh deserved to die. " I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them " (Genesis 6:7). Thus man as a race was under sentence of death, and justly so. How could the race be preserved alive? All hopes hung, humanly speaking, on one man, Noah. Because of him the race was not exterminated. " Everything that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." On how slender a thread all then hung. Had lie failed where would man have been? Had he been found like the rest what would his family have done? The human race was preserved through him, and the living creatures of earth and air were saved from utter destruction likewise. Creation found itself interested in this one. Judgment must take it course, for corruption pervaded all flesh and the earth; but God's handiworks in creation could righteously be rescued from complete extermination. To outward eyes, probably, there was little to interest a stranger in this man. His conduct condemned the practices of those around him; his words must have disturbed and broken in on the composure of many a soul desiring only to go on unchecked and unreproved in its wild career of lawlessness, as he preached righteousness to his contemporaries. Many, probably, hated him; some, perhaps, could not make him out; others doubtless thought him a visionary, building a big ship on dry land and talking of a judgment to fall on the world, whilst none but his immediate family followed him into the ark. Such might he have appeared to men; but what was he before God? All turned on this. Man's judgment of him would avail nothing in the matter of the preservation of the human race. Had they raised him to a pinnacle of greatness unequaled by any one before or since-had they proclaimed him a perfect man fit for the presence of God-if God had not accepted him no living creature would have been saved for the new world. " But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." So he appears here as a type, may we not say, of Him-that one corn of wheat, on which all really then, and all manifestly afterward, hung. But Noah was only a type, for he found grace in the eyes of the Lord; whereas He, who likened Himself to the corn of wheat, was full of.grace in Himself; not filled with it, but full of it. And in His case, as in Noah's, all depended on what He was before God. The world's conception of Him had no bearing on the final destiny of man and the earth. Rejecting Him, condemning Him, they rejected their own mercies and sealed their own condemnation, as did the antediluvian world. In Noah was seen the one God had accepted; in Christ the one in whom the Father was well pleased.

Perusing still further Noah's history, we reach the day, when he entered the ark with his family and the different pairs of animals as previously appointed. Now he learns the exact time of the flood, and the period of its duration; for the times, previously hidden, are disclosed. As righteous in God's sight he enters the ark, but his family enter with him. They were not righteous that we read of. No approval of any of them is recorded in the word; yet they entered, and were saved. Noah inside the ark was but a pattern of all who are saved; but in taking in his family with him, we see him a type of another. "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." Not a word, not a hint have we of what Shem was-not a syllable of approbation of Japheth. They were saved, preserved from the common destruction because Noah was righteous, and there in that ark they were living exemplifications of

what it is to be saved by the righteousness of another. And how complete the salvation was, for all who went in came out. None were lost inside, but all died who were outside. Secure, because God shut Noah in, his family were saved through the flood, and saved with him. But here we must mark a difference between the type and the antitype. They were saved with, but not in Noah; they were preserved because of, but not by Noah. He was in the ark with them enjoying the same salvation; he was there as righteous himself; they, as exemplifying the obedience of faith, were inside because of the righteousness of another -their father Noah. We learn what they learned; the possibility, the certainty, the security of salvation through the righteousness of another-for us the Lord Jesus Christ; and we experience what Noah experienced, preservation as in the ark from the waters of judgment. He was not the ark, he was inside it; and we are in Christ. Thus, we can distinguish in Noah between the man as he was, and the typical character he sustained. All saved by grace will learn like him what it is to be in the ark, brought through death, the judgment deserved because of sin; but he stands forth as the righteous one because of whom others are saved. In this surely he is a type of Him that was to come.

Another feature in this history should be taken notice of-the prominence given to Noah, and the little notice of his sons. When the animals entered the ark, they went in, two and two, unto Noah, the one because of whom they were preserved. When the Lord closed the door on the living freight which the ark carried, we read, " the Lord shut him (1:e. Noah) in." When all around outside were dead, we read, "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." God’s eye rested on him throughout the flood, and God thought of him after it, for we read, " God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark" (8. 1). In all this Shem, Ham, and Japheth are, as it were, unseen. They are mentioned as entering the ark; but on Noah God’s eye rested, and to him His thoughts were directed. He is-remembered, and the rest came in remembrance only because with him. For forty days the flood increased. At the expiration of five months the ark first touched the ground, a symptom that the waters were diminishing. On the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains could be discerned, and a hope of ere long emerging from the ark could arise in the hearts of its inhabitants. To keep seed alive on the face of all the earth was the reason of the living creatures being preserved. Noah knew he would come out of the ark, but now he might learn that the time of exit was approaching, for the tops of the mountains appeared above the hitherto unbroken surface of the waters. For forty days did he wait, and then sent forth a raven through the window, and after the raven a dove. The raven would tell when the waters were dried up from off the earth; the dove would teach him when the face of the ground was dry. The raven went to and fro, but the dove sought for re-admittance into the ark, and found it. The raven returned, it would seem, to it, indicating that the waters were not yet dried up from off the earth, but needed not re-admittance within. It could feed on what it found; the dove could not feed without till vegetation had recommenced. A week after the dove’s first return the welcome tidings were received, as she re-entered in the evening with an olive leaf plucked off in her mouth. Vegetation had revived; this little leaf showed it. How welcome that little harbinger of the future must have been! Another week of patient waiting was passed, when the dove went forth for the third time, to return no more. She had found a home in the new world. Her non-return this time was as expressive as her previous returns had been; and Noah, interpreting aright her absence, uncovered the covering of the ark, and beheld, for the first time, the new world he and his children were to people. The face of the ground was dry, but the earth was not ready for his reception. Two months longer nearly had he to wait in the ark till God, who

shut him in, gave him leave to come out. The face of the ground was dry on the first day of the first month; but he would not trust to appearances: he waited for permission to come out, as he had entered, at the express command of God. God knew the times and seasons, which Noah did not: He knew when he must enter, and He knew when he should come out. The sight of his eyes could not make Noah forsake the ark, nor the desire of his heart make him cross the threshold of the door, till God commanded him. To God's will he submitted, and to God's guidance he committed himself. Had he left the ark when the dove did, he would have left it too soon: the face of the ground was dry, but he must wait till the earth was dried. In all this he shows himself perfect. He was really, he would be practically, dependent on God, like Him who allowed neither the sight of His eyes, nor the natural desire for food, to draw Him aside from the path of unconditional, constant dependence on the Lord His God. As in the ark he had manifested perfect confidence in God, so, as soon as ever he leaves it, his first thought is for God, and he takes the first opportunity of ascribing all the glory of their deliverance to Him. With a thankful heart surely it was he built an altar, and took of every clean beast and every clean fowl, and offered on it burnt offerings. It was no grudging service. He did not take one animal and one bird, but one of each class of the birds and fowls which were clean. He discriminated between the clean and unclean of the animals and the birds, because he knew that the One to whom he was about to offer them was holy, and could accept nothing that was not clean; and he disowned for himself and family all thought of offering what they chose, like Cain, as he drew near with that which God could accept like Abel. How often has this discrimination shown by Noah been overlooked, as men have thought of approaching God with something of their own, to be accepted without reference to God's estimate of it. Noah, from whom all on earth are lineally descended, acted otherwise. Would that our father Noah's example and principle were more widely accepted and conformed to! But to return. By this act he owned he needed a Savior, that life must be given up for his life. In this lie took the place of a sinner, but a saved sinner, brought through death into resurrection. There is, however, another character in which he here appears; he leads the worship of others after the deliverance from God's judgment is accomplished. Does he not in this seem to typify Him who leads the praises of the redeemed? And, if we cannot call it. a type, we may observe the striking parallel, and mark also- the contrast. " In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee," is the language of the Psalm (22. 22), speaking of the Lord after His resurrection, which is especially applied to Him in the Hebrews (2. 12), as pointing out the association of the redeemed with Him. So Noah, foreshadowing this, builds the altar in the midst of his family, subjects with himself of God's salvation. In their worship that day Noah took the initiative, as the Lord does and will (Psalms 22:25) in the company of the redeemed; Noah, because sharing with them the deliverance-the Lord, because raised up from death. Others well know full salvation by His blood. To that sacrifice there is an immediate response. It could not be otherwise. God saw in it what, perhaps, Noah did not, and the fragrance of a richer sacrifice, which it foreshadowed, rose up before Him. He smelled a sweet savor (the first occasion on which this term is used), yet we read not of incense offered up with it. It needed nothing to sweeten it; the sacrifice itself was, and we can say is, a sweet savor before Him, for its pleasantness, its acceptableness, will never fade away. And now we are introduced to what followed from it. God held converse with Himself. The Godhead had counseled about creating man (Genesis 1:26): God had held converse with Himself about destroying all flesh (Genesis 6:3). The Father and the Son, too, we read, held converse about the work the Lord was to undertake (Psalms 40:6-7); and here God speaks to Himself: " The Lord said in his heart, I will

not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living as I have done. While the earth remained), seed time and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." He knew what man was, still unchanged in heart. What he was before the flood, that he was after it; and, when none were alive in the new world but Noah and his family, God thus speaks to Himself about him. Punishment could not change him. Could he earn the favor of God? Impossible. Could he preserve the world from a second flood, and the ground from being again cursed because of his sin? No: but what man could not do God could, because of the sacrifice. Now, all rests on the virtue of the sacrifice. No flood shall again desolate the earth, nor, whilst the earth lasts, shall the order of the seasons be interrupted. Stability on earth, where fallen man is concerned, can only be secured by sacrifice, and God can righteously deal with man in a new way by virtue of it. And now a fresh subject comes before us. As creation had been visited by a deluge because of man, but was promised immunity from its recurrence because of the sacrifice, man, too, whose sin brought down the judgment, should reap benefits from the sacrifice. " And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." God speaks again to Noah, but He speaks to his sons likewise; to them for the first time. Till they had come through the flood they had, as it were, no place before Him. He communicated his mind to Noah, and to him only. Now they have a standing before God, as it were, and He speaks to them, but with Noah. Apart from Noah they had no place; but when speaking to him now He speaks to them likewise, and in language to which men, since the fall, had been strangers. " God blessed Noah and his sons." At creation He blessed the moving creatures of the waters, and the fowls of the air: on the sixth day He blessed man; and on the seventh, the Sabbath day. The fall took place, after which God blessing anything was language unheard of. Now a change takes place: what induced the change? The burnt offering, which rose up a sweet savor to God. On that ground He could, He has blessed, sinful creatures." To be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth," had been part of God’s blessing in Eden; "to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth," is His blessing after the flood. His purpose does not change. He created man for this object, and He would have him fulfill it. The flood seemed to have put an end to it; but His counsel shall stand, and here it comes out. Time cannot alter it, nor the malicious machinations of the enemy frustrate it. He sent Noah and His sons abroad on the earth to fulfill His purpose, by replenishing it. Yet there is a difference, and a marked one. To Adam God added: " and to subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The Son of Man will exercise this sovereignty when He reigns (Psalms 8:1-9). To Noah and his sons God promises to put the fear of them on all the animals on land and water. All should feel fallen man’s superiority, though he had not the commission to subdue them. To the first Adam was that given; by the last Adam will it be carried out; for such a commission is not entrusted to a fallen creature. And here, in connection with the sacrifice, God conveys to man a grant of every living creature: Into your hand are they delivered; every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." All the resources of the earth are thus placed at his disposal, both what it produced and what it carried on its surface-a vast change from the language in which God addressed Adam after the fall, and a fuller grant than that which He bestowed on him in Paradise. After the fall, He took from man the fruits which he had so misused, and sent him forth from Eden to eat the herb of the field; now He gives him to eat of everything. By sin man lost; in virtue of the sacrifice, God could be

a bounteous giver. But it is not merely recovery; it is more. In Eden they could eat the fruits of the ground; in the new world they could eat of everything-an illustration of the truth conveyed in the lines, "In Him the tribes of Adam boast More blessings than their father lost."

Further on, in the history of the world, when Israel stood before God on the ground of their responsibility, to be blessed if obedient, a restriction in the articles of food took place; a distinction was made between the clean and the unclean, and the former only were allowed them. But when the sacrifice had been really offered up and accepted, and God began again to deal with man on the ground of the sweet savor which ascended up, all curtailment of the articles of food is removed, for " whatsoever is sold in the shambles that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (1 Corinthians 10:25-26). " Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4-5)-God's word to Noah, setting it apart for our use, and our prayer to Him. What a difference there is between dealing with man according to what he is or deserves, and acting towards him according to the acceptableness of the sacrifice! Noah and his sons now experience the latter, as Adam, and all before the flood, had proved the former.

Unrestricted as they were in the articles of food, this comprehensive grant had one condition annexed, " Flesh with the blood thereof, which is the life thereof, shall ye not eat." Life belonged to God, and man was to own it; he could not, therefore, feed on it. Man's life, however, was precious in God's sight, and He here gives clear evidence of it: If a beast took man's life, God would require the blood of the life at the hand of that beast; and, if a man took a fellow-creature's life, "at the hand of every man's brother will I," He said, " require the life of man." As Creator, He will require from any living creature the life of man. The animals prey on each other, and man might kill of all kinds for his use; but man's life was precious in God's sight, " for in the image of God made he man." As God's representative on earth, to take. man's life unlawfully is to disturb the order of creation. Who has power over a representative but the one whom he represents? Any infraction, then, of this principle, God would take cognizance of. To enforce this, government on earth in the hands of man, a new thing since the fall, is next introduced. " Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." The sword of justice is here, for the first time placed in man's hand, to be used in righteousness, without mercy. Cain was especially preserved from death by man; here death is enjoined. Before the flood, what a scene it must have been of lawlessness: now, order is introduced, and a strictly righteous rule is established, with death as the penalty of its infraction. And one day this will be fully carried out, when the Son of Man, of whom Noah is here a type, shall re-establish God's authority on earth, and death be the sinner's portion (Psalms 75:3; Isaiah 65:20; Psalms 101:8), after the era of disorder and lawlessness, which Scripture speaks of (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17), shall pass away in the overflowing of divine judgment and public execution of sinners (Revelation 19:20-21).

Throughout this history, side by side with man, we have creation introduced as deeply interested, because especially affected, by man's sin. God makes a covenant with Noah and his sons, and every living creature, that no flood should again destroy the earth. He had said it in His heart, but He would have them to be acquainted with His mind; He here proclaims it, and gives a token of the covenant between Him and the earth. He would look on the bow, and remember the everlasting covenant. How God delighted in Noah's sacrifice! and, delighting in it, would have all to know it.

Blessings descended on man, and with him on all that had breath. He makes a covenant, binding on Himself, never again to destroy the earth by a flood. He had said to Noah, before the deluge, " with thee will I establish my covenant:" now He enters into one, not with Noah only, but with all that moves on the earth. The announcement in Eden of the woman's seed depended on the preservation of the human race from destruction. With Noah, therefore, He would establish His covenant. But after the flood God binds Himself to all the living creatures; so all share in the results of Noah's sacrifice, as all will share in the result of that sacrifice already offered up, and ever had in remembrance before God. Great, however, is the difference. All were assured of preservation from catastrophe such as had taken place; but creation know, not merely immunity from a second flood, I the full enjoyment which the Lord's presence will secure, when He reigns in power. It was after the flood creation learned that God would enter thus into covenant. It will be after the long night of weeping that the day will dawn full of brightness and joy (Psalms 96:1-13; Psalms 97:1-12; Psalms 98:1-9) But Noah here also was only a type, for he made wine, drank of it, and was drunk. He who should have exercised government on earth is found uncovered in his tent. How soon man fails! Aaron, Moses, David Solomon, tell the same tale of unfitness for that place (which man should, but the Son of man alone will, fill without failing. All, therefore, point to Him; and as each failure is recorded, the mind travels onward to Him that is to come, taking in by the way, from each type some thought of the offices and glory that will be sustained in perfection by none but the woman's seed.

One more remark before closing. To many of God's saints promises about their seed were given; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David received them. To Noah we read of none being given. This is surely fit, for all God does is right. But can we not discern the fitness? In Noah we have in type the coming One actually on earth in millennial power, as we see man having government committed into his hand, to rule in righteousness. Beyond this, as far as earth is concerned, nothing can go. So to Noah and to Solomon-types of the Lord as Lord and Christ-God gave no promise about their seed. They shadowed forth Him as He will be, when there will be nothing more here to be desired. For what, as we read their histories, we see is wanted is, not one to fill a place different in character to that they respectively filled, but the One, who will sustain in righteousness and in continuance that authority and rule they in measure exercised, under which alone this groaning creation can be set free, and be at rest forever. For that One we, too, wait. C. E. S.

S. Notes on the Kingdom.

Notes on the Kingdom.

"It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," was God's announcement to the serpent in the hour of its apparent triumph that He would not leave it in undisturbed possession of power over man and the earth. From the time however of man's acceptance of Satan's guidance, violence, self-will, and oppression began to be manifested in the world; but God's purpose must be fulfilled. So, from time to time, during the forty centuries which rolled by between the prophetic announcement and the appearance of the one predicted, God disclosed something of the future concerning the kingdom to be established in power and permanence, where His authority has been disowned and His rights denied. To Abraham it was promised, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and to Isaac and to Jacob after him was this promise confirmed. (Genesis 22:18, Genesis 26:4, Genesis 28:14.) In the hope of the kingdom saints died. Jacob, before gathering up his feet into the bed, predicted the gathering of nations to Shiloh, who was to come (Genesis 49:10); Moses closed his blessing of the tribes with the prospect of the people's welfare, when the Lord should be reigning in person over the earth (Deuteronomy 33:28); and David's last words are descriptive of the One who is yet to put down all that opposes itself to God. (2 Samuel 23:1-39 :) In the days of Israel's triumphs the hope of the kingdom was remembered, for they sang of it at the Red Sea, and looked on to it as the ark entered Jerusalem under David. (Exodus 15:1-27 :; 1 Chronicles 16:23-33.) Individuals cherished the prospect of it in their hearts: witness Hannah, who, pouring forth the joyful utterance of a grateful heart, cannot close her thanksgiving for special favours without making mention of the king, the Lord's anointed. And David, as he wandered over the land he was one day to govern, and as he sat on his throne in the city of Zion, looked onward to that which we too expect (Psalms 18:1-50 :, Psalms 63:1-11 :); whilst the personal majesty of the king he sung of in Psalms 45:1-17 :, and the beneficent character of His reign he celebrates in Psalms 72:1-20 : After him the prophets took up the strain. Isaiah, Micah, and others predicted the blessings that will be enjoyed under His rule, and Daniel fixed the date of His first coming to earth; whilst to Nebuchadnezzar God revealed in dreams the crushing power of the stone cut out without hands, and the setting up by the God of heaven of a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. To Jewish ears then it was no strange sound which John the Baptist gave forth, as he proclaimed, "The kingdom of heaven [or heavens] is at hand." After him the Lord Jesus uttered the same words, when He began His ministry in Galilee; but both prefixed to their announcements the imperative call to repentance. (Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17.) For the children of Israel being sons of the kingdom (Matthew 8:12), its establishment in power is connected with that nation's blessing, and their future glory depends on it, as Daniel had predicted: "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" [or high places]. (Daniel 7:27.) To them, then, whilst announcing the near approach of the kingdom, it was needful to declare the terms upon which they could enter it, and what God looked for from those who should receive it. In Galilee, therefore, the Lord preached repentance; on Nicodemus He impressed the necessity of the new

birth (John 3:3; John 3:5); to His disciples He made known the childlike spirit requisite for those who shall enter it (Matthew 18:3), and warned all against mere profession without practice, which would for ever shut out souls from that which Israel had been taught to expect. (Matthew 5:20; Luke 13:25-29.) To John the kingdom was future, for dispensationally whilst on earth he was outside it (Matthew 11:11); but the Lord could speak of it as existing on earth, manifested by the power over Satan which He exercised. (Matthew 11:28.)

John spoke of the prospect, the Lord preached the kingdom of God, and commissioned the twelve, and the seventy disciples, to proclaim it likewise. (Luke 4:43; Luke 9:1; Luke 9:60; Luke 10:9.) The devils discerned the great change which had taken place consequent on His presence in the midst of Israel, for they felt His power, confessed His authority, and owned what alone they expected from His hands. (Mark 1:34; Matthew 8:28-31.) He had come, who was to destroy the works of the devil. The people who heard Him, and witnessed His works, should have discerned the great change and have rejoiced; for if He preached to them, as Matthew and Luke express it, "the gospel" or "glad tidings of the kingdom," or as Mark perhaps really wrote "the gospel of God" (Matthew 4:23; Matthew 9:35. Luke 8:1; Mark 1:14), the kingdom was in existence, for the king was present. A power which could deliver man from that one into whose hands he had put himself was manifested in Him who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. The people saw it and marvelled; the rulers confessed the works and caviled, and blasphemed. (Mark 1:27; Mark 3:22-30.) Men, released from the tyranny of demoniacal possession, were witnesses none could gainsay. The King was really on earth, and gathering souls around Himself by the word of the kingdom, the seed spread abroad by the sower; all who heard and received His word became really what Israel were only nationally, true children or rather sons of the kingdom (Matthew 13:19-38), wheat or good seed sown in the field.

Turning back to Daniel 7:18; Daniel 7:27, we find mention made of two classes of saints: "the saints of the Most High" (or high places) who "take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever;" and "the people of the saints of the Most High" (or high places) to whom the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given. The former are the heavenly saints who shall reign on high over the earth, the latter are the people of Israel on earth during the millennium; for the kingdom, as prophesied in the Old Testament and often when spoken of in the New Testament, has reference to a rule to be exercised over the earth. To Jews therefore, though the term "kingdom of heaven" is not found in the Old Testament, the thought it conveyed was not a new one, and when John preached "the kingdom of heaven (or the heavens) is at hand" (and He did not, that we read of, use any other formula), whilst His message must have gladdened the hearts of the faithful, He would have stumbled by His language none who were acquainted with Israel’s hopes, or had studied the Old Testament scriptures. And, often as we meet with the term "kingdom of heaven" in St. Matthew’s gospel, where alone it is found, we never read of any one asking either John or the Lord what they meant by it, or what it was intended to express. The term might be new, but the thought it expressed had cheered the heart of many a saint in previous ages, as the language of the priest Zacharias, when his mouth was opened, shows us how the godly before the Lord’s first advent looked onward to the fulfilment of God’s word. (Luke 1:71-76.)

John the Baptist spoke of the kingdom of heaven, the Lord spoke besides of the kingdom of God. Are there then two kingdoms, or one? One only. It is the kingdom of God, because it belongs to Him; it can be called the kingdom of the heavens because in the heavenlies is, and will be, the

seat of royal authority and power. If we take in the full range of the kingdom it comprehends both heaven and earth. So we read of the righteous shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (that is the heavenly part of it), and of "the kingdom of the Son of man" (that is the earthly part of it), which has earth for its sphere, though the seat of power will always be in the heavenlies. (Matthew 13:43; Matthew 13:41.) Again, addressing those who form part of the heavenly saints, the Lord said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29): whereas in the address He will at a future day make to the sheep, those amongst the Gentiles who shall have a portion on earth when He reigns, we read, "Come ye blessed of my Father (not your Father) inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34.) In general however in the gospels where the kingdom is spoken of, what was to be on earth, not in heaven, forms the subject of the teaching. And often we find the terms, kingdom "of God" and "of heaven" used interchangeably. Thus the Lord could announce that both were at hand (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15.) He could speak too of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as in Matthew 13:11, and of the mysteries of the kingdom of God as in Mark 4:11, and Luke 8:10; for He was teaching the things concerning the kingdom in existence, but not in display as it would be known to the faithful, during the time of His absence before it would be manifested to the world. So the parables of the leaven and of the mustard tree are similitudes of the kingdom of heaven as well as of the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:1-58 :; Mark 4:1-41 :; Luke 13:1-35 :); for they describe the outward appearance and character of the kingdom on earth after that the King should have entered into heaven: and looking on to the day when the kingdom shall be seen in power, and the heavenly saints shall have entered into their inheritance; the Lord could speak of souls sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11) as well as in the kingdom of God. (Luke 13:28.) Both terms could thus be used, because the epoch contemplated was that subsequent to His ascension to the heavenlies. And even since the day that the cloud received Him out of the sight of His disciples, who stood gazing up to heaven, the kingdom as it exists on earth might be rightly called the kingdom of heaven as well as the kingdom of God. But such was not always the case. When the Lord was on earth the kingdom of God was on earth, because He the King was there; but it would not be called the kingdom of heaven till He had taken His place in the heavenlies. So in certain places in the gospels, where Matthew adduces something characteristic of the whole of the present epoch, he uses the term the "kingdom of heaven," whereas in the parallel places in Luke, where something is introduced characteristic of the time when the Lord was on earth, the term employed, and the only one which could be, is "the kingdom of God." Compare Matthew 11:12-13 with Luke 16:16. In the former the Lord points out the new feature manifested in connection with the kingdom, which would be characteristic of the whole time till He return in power. The Jew looked on the kingdom as his by right, his title to it he considered was bound up with his genealogy. As a son of Abraham he was a son of the kingdom; his birth according to the flesh settled the whole matter. But this was a grievous mistake, as the aspect of things around would point out. The Spirit of God was at work on souls, and the kingdom whilst connected with birth, was connected with the new birth and not with descent from Abraham according to the flesh. Men were finding that out, and as acted on by the Spirit were taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, being in earnest about it. God's Spirit had then begun to work on souls who could not rest till they entered it. Such was, such is, the character of things as regards the kingdom. But in Luke the Lord speaks of what actually was done in His day: "The kingdom of God is preached," hence the

change in the language, for we never read of the kingdom of heaven being preached. He preached proclaimed — the kingdom of God, and taught about the kingdom of heaven.

Again comparing Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20 we may note the difference, and understand the reason of it. Describing the character of those to whom the kingdom belongs, the Lord speaks of it as the kingdom of heaven, but, telling those before Him of the blessings already theirs, He calls it the kingdom of God, for that was the character of it then existing.

Very guarded then is the language of scripture, and it is well for souls to observe it. This Matthew illustrates. For whilst he so often wrote the words: the kingdom of heaven, he teaches us that there were occasions when, the Lord Jesus Christ could not use it. Disciples were to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), which had come unto Israel (Matthew 12:28), into which publicans and harlots were entering before the chief priests and elders; and from whom, because they rejected Christ it should be taken and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (Matthew 21:31; Matthew 21:43.) These four passages are the only ones in which Matthew has used the term, the kingdom of God, except in Matthew 19:24. In the preceding verse we have the more common term for the evangelist, "kingdom of heaven." And whilst the common text with the majority of MSS. in verse 24 reads, kingdom of God. Lachmann, and Tischendorf, Tregelles and Alford, following Z and many of the fathers, read here also the kingdom of heaven. Whichever reading be preferred, on textual ground, there is nothing to forbid looking at the passage exegetically, the reading of the Dublin rescript from being the faithful preserver of the original form of expression. The hope of Israel was the kingdom in power when Messiah should reign. The angel in his message to the Virgin Mary took cognizance of it (Luke 1:32); the wise men from the East expected it. (Matthew 2:2.) The aged Simeon died in the hope of it. (Luke 2:32.) John the Baptist’s question by his disciples, when in prison proves it. (Matthew 11:3.) All classes were familiar with it. The chief priests and scribes could turn up the scriptures which spoke of it. Andrew a humble fisherman, and the woman of Samaria, and the penitent thief, by their language confirm it. So with Messiah at last really on earth, the appearance of God’s kingdom was looked for as close at hand. To correct this mistake, the Lord spake the parable of the "pounds." (Luke 19:2 :) Yet how deeply engraven this thought was on the hearts of the Jews is evidenced by the question addressed to Him by the disciples in their last moments with Him on earth. (Acts 1:6-9.) Joseph of Arimathaea who buried the Lord waited, we learn, for the kingdom of God; and the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus confided to the stranger, as they thought, the once cherished hopes of their heart, now dashed to the ground by His death. (Luke 23:51; Luke 24:21.) His answer confirmed the correctness of their hopes, and revived the anticipations of the nation’s future blessing. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" His death then, however startling and stumbling to His disciples, is no bar to the accomplishment of the prophecies recorded in the scriptures; for, as Paul taught the assembled multitude in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, the mercies of David would be made sure through the King reigning in resurrection. (Acts 13:34.)

All this however is yet future, though the kingdom exists on earth. What then would characterize the epoch whilst this anomalous condition of matters should last, the kingdom in existence without the king’s power being everywhere really owned? The prophets can tell us nothing about it, so the Lord gave these parables, which are called similitudes of the kingdom to explain it, and they supply the link in the chain, which we should in vain search for elsewhere. Found in Matthew 13:,

18:, 20:, 22:, 25:, Mark 4:1-41 :, Luke 13:1-35 :, they come in each gospel, it should be remarked, only after His rejection by the nation has been unequivocally declared. See Matthew 12:1-50 :, Mark 3:22-30, Luke 11:13 : "Therefore," said the Lord, "every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old:" — "old things," because he can speak of what the prophets predicted; "new," because he can teach what the Lord revealed. Of the parables in the gospels all are not similitudes of the kingdom. Those only are similitudes which have special reference to the characteristic features of the epoch between the Lord's ascension and return in power. Thus the parable of the sower is not a similitude of the kingdom, because it deals with the Lord's work, as the sower of the seed, whilst He was on earth; but the parable of the tares is a parable of the kingdom, because it describes the evils that would be disseminated in the field by the enemy while men slept. So that parable, peculiar to Mark, of the seed cast into the ground, is a similitude of the kingdom of God, because it tells of the crop growing during the absence of Him who sowed the seed. Again the parable of the husbandmen (Matthew 21:1-46 :), is not a similitude of the kingdom, because it only carries us down to the Lord's death, the heir killed, and the announcement of the judgment to be executed on the unfaithful husbandmen; but the parable of the marriage supper, which immediately follows is a similitude of the kingdom, as it treats of events on earth in the kingdom after the Lord's ascension. And these two, placed so close together, and dealing with acknowledged facts in history, the death of the Lord, and the death of His servants afterwards, help a careful student of the word to discern, when what is called the kingdom of heaven really did begin. Other parables there are, such as "the talents," and "the pound," which treat of God's general dealings with men, but are neither of them similitudes of the kingdom (notwithstanding the unfortunate interpolation of the Auth. Ver. in Matthew 25:14); for though they apply to all who shall be in the kingdom, they do not confine themselves to what is characteristic only of the time during the Lord's absence from the earth. That He will return to the earth, having received the kingdom, many of these parables intimate, as they speak of judgments to be executed and rewards to be bestowed. But this event, the ushering in of the kingdom in power, is rather outside their scope, and is treated of fully elsewhere in the book. They suppose it, for responsibility as servants does not cease till the Lord takes the kingdom; but they do not describe His advent, which will not take place till the gospel of the kingdom shall have been preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:14.) This statement, very clear yet much misunderstood, marks at once the difference there must be between the character of the testimony that has been going forth since the Lord's ascension and that which was when He was on earth and will again be ere He returns to reign — "the gospel of the kingdom." This glad tidings He first announced and this glad tidings will again be heard. He preached it in the land of Israel; it shall be preached throughout the whole world among all nations. How this is to be effected we learn in Revelation 14:6, and what the terms of the message are we there read. It is the everlasting gospel or good news, as it speaks of God's kingdom to be at last established in power on earth, to whom all are exhorted to submit, though it differs widely from the gospel or good news of God's grace. The former will be good news because it will proclaim the end of the reign of wickedness and of Satan's meddling with the affairs of earth, and that the reins of power will henceforth be in the hands of the man competent to retain them. The latter is good news, as it tells us of God's plan of salvation for all the lost who believe on His Son Jesus Christ. Since the time when the Lord and His disciples preached the gospel of the kingdom before His

crucifixion, that joyful sound has not been heard. When next it breaks forth, a message from God to a groaning creation and a down-trodden people, from heaven will the tidings fall on the ears of all who will give heed to them. How those in heaven will regard the approach of the epoch, when the Lord shall appear to the world and reign openly, Revelation 11:15-17 discloses. Without one dissentient voice it will be hailed with joy. How creation and God's people on earth will view it, Psalms 95:1-11 : — 100: bring out: "Zion heard and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgment, O Lord," is the simple statement of the Psalmist. And the Spirit, speaking by Isaiah, exclaims, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." (Isaiah 52:7.) Till these days approach, though the gospel of the kingdom will not be proclaimed, the kingdom should have its due place in the teaching and preaching of God's servants. It had a place in the instruction which the first teachers of Christianity gave to their disciples, it should always have a place still.

During the forty days which elapsed between the Lord's resurrection and ascension, the kingdom of God had a prominent place in His teaching. (Acts 1:3.) Philip went down to Samaria and spoke about it. (Acts 8:12.) Paul at Ephesus, at Rome, and elsewhere preached it, and taught the things concerning it (Acts 14:22; Acts 19:8; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:23-31), but always as the kingdom of God and of Christ — terms which must bring before the heart the thought of responsibility. It is God's kingdom, therefore to His will souls should conform and His mind they should seek to discern. Were there contentions and strife about days and meats among the converts at Rome, the apostle would remind them that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17.) Were the Corinthians taken up with gifts and the eloquence of their teachers, the apostle would have them remember, that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." (1 Corinthians 4:20.) And when he has to expose unrighteousness in various forms, he warns them that the unrighteous shall not inherit it (1 Corinthians 6:9); and whereas, some were seeking to persuade them that there was no resurrection of the dead, he would have them know that all the godly must be changed, "for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 15:50.) To the Galatians, and in the Epistle to the Ephesians he has to speak of the same subject; for whether he has to write and reprove those who were slipping away from foundation truth, or is able to unfold the true place of a believer in Christ, the truth concerning the kingdom having to do with the believer's walk on earth finds its proper place in both these letters. (Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5.) The saints of Colosse are reminded of the grace which had delivered them from the power of darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of the Son of His love (chap. 1: 13), though its display in power was and is yet future. The saints at Thessalonica had heard of it, and when in trouble were comforted by the prospect of it. (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5.) Timothy was reminded of it, and the Hebrews received exhortations founded on the hope of it. (2 Timothy 4:1-18; Hebrews 12:28.) James speaks of it (James 2:5); Peter would stir up those to whom he wrote that they might have an entrance into it ministered unto them abundantly (2 Peter 1:11); and John declares that he and the saints in his day had part in it (Revelation 1:9), as all saints have still. At times then they taught about it as in existence, at times they spoke of its manifestation in power which is future, as servants and instructed scribes they knew how to speak of it, and what to teach about it. To enter the kingdom however, and to be found in it when the Lord returns, are very different things. None can enter it now without being born of water and of the Spirit, nor even see it without being born

again, and all who are so born during the time of Christ's absence become inheritors of it. It is the inheritance of God's Son, and God's children will inherit it with Him — "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." But within its range, as it now exists, all manner of evil is found, which at His coming will be gathered out of it (Matthew 13:41); and ever after nothing actively evil will be allowed in it unjudged, though the unconverted will enjoy earthly blessings under His reign, if outwardly obedient to His sway. (Psalm 101:, 18: 44 — margin.) Are the kingdom and the Church then the same, it may be asked? By no means. All who are of the Church inherit the kingdom, but all the heavenly saints will share in it likewise. (Revelation 20:6.) Connected with each there is a hope. The hope of the Church is Christ's descent into the air; the hope connected with the kingdom is the Lord's appearance with His saints. In the kingdom there are ranks, in the Church there are gifts. The rank and reward of each one in the kingdom will be determined by his service, as the catalogue of David's worthies shadows out, and the parable of the pounds clearly intimates. The gifts are bestowed on the Church in accordance with God's sovereign will, and responsibility flows from the possession of them. The place in the kingdom will be determined by the right use of the opportunities afforded and responsibilities discharged. From the kingdom all evil will be put out when the Lord returns; from the assembly evil should be put out by His members on earth whilst He is absent on high. The kingdom awaits an absent Lord, the Church is joined to a head in heaven. A few words in conclusion. Varied are the terms used in scripture when speaking of the kingdom. It is God's kingdom as we have seen, and the kingdom of heaven likewise. It is also the kingdom of God's dear Son, because to Him the rule in it has been committed. It is the everlasting kingdom, because it never will end. The Father's kingdom and heavenly kingdom speak of the heavenly part of it; the kingdom of the Son of man is the earthly portion of it. We learn from the word the commencement of the existence of the kingdom on earth. We learn too when the present form of it will cease. We read in the prophetical portions of the book how it will be displayed in power, and we read too that a time will come when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; but the kingdom will never end. He delivers it up, but it does not terminate. Daniel declares it shall last "for ever, even for ever and ever," and John in the last chapter of the Bible reaffirms it, as he writes "they shall reign for ever and ever." C. E. Stuart.

S. Propitiation

Propitiation. That God could pass over sins, the Old Testament teaches us, and the saints of those days abundantly proved it. That He is righteous in doing so, the New Testament shows, us (Romans 3:21-26); for the blood, sprinkled once on the mercy-seat, vindicates His holiness and His righteousness, and enables Him consistently with all that He is to act in mercy and forgiveness to those on whose behalf it has been put, as it were, under His eye, and on the place of His throne. Hence there are two questions which have to be settled ere the sinner's conscience can be at rest in the presence of God. Can he be forgiven? And on what ground can a holy God exercise His prerogative of mercy and forgiveness? That the offender could be forgiven, if the case admitted of a sin-offering or trespass-offering being brought to God's altar, we have already seen. Now we would consider why, according to the teaching of the divine Word, God could righteously forgive; for nothing short of God's righteousness being manifested in forgiving our sins can really set us at rest before Him. Of old the sinner had a witness of it as he brought his sacrifice to God's altar. (Romans 3:21.) Now that righteousness is fully manifested, "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe." But this leads us on to the consideration of what is called propitiation - a term not met with in the Old Testament, but one with which we are made familiar by the writings of the New Testament. (Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10.)

Now we are not to understand by this that God needed to be propitiated by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to reconcile Him to us. We, not God, needed the reconciliation (Romans 5:10-11; Colossians 1:21-22); and the presence on earth, and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ are a sufficient refutation of such a doctrine. The incarnation, and the atoning death of Christ, both give the lie to it. He came, given by God (John 3:16), and sent by the Father. (1 John 4:14.) It was God, rich in mercy, who for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, quickened us with Christ. (Ephesians 2:4-5.) Of us we read that we are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. God, too, commended His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8.) So wrote Paul, concerning himself, and those who with him shared in the salvation of God. To speak then of propitiating God by sacrifice would be to belie the teaching of revelation, and to deny what He is whom we know as our God. Such a thought would do for a heathen, but not for Christians; and the fact that the heathen have such notions only indicates how utterly man, by the fall and its results, is astray as to all true knowledge of the character and nature of the Divine Being. But if He needs not to be propitiated, and can pass over sins, and forgive them, does He think lightly of them? The death of His Son on the cross, and His being there forsaken of God, when made sin for us, sufficiently shows what is God's abhorrence of sin, whilst the giving up His Son to die for sinners, proves, as nothing else can, the greatness of His love to them. To be propitiated on their behalf He never needed; yet propitiation was requisite, for He can only act in grace consistently with all that He is. And propitiation by blood is the only thing that could meet the case; for blood is the life of the flesh, and by it atonement, of which propitiation forms one element, is made for sins. Propitiation, therefore, had to be made, though

God needed not to be propitiated. The ground had to be laid, on which God would be righteous in accepting a guilty person before Him. For when one thinks of propitiation, we think of that which has to do with God's nature, and God's throne. It is not the meeting of the sinner's need, though that results from it, but the providing that God should be able to act in grace to the sinner, without compromise of anything that He is, that is meant by propitiation. Hence the making it was an act God-ward, not man-ward, and one done in the sanctuary, when the high priest was alone with God. And intimately concerned as Israel were with all that was done on the day of atonement, the first work in the sanctuary had relation to the claims of God's holiness, and not to the need of the sinner. By whom propitiation really has been made, and the abiding value of it, the New Testament teaches us; but in the Old we have traced out for us in type how it was made. To this we would now turn.

There is an order in God's book, and He gives His revelations when and how He pleases, though He does not give a syllabus of the contents of any book, but leaves us to gather that from a study of its pages. So in Leviticus we are first taught the way of approach to God, which is by the death of His Son, and the institution of priesthood and of a high priest who represents the people before the Lord. After that, we learn principles of walk, which should characterize those who are redeemed, typically treated of in the regulations about clean and unclean animals in Leviticus 11:1-47. Then come regulations about defilements, and the rites for purification from them. Then at length we have the revelation about the day of atonement, teaching how sins can be dealt with before God, and uncleannesses likewise. (Leviticus 16:16.) Thus the deeper question, and really the prior one, being the foundation of all that preceded it, is taken up last in order in the book. For God in His goodness to His people shadowed forth the way of approach to Him, and the provisions for those who had sinned or were defiled, ere He set forth on what grounds alone He could be righteous in having them before Him. The whole subject, for it is a great one, is taken up therefore in order, first what man needed, and then what enables God to meet that need. To this last we now come, as far as treated of in the Old Testament in the rites appointed for the day of atonement, in which we have set forth how propitiation is made, and in a clear way too what substitution really is. To the former of these we must for the present confine ourselves. In previous revelations in this book we have met with, as occasion called for it, the Lord's gracious announcement, "It shall be forgiven him" (Leviticus 4:1-35, Leviticus 5:1-19, Leviticus 6:1-30), or "He shall be clean" (Leviticus 12:1-8, Leviticus 14:1-57, Leviticus 15:1-33), according as the matter had reference to sin or to defilement. In Leviticus 16:1-34, we have no such assuring utterances; for we are to learn rather how God's nature is cared for, and all that He is vindicated and satisfied through propitiation by blood.

Death then must take place for propitiation to be made, and a high priest is needed to deal with the blood when taken into the holiest of all. Hence the sinner is wholly cast on the service of another to procure for him a standing before the throne of God, though such service could have no place unless death had previously taken place. Obedience therefore on his part, or devotedness of the highest order, could never procure for him that which as a sinner he needed. Self in no form, under no name or guise, can be of any avail when it is a question of making propitiation. The distance between God and the sinner can never be bridged over, and approach to the throne be permitted to the offender without condign punishment overtaking him, unless another, the high priest accepted by God, has accomplished what he alone can effect inside the veil. We need therefore

the ministrations of another - a priest to care for God's holiness, and make good a standing for us in righteousness before the throne. And as none but the high priest can do that - the high priest, too, of God's appointment (Hebrews 5:4) - those only who are willing to be indebted to the ministrations of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, can share in the propitiation made by Him. But it is propitiation by blood, His blood; for He and He alone is the sin-offering, God's lamb, whose sacrifice God can accept, and, we can add, has accepted. No standing then could there be for any of us before the throne unless the sacrifice for sin had been slain; no standing, too, could there be for any of us unless the blood had been, as the type teaches us, taken within the veil. Those who reject the sacrifice of Christ have no sin-offering on the ground of which they can come to God, and no propitiation can there be made by virtue of which they will be able to stand in the divine presence. Obedience, repentance, devotedness, supplication, none of these can vindicate the claims of God's holiness; none of these can justify Him in freely and fully forgiving the sinner. Now this side of truth is very much forgotten. Man thinks of his sins, and the consequences to himself, and wants those consequences averted; but he forgets, unless divinely taught, that God's nature has to be cared for, and His righteousness in acting in grace made good through propitiation by blood. A high priest was requisite for this, and the Lord instructed Moses about it. In garments of white, indicative of the spotless purity of the Lord Jesus Christ, Aaron went into the holiest once every year with the blood of others; 1:e. of bulls and of goats, the type, but in this falling short (and how short!) of the antitype, who, pure Himself, entered in by His own blood. (Hebrews 9:12.) Not in virtue of His blood, as if He had no right of entry otherwise; but what characterised Him was entrance by His own blood, as that which characterised Aaron was entering in by the blood of others. (Hebrews 9:25.) Inside the veil, with the cloud of incense rising up between Aaron and the mercy-seat, on which the cloud of glory rested, and in which cloud the Lord appeared (Leviticus 16:2), the high priest prepared to do his work, death having already taken place. Now that work was speedily done but how effective was it when done! No prayer was uttered that we read of; no invocation was needed, when the high priest sprinkled of the blood on the mercy-seat and before it. The service was a silent service. All Aaron's eloquence, all his entreaties, could not have added one iota to the merits of the blood; nor could Aaron have understood what was its value and preciousness to Jehovah. Prayer then was not called for; no need was there for one single word to be spoken; for the blood had a voice for God, which He well knew, and could listen to. Aaron therefore first sprinkled of it on the mercy-seat, and then seven times before it. With that his work within the veil was done.

Once was it sprinkled on the mercy-seat, and that was the first act of the high priest. He put it on the throne of God, and where the cherubim, the supporters of His throne, looking down as they did to the mercy-seat, could see it, and gaze on it; and he left it there. This was enough for God. The moment, as it were, that He saw it, the action of the throne, which must otherwise have been going out righteously in judgment, was stayed; and those on whose behalf the blood was brought in, would not be dealt with in judgment as they deserved. The blood of the sin-offering thus put on the mercy-seat, was never wiped off; it remained throughout the year ever before God. Then sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat, the sinner's perfect standing before the throne was assured to him. All this time the people were without; they could not enter the holiest. The high priest alone could, and he did the work there all alone. He did it, and came out; for he was only a type of Him who remains within the holiest, having found eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:12.) The Lord abiding within the heavenly sanctuary assures us of this. This work was never repeated, as long

as the time lasted for which it was made. As typical of the true work of propitiation it was done every year; but its value the last day of that year was just as great as on the first. Now it has been done once for all by the great High Priest, who entered in once into the holy place, having found eternal redemption. Thus God is perfectly glorified, and able righteously to act in grace towards the greatest of sinners. The blood on the mercy-seat bears witness to this. A perfect standing too before the throne is secured for all who believe on the Lord, by His blood, sprinkled, as it were, seven times before it.

Propitiation, then, has been made inside the heavenly sanctuary. Of this we are assured on the authority of the Holy Ghost. He, the Comforter, would come, sent by Christ from the Father, the token that He had gone whither He told His disciples He would go. (John 15:26.) Israel knew it was effected annually for them, as the high priest emerged from behind the curtains which screened the entrance to the holy place. We know it has been made once for all, by the coming of the Holy Ghost to tell us of the perfect and abiding acceptance before God of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Sacrifice and High Priest. The need of it God knew, and has declared. The provision to make it He concerned Himself with, and now that it has been effected tells us of it. God on the throne is perfectly satisfied with that precious blood before Him. But what grace have we part in who share in the result of this! The High Priest, God's Son, has vindicated by His own blood the nature of God, and enabled Him righteously to accept guilty creatures before Him; and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell us of it for our joy, and peace, and confidence of heart before God. What a God, we may well say, is ours! and may indeed exclaim, "Unto thy name be the glory, for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth's sake."

Now this propitiation concerns both sinners and failing saints. It concerns sinners, as they thereby learn that God is righteous in saving such from the judgment they had deserved. It was love, too, which provided for the propitiation to be made; for it has been effected by the blood of God's 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 4:10.) A sacrifice was needed. Blood must be shed, and carried in, as it were, before God. What sacrifice could He accept? What blood would avail? The blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sins. The sinner could not die for himself; but God's Son could, and did die for us. Herein indeed is love. Propitiation made tells us what men are, and what we deserved; but having been made, and in the way in which it has been accomplished, it shows us too what God is. He is love, and He is light. As light He could only act in righteousness, and that is seen in the requiring a sacrifice; whilst love is displayed in providing it. So God on the throne, the Lord Jesus our Sacrifice and High Priest, and the Holy Ghost who declares it, are each seen engaged in the activity of divine love, caring for those who have sinned. Surely we are very little alive to the love which has been thus manifested towards us. Two things, which to man it would have been impossible ever to unite without compromise of either the one or the other, are fully harmonized and displayed in the death of the Lord Jesus, and the propitiation made by His blood - God is light, and God is love. Propitiation then made, and it has been perfectly made, God can deal in grace with any and every sinner. His righteousness has been fully vindicated, and therefore He can justify the ungodly.

Neither the enormity then of a man's guilt, nor the length of his career in sin, are questions which affect the possibility of propitiation being made, though the heinousness of the guilt, and the length of time any, one continued in it, must surely deepen in the heart of the justified one the sense of

the grace in which He shares. But all that has no place at all in determining the question, Can God righteously act in grace? If He is righteous in so dealing with one, He will be equally so in thus dealing with all who now accept His terms; viz., believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the saving of their soul. Hence propitiation is for the whole world (1 John 2:2), not for the sins of the whole world; but it is enough for the whole world, God requiring nothing more than what has been done, to be righteous in saving the whole world, if all were willing to be saved. Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the whole world, the value of His blood before God being all that is needed to deal in grace with the whole world. It speaks to God, and is ever before Him. How this simplifies matters! "Is God able to have mercy on such a wretch as I am?" some one might say. "He is righteous, perfectly righteous, in having mercy," is the answer, the Word given us. Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the whole world. Nothing then is wanting but the sense of need and of guilt in the sinner's heart and conscience, for the acceptance on his part of the salvation proffered him by God. So that which in the book of Leviticus is treated of in the inverse order, we learn about in the New Testament in its proper order. God's righteousness is first met, and then the sinner is evangelized. But saints are concerned with this truth as well. Has failure come in? Has sin been committed? Confession then has to be made. Can God forgive the saint who has fallen, sinned against light, and perhaps in wilfulness; sinned presumptuously? Yes; thank God. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2:1-2.) Our relationship to God never changes, and at such a moment, when the heart most needs it, God assures us of it. We have an Advocate with the Father, One who can always take up our cause and be heard; for He is righteous; One who has ever a place before the throne; for He is Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins. He is the propitiation. It is of what He is abidingly that we are here reminded. Not merely that He was, but He is the propitiation. Hence the value of His blood abides unchanged before God, and the failing saint learns the immense comfort of such a truth, and the reassuring nature of it, as he reads those words by John. God is able righteously to forgive a failing saint, as He was to forgive the sinner at the outset; for propitiation has been made by blood, the blood of His Son. How the need for the death of Christ and the shedding of His precious blood comes out to us. How the need, too, for Him as High Priest to make propitiation, is made plain to us. Without it God could not righteously act in grace, nor the sinner stand before Him. By it He can act in accordance with all the desires of His heart; and the sinner who believes, and the saint when he has failed, both learn something of the value of that work, and together will have cause throughout eternity to bless God for it. C. E. Stuart.

S. Psa_102:1-28.

Psalms 102:1-28. A wonderful psalm is this which has for its subject the intercourse held between the Messiah, our Lord, and God. It tells us what occupied His heart in view of being cut off and having nothing, according to the prediction of Daniel 9:26, even the visitation of Zion by Jehovah in mercy; just as John 17:1-26 : admits us, through His intercourse with the Father there recorded, to an understanding of His desire for His disciples then present, and for all who should believe on Him through their word. And though probably no human ear heard the outpourings of His heart to Jehovah in the words of this psalm, yet as the cry of Psalms 22:1 was really uttered by Him, we may rest assured that the Spirit has here revealed what He felt, and what He made known to Jehovah, together with the wonderful answer vouchsafed Him. Very different is the character of the communication in John 17:1-26 : from this in the psalm. There it is the Son about to leave the world, and to return to the Father, caring for His own who were in it, who had received Him, and through Him the Father; here it is Messiah, about to be cut off, thinking of Jerusalem so soon to be rightly described as the city where their Lord was crucified. As Son of God He speaks of the future before Him — the glory; as man, Messiah, rejected by the people, about to be crucified, He speaks of the future before Him — death. But another feature is introduced in the psalm which we have not in John — the answer of God to the afflicted One, declaring who He is.

It is a wonderful psalm also, if we take into account the period of time it embraces. Commencing from before the time when the foundations of the heavens and the earth were laid, it reaches on to the establishment of Zion, when the Lord shall reign, and yet it does not travel beyond the limits of the life of the One who here as man asks God to hear Him. Of whom then could it speak but of One? For which of the sons of Adam had a past existence before time began, although all will have a future existence when time shall end, except the woman’s Seed? Living between the time of His humiliation, when He passed through what is here described (ver. 3-11), and the day of His glory we may read it, and, by the light which Hebrews 1:10 sheds upon it, find subjects for wonder and praise. But we must admit that the circumstances in view of which it was written, and inserted in the Book of Psalms, are still future. "The time to favour Zion, yea the set time," has not yet arrived; nor can any past event in connection with Jerusalem satisfy the terms employed, however men may try to explain them of the restoration under Cyrus. The set time contemplated in the psalm is yet future. So this prayer of the afflicted has its place in book 4:, which, commencing with Psalms 90:1-17 :, and ending with Psalms 106:1-48 :, is chiefly occupied with the reign of Jehovah over the earth in power, when His throne will be established in Zion (Psalms 99:2), and the earthly people of God with creation will welcome with acclamation the king. (Psalms 95:1-11 : — 98:) And as other psalms which speak of His humiliation — e.g., Psalms 22:1-31 :, Psalms 69:1-36 : — follow those which tell of the glory that comes after (Psalms 21:1-13 : — 68:), so it is here; the celebration of the kingdom set up in power, with the king’s method of government (Psalms 101:1-8 :), precedes the one which tells of His having just been cut off and having nothing. (See Psalms 93:1-5 : — 101:)

Let us now examine it a little more closely. It has a title — "A prayer of the afflicted one when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." We have prayers of David, Psalms 17:1-15 :, Psalms 86:1-17 :, Psalms 142:1-7 :; and a prayer of Moses, etc. Here is a prayer of the afflicted One, greater than Moses, yet the Son of David, of whom Moses and David prophesied, the Mediator and King of Israel. What comfort will it be to godly souls among the remnant to find One who has been in trouble likewise, and whose expression of it describes their condition and circumstances, though they may not exhaust the meaning of His words! Are they well-nigh overwhelmed and think some strange thing has happened to them? This One has been quite overwhelmed. Does death stare them in the face? He has known what this is, yet never once failed to look to God, nor gave up cherishing God's thoughts about that centre on earth so dear to them and to Him. And this prayer tells of a time when it will be made apparent that the Lord looked down from the height of His sanctuary to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death. Surely in this they will find consolation that the groan of the prisoner, the cry of the afflicted, can pierce the very heavens, and reach His ears even in the height of His sanctuary.

Beginning with a request to be heard by Jehovah because in trouble, desiring that His face should not be turned aside from Him, and asking for a speedy answer, the afflicted One proceeds to describe His condition which called out His prayer: "For my days have been consumed as smoke, and my bones have been burned as an hearth. My heart has been smitten and withered like grass, for I have forgotten to eat my bread. Because of the voice of my groaning my bone has cleaved to my flesh. I have resembled a pelican of the wilderness, I have been as an owl of desert places. I have watched and have been as a sparrow alone on the roof. All the day mine enemies have reproached me, and they that are mad against me have sworn by me [i.e., made me the formula of imprecation]; for I have eaten ashes like bread, and I have mingled my drink with my weeping; because of thine indignation and thy wrath, for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." Such was the condition in life He had been and was still in; now the hour for His departure draws nigh. Hence there is a marked change in the language, which the Authorized Version fails to show. "My days are like a shadow stretched out," near their end. What then can He look forward to? "And I shall be withered like grass." Cut off as man, this is what as man He looks forward to. But what of Jerusalem? Is Zion never to be restored? Are the promises never to be made good? Messiah may die, wither as grass; but Jehovah remains the same. He lives for ever. His very name implies that. So He contrasts what is before Him with the eternal existence of Jehovah. "I shall be cut off as grass. But thou Jehovah shalt abide for ever." (Is there not an intentional paronomasia, or play on words, here in the use of Hebrew in verse 11, and Hebrew in verse 12?) "And thy memorial," as God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "to all generations." (Exodus 3:15.) Hence the future of Zion is secured. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will make good His word, for He, the self-existing One, can never pass away. This leads to the other subject of the psalm — the showing mercy to Zion which, as placed in the book, is looked on as close at hand; the present interval during which Zion is disowned being past over, so that the time of Messiah's humiliation, and the day of Jerusalem's joy are closely connected. "Thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come." Had He not made atonement, the time to favour her could never have come. Having accomplished that, when He died on the cross, the ground has been prepared for God's favour to be shown her. And here we are transported by the language of the Psalm to the coming days of Israel's blessedness. The time has come. What makes known that it has arrived? "Thy servants have taken pleasure in her stones, and they favour her dust." The

watchman, the Lord Jesus, according to Isaiah, will sit on her walls to cry for this (Isaiah 62:6) has appeared, and will give Jehovah no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Then, looking forward to the consequences that must ensue from Zion being favoured, the psalmist proceeds: "And Gentiles shall fear the name of Jehovah, and all the kings or the earth thy glory. For Jehovah hath builded Zion, he has been seen in his glory. He has turned to the prayer of the desolate, and has not despised their prayer." Such is the simple statement of the Hebrew, which gives a more consistent interpretation of the idea intended to be conveyed than the Authorized Version presents. It is true what is there said: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the desolate, and not despise their prayer;" but this is not the truth intended to be conveyed in this place. Verses 16, 17 are the direct cause of what is stated in verse 15. The Gentiles will fear His name, for they will see He has built up that city they wished to destroy, and that He is the friend of the destitute whom they have desired to cut off. And all kings shall fear His glory, because it has been displayed. It is as king the Lord will destroy His enemies as David did before He reigns Solomon-like as Prince of Peace. But when He first comes to oppose the nations at Jerusalem, His glory will be displayed. Hence the heathen will fear Him when they see He has interposed in behalf of Zion. But not alone shall the Gentiles fear the Lord; for the people created in the day of His power shall know what He has done, and praise Jah. (Ver. 18.) These doings which call forth their praise of the victorious One, who has interposed on behalf of Zion, His people, are next recounted in verses 19–22. "For he has looked down from the height of his sanctuary, Jehovah from heaven has looked to the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare in Zion the name of the Lord and praise in Jerusalem; when peoples are gathered together, and kingdoms, to serve Jehovah."

Such being the events which will take place because Jehovah abides for ever, and His promises cannot fail to be made good, though Messiah as man be cut off, who is this One who thus speaks as being like the grass which withers away? To this the remainder of the psalm is devoted. "He has weakened my strength in the way, He has shortened my days," He could say: and He adds, "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days. Thy years are throughout all generations." Then comes the answer. He who has cried to God as man is Himself Jehovah the Creator. "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands." Can He then perish? He may, and surely must, die as man according to the counsels of God; but time can make no change to Him. His works may perish, and grow old. "They shall perish, but thou shalt stand; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall pass away. But thou art the same [lit. thyself] and thy years shall not be finished." Cut off in the midst of His days as man, when only half the allotted period to man on earth has been passed through by Him, He is found to be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, the first and the last. He is the Ancient of days. Before time was counted, He was. When it shall end, His years shall not be finished. And just one more revelation completes the subject of the psalm. Shall He abide for ever alone? The answer is given: "The children of thy servants shall abide, and their seed shall be established before thee." What a bright ending to such a dark beginning! I shall be withered like grass, He had said. His years shall never end, is the answer to Him. And more, Jerusalem shall be built, and the heathen fear God, and the children of Messiah’s servants shall abide. Appointed to death they might have thought themselves; but they shall abide, and, as an earthly people, inheriting earthly promises, the provision is annexed of a permanence for their offspring, and that before Him in whose presence alone can true blessing be

found, for "their seed shall be established before thee." C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 77

S. Repentance and the Preaching of It.

Repentance and the Preaching of It. From Genesis to Revelation repentance is from time to time brought before us. At one period of the history it is spoken of God, at another it is urged on man. "The Lord repented that he had made man." "He repented that he had made Saul king." "He repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." These and similar expressions, used of God in the Old Testament, are never found in reference to Him in the New. Twice only in the New Testament is repentance spoken of about God, and both times to express the unchangeableness of what He has done. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29.) "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." (Hebrews 7:21.) With man in the flesh before Him in the Old Testament we can understand such a term used of God. Man's wickedness drew out the expression from the Spirit that God repented He had made him on the earth. His people's miseries, when suffering under His governmental dealings, drew forth the compassion of His heart, and He delivered them; "For it repented the Lord because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." (Judges 2:18.) With the Second man, the Lord Jesus, before Him in the New, and the fragrance of His merits ever fresh in His sight, no room was there for repentance on His part. The time of man's probation had ended; the day of dealing in grace had followed.

Turning to man, repentance in both Old and New Testaments is enjoined on him. Job repented, and the Ninevites also. To Israel urgent but fruitless exhortations to repent were addressed by the prophet Ezekiel. As we open the New Testament we meet with that call repeated. John the Baptist preached it, and the Lord called men to it. The apostles before His crucifixion went out to insist on it, and after His ascension continued to enforce it. At all times after the fall, and under all dispensations, repentance on the part of fallen man was needful. Dispensational teaching does not do away with it; the fullest grace does not supersede it; for, side by side with the proclamation of forgiveness of sins, the Lord Jesus, when risen, commissioned His apostles to preach it. Thus Peter and Paul alike insist on the necessity of it, whilst the Lord Jesus had previously told of the joy which shall be in heaven, and the joy which is now experienced by the angels when one sinner repents and turns to God. A just person needs no repentance, a sinner does. Hence, in the New Testament, where we have principles set forth, and not the mere external acts, the term used of God's repentance is different from that employed when repentance is insisted on for sinners.

Forming then, as repentance does, so prominent a topic in the preaching of the apostles, it may well be a subject for inquiry, how far this element of apostolic preaching enters into the general evangelical teaching of the present day. Amid the now widely spread proclamation of God's grace to sinners, is not repentance sometimes overlooked? Is there not too with some a jealousy lest the preaching of it should detract from the freeness of that grace? Such clearly was not the case in apostolic times, nor should it be the case now. None contended more earnestly or constantly for the freeness and fulness of grace than Paul, yet none more plainly insisted on repentance. At Ephesus (Acts 20:21), at Athens (chap. 17: 30), and when writing to the Romans he spoke of it. (Romans 2:4.) It was God's command to all men. At Damascus, at Jerusalem, in all Judea, and

wherever he went among the Gentiles men could hear him insist on the importance and necessity of it. (Acts 26:20.) Repentance and faith he preached, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not repentance as preparatory to faith, nor faith without repentance; but repentance and faith. But some may ask, What is repentance? Let us turn to scripture to find out. It is not a mere change of mind on certain points (this will confound it with faith); but the Lord preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15.) It is not simply a conviction of having done wrong; for, when the multitude were pricked to the heart, Peter exhorted them to repentance. (Acts 2:38.) It is not sorrow for sin, "for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." (2 Corinthians 7:10.) Nor is it synonymous with conversion; for Peter tells the Jews to "repent and be converted." (Acts 3:19.) But it is a change of mind, a judgment of self, ways, and sins, which is evidenced by a change of life. It is God's gift (Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25) bestowed by the risen and ascended Christ. (Acts 5:31.) It is fruitful; for there are works meet for (worthy of) repentance. (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20.) It gives God His right place in the conscience of His creature, so it is "towards God" (Acts 20:21); and it is "unto life" and "salvation." (Acts 11:18; 2 Corinthians 7:10.) But how was this change of mind wrought in the individual? Not by preaching law. The law could show the sinner he had done wrong, but God alone could give repentance. Saints before the giving of the law experienced it, as well as Gentiles who never were under it. Job saw God and repented; the Ninevites heard the preaching of Jonah about a coming judgment and repented. A judgment to come the apostles often announced. (Acts 3:23; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; Acts 24:25.) The Roman saints heard of it (Romans 1:18), and the Thessalonian believers had escaped it. (1 Thessalonians 1:10.) Peter wrote about it, and Jude quoted Enoch's prophecy concerning it. In view of the wrath to come the apostles urged on souls the importance of repentance. But to Israel there was an additional reason for their repentance, viz., that the times of refreshing should come by the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven. (Acts 3:19.) Nor was it only in view of the future that they preached repentance. They exhorted their hearers to it on the ground of what had taken place. Man had crucified God's Son, and thereby showed his hatred to God. God had replied to man's act by raising up the crucified One, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavens. By this it was plainly seen who it was that had been crucified, and as clearly demonstrated that all who opposed that crucified One, and persecuted those who followed Him, were really opposed to God. Here was a ground on which repentance might well be enjoined, and Peter insisted on it on the day of Pentecost. But how does he address his hearers? Does he speak of God's anger against the people, and dilate on the terribleness of His wrath, and urge them to propitiate the angry Judge? He brings home to many of them the enormity of their guilt, by showing from scripture who the crucified One really was and is. He was the Christ, the hope of Israel. He was the Lord, the ruler of all. God's faithfulness to His promises had been vindicated in the sending of His Son, and this was the way they had treated their long-looked-for Messiah. Believing what he said, accepting the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Peter, they saw what their sin was, and asked what they must do. So in Solomon's porch (chap. 3:), and before the council, the apostles tell them plainly who it is they have crucified, and what God has done for Him. They preached Christ, and God's acceptance of Him, witnessed by His resurrection and ascension. The person of the Lord set forth, their sin was manifested in all its enormity. They scrupled not to state it, and the conviction of it on the hearts of their audience necessitated repentance. Paul, too, bore witness of a glorified Christ, and preached the kingdom of God, which, when received, made repentance needful for all who had opposed the truth of God, or had been

living to please themselves. It was not the thunders of the law that the apostles resorted to on such occasions. They told of God and of Christ. They preached the Lordship and Christship of Jesus. They began with God and His Son, and thus penetrated to the inmost soul of their hearers. Is not this the way to be successful now? Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans. Paul preached the kingdom of God, and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, in his hired house at Rome. God's gospel he proclaimed, which is the power of God unto salvation. And here another feature in their preaching may be noticed. They presented the Lord Jesus as God's provision for the need and desires of the soul. In this they followed the example of the great Teacher Himself. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away," is the Holy Spirit's delineation by the virgin Mary of God's manner of acting amongst men. To the hungry the Lord offered Himself as the true manna, to the thirsty as the giver of living water, to the weary and heavy laden He offered rest, to the blind He could give sight, and to the sheep He was the Shepherd. All in whose souls there was a desire for what the world could not supply found in Him the answer to the craving of their heart. In a similar manner the apostles presented Him to individuals or congregations. In the house of Cornelius at Caesarea, in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, in the prison at Philippi, Christ was presented as God's remedy, and God's full provision for the fallen children of Adam. The Gentiles heard of forgiveness of sins through faith in Him. The Jews were instructed in the way of procuring a perfect justification, which the law never had provided, and never could. At Philippi, Paul spoke of salvation, but to one who was anxious about it. They ministered God's grace as was suited to exercised souls. If they spoke to an individual of salvation, it was because the heart was exercised about it. If they preached to a congregation, they pointed out it was for a class — for those who wanted it. Take the different sermons in the Acts. At Pentecost, it was the question of the heart-pricked ones which elicited the way of forgiveness. In Solomon's porch, forgiveness is assured to all who repent. The Son of God has been sent first to Israel; but those only who repented would know forgiveness of sins. To Cornelius and his company, the Lord is presented as the object of faith, by whom souls could get forgiveness. At Antioch in Pisidia, forgiveness is preached to all, and a perfect justification through faith in Him. At Lystra, God is proclaimed as the Creator, and the giver of all temporal blessings. At Athens the unknown God was revealed, and the future judgment announced. To Jews and Gentiles God's grace was preached; to the heathen God was revealed. But is it not the case that God's grace was preached as meeting something the heart needed? Faith in Christ is clearly set forth as the way of salvation and forgiveness; but the manner of its announcement supposes an exercised heart, a needy soul. How different is Paul's language to the jailor, from his speech to the careless multitude in the Areopagus! The jailor has his question answered; the Athenians are informed of the unknown God, and warned of the coming judgment. Where there was a need already, the apostles ministered to it; where it did not exist, they attempted to create it by preaching about God and about Christ, The kingdom of God, the gospel of God, the person, the work of Christ and its results, they set before their hearers.

Such a method of preaching did then, and always will, lead to a deep and lasting work. Should faith in Christ be regarded simply as a means of getting to heaven? There is no other way surely. But is not the gospel rather to be regarded as a divine remedy for the fearful results of sin; and God's method of deliverance and relief for souls acted on by His Spirit? A remedy, yet more, far more, than a remedy; for it tells us of more than deliverance from wrath. Still it is God's way of meeting what man needs, and is intended for those who have felt that need. It is not an easy road

to heaven, but a way of escape from the deserts of sin. For the cross of Christ tells us what sin is in God's sight; it shows what the deserts of sin are; it manifests what the love of God and of Christ is, and what has been provided for sinners. That the gospel of God's grace is preached with a fulness and freeness, to which the world has long been a stranger, is a matter for deep thankfulness. All should rejoice that in the nineteenth century the message of the evangelist is again heard in its clearness and simplicity. But in all recovered truth there is a tendency, from man's infirmity, and the desire to give due prominence to the truth recovered, so to magnify it that its relation to other parts of divine revelation is in danger of being overlooked. Has not God's grace been sometimes so preached as almost to overlook the need of repentance; and the offer of salvation been presented as what all may partake of without the conscience being aroused, and the heart exercised as to the need and cause of this rich and wonderful provision of God for the display of His glory, and the deliverance of sinners from the wrath to come? C. E. Stuart.

S. Rev_7:1-17.

Revelation 7:1-17.

(To the Editor of the Bible Treasury) Dear Mr. Editor, An interesting question arises out of Revelation 7:1-17 : Let me clear the way a little before I put the question. I take for granted that the church has been taken up; I take for granted that chapter 7: is not a continuance of the historic sequence in Revelation, but rather an episode between the sixth and the seventh seal, in which God, in His loving kindness, lifts, as it were, the veil a little, to let us know that, when the sore judgments are about to come, His own amongst both Israel and Gentile nations are safe. How could it be otherwise? "In the time of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall He hide me."

Israel and the Gentiles are the next point to clear up. I take then for granted that in verses 4–8 the twelve tribes mean the twelve tribes — Israel literal. I can neither understand those who say that they mean the "Israel of God" (meaning thereby the christian church), nor can I feel that there is any weight in the references which they give in support of this opinion. I think that they are given under a misapprehension of Matthew 25:31-46, supposing this to be the last judgment; from not being aware that there will be a "new Jerusalem" earthly, and a "new Jerusalem" heavenly; and lastly, (which I mention last to attract notice, as I believe it to be the secret of the misinterpretation of the whole book of Revelation from chapter 4: 1, to 22: 21) that the church is in heaven when chapter 7: comes before us. I do not think that the expression "Israel of God" (see Alford, in loco) is ever used for the Gentile christian church. Galatians 6:16, is adduced in proof of it. I will not now occupy your space in discussing the point further, than to say, that, even granting for a moment that this expression in Galatians 6:1-18 : does mean the christian church (which I do not admit), we cannot take one isolated expression against the weight of the universal testimony of Old and New Testaments against it. These say that Zion is Zion, Jerusalem is Jerusalem, and Israel, Israel. But however this may be, in Revelation 7:1-17 :, it strikes me as impossible, for the plainest reasons, to use it in any such sense, as, in that case, verse 9 would be a mere needless repetition of verses 1–8. Verses 4–8 is literal Israel; verse 9 the Gentiles; verse 11, the church, as we have it always in this book represented by the twenty-four elders.

I take then for granted, first, that the church has been taken up; second, that verses 4-8 are the expression of God’s providential care of the elect of Israel; third, verse 9, the same care of Gentiles (other than the risen saints) brought to the Lord by the ministry of restored and converted Israel(?) under the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in larger measure than on the day of Pentecost. I say, assuming these three several points — (though I do not see my way clear in the third except that verse 9 are Gentiles,) I say, assuming these several points, does not all the above indicate that the time between the raising and taking up of the saints and the destruction of Antichrist and his host, must be larger than we (I at least) have generally supposed it to be? This Revelation 7:1-17 : is, in historic sequence, previous to Revelation 19:1-21 : Revelation 19:1-21 : makes way for the millennium. Matthew 25:31-46 is the judgment of the nations (other than apostate

Christendom) as to having received or rejected the testimony of Israel in behalf of the Lord Jesus.

I would ask then, when does the mission of converted Israelites to the Gentiles take place, and for how long carried on? I beg particularly to say, that I do not put this question as of any doctrinal importance, and think that every dear saint may be quite ignorant of the matter — or, having crossed his mind, he may not have come to any conclusion about it — or, having come to one, it may be contrary to one's own; I say this the rather, because I think it of very great importance that we should not make brethren offenders for any details of the kind, however interesting they may be. Yet still, at the same time, as a clear understanding of this matter would tend to clear up several points mentioned in that wonderful and blessed book, the Apocalypse, I should be glad of information on the subject. After the church has been taken up, and when Antichrist appears, I believe that the two tribes (previously restored but in unbelief, the temple built and city inhabited) will receive Him as Messiah, at the beginning of "the week," that is, seven years. He will, in the course of the week, set up idolatry in the temple. The Jews spurning this, He will turn against them; the slaughter of Zechariah will take place to prevent their entire destruction, Messiah appears, delivers them, and destroys the host of Anti-christ, consigning the leader to the lake of fire. During their seven years, I believe there will be Gentile believers and a Jewish godly remnant, many of whom will be martyred. I believe that, after Antichrist is consigned to the lake of fire, Israel, converted, will be the instrument of conversion to the nations. But when will "the great multitude which no man could number of all nations, kindred, peoples, and tongues "be brought to the Lord? The solution of this will clear up other matters to my mind, which I do not at present see clearly. X. Y.

{1873 271 The querist writes that in the third paragraph (p. 255), there should be neither "chapter" nor "xx.," nor "chapter 20:" again repeated, nor "chapter 10:," nor "chapter 10:" again repeated. In the next paragraph "third, verses 4–9," ought to be verse 9, and (p. 250) "chapter 10: 9 "ought to be simply verse 9, reading "his" for "her" three lines after. The sentence most affected should run thus: "verse 9 would be a mere needless repetition of verses 1–8. Verses 4–8 is literal Israel; verse 9 the Gentiles; verse 11 the church, as we have," etc.} Answer To "X. Y." OnRevelation 7:1-17.

1873 302 Dear Mr. Editor, The points to which "X. Y" draws attention in his letter in the April number of "The Bible Treasury" are very interesting. A work of God, not bounded territorially by the limits of Christendom, will take place upon earth after the church has been removed from this scene, a work prolific in fruit among Gentiles, and unequalled, as regards the area over which it will spread, by all the efforts of Christians from Pentecost to our day; though falling far short, in the blessings souls will thereby enjoy, of the privileges, the hopes, and the portion of those now called out from both Jews and Gentiles to form the bride of Christ and to know, whilst on earth, what it is to be sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

Two questions arising out of the consideration of this subject "X. Y." asks in your columns, the one, as to the time requisite for this immense work to be accomplished; the other, as to the agency employed to effect it.

First, as to the time. Of the seventy weeks or heptads which we learn from Daniel 9:24 were to intervene between the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, and the entrance of Israel into their final blessings under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Messiah,

sixty-nine had run out before the Lord had been cut off by death upon the cross. But do we ever read that only seven years will elapse between the rapture of the church and the Lord's return in power to effect the deliverance of His earthly people? Are there not on the other hand indications in the word which would lead us to conclude that a longer period of time will elapse between the two above mentioned events than one heptad of years? For the beast (the prince who shall come of Daniel 9:1-27 :) who will confirm a covenant with the Jews for one week, or heptad, and will break it in the middle of it, rises up (as we learn from Revelation 13:1) out of the sea: a figure, is it not? of a troubled and abnormal condition of things on the Roman earth, the result perhaps of the providential judgments of God described under the first four seals, when peace will be taken away from the earth. What length of time then will elapse between the rapture of the saints and the rise of the beast out of the sea is, I believe, veiled from us; and what interval of time there will be between the rise of the first beast and that of the two-horned beast (the false prophet and the Antichrist), out of the earth, is also (am I not right?) a period of time unmeasured for us in the word. Taking then these things into account, there are surely grounds to make us slow to conclude that a very short time only will elapse, after the church's departure, before the Lord is seen coming in the clouds of heaven. But, if on this point we can only speak of probabilities, we can say (I believe on the authority of the word) that that whole epoch cannot be a long one; for we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 that divine vengeance will overtake souls on earth, at the Lord's return with His saints, who have not obeyed the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, an intimation surely that the mass of those who will have been proved by the rapture to be professors only in name will still be alive upon earth, when He shall be revealed from heaven, forming that class described in Revelation as the dwellers (Revelation 3:10; Revelation 6:10; Revelation 8:13; Revelation 11:10; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8) and sitters upon earth. (Revelation 14:6.) Whilst then scripture clearly bars the thought of any extended duration of time during which the work amongst the Gentiles will be carried on, the fruits of which we read in Revelation 7:1-17 :, there seems surely just ground to forbid us limiting it to one heptad of years. But how are these Gentiles to be taught, and when? And first, who are they? They "come out of the great tribulation [for so we should read], and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." A description this is, general in its character, bearing testimony to their walk, and their preservation through the fierce time of trial, here called the great tribulation; but predicating nothing of any particular testimony borne by them against special evils which will be rife in those days, though they will be contemporaneous with the beast, the false prophet or antichrist, and the king of the north of Daniel, the Assyrian of Isaiah. Others, as the two witnesses of chapter 11: and the company on the sea of glass of chapter 15:, will have stood out as witnesses for God and the Lord Jesus against the idolatrous worship of the beast; but these seem to be the fruits of a wider work among Gentiles, gathered out of every nation, and of kindreds, and of peoples, and of tongues, monuments of God's upholding grace throughout the great tribulation and preserved alive on earth at its close, as the term "come out of" would seem to imply, and the description of their blessings would surely intimate. And, just as there will be a sealed company made up from all the tribes of Israel, of whose special service in testimony we read nothing (a company distinct from that of the 144,000 of Jews who will stand with the Lamb on mount Zion, chap. 14:), so, judging from the description of these Gentiles given by the elder, and from the place in the book in which they are introduced, may we not regard them as the result of a general work among Gentiles throughout that whole epoch, apart from any special testimony borne by some, or the service

rendered by others (for example, those in Matthew 25:1-46 : who will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world)? But how can this work be effected? I would suggest that, looking at them as connected with no special testimony of that day we have indications in the Book of Revelation of instruments by whom such a work might be carried on. For no sooner will the church be removed than God will begin to work afresh in grace in this sin-defiled world. The earliest intimation of this we have in Revelation 5:1-14, in the fact of the elders in heaven having golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints then in trial on earth. Again in chapter 8: we have mention of the prayers of saints on earth in trial, which, taken up by the angel, are answered by judicial dealing with men upon earth. And before that scene at the golden altar we read in Revelation 6:9-10 of souls which have already been slain for their faithfulness to God after the rapture of the church. Thus God had evidently been working, and from the answer given to the souls under the altar He would continue to work, till their brethren, that is, Jews, and their fellow servants (may not these be Gentiles?) which were to be slain, as they were, should be fulfilled. I submit then that with these scriptures before us we have indications of the existence of agencies by whom such a work may be carried on.

Other points of interest raised by the consideration of the question proposed by "X. Y." might, I think, with profit be discussed, but as the space in your journal, as well as the patience of your readers, is not inexhaustible, I forbear to suggest them, and will conclude with one remark; namely, the illustration we have in chapter 7: of the difference between standing openly on the ground of redemption accomplished, and the being dealt with in grace on the ground of the atoning work of Christ. As standing nationally on the former ground the preservation of the company from each of the twelve tribes is announced before they enter on their tribulation; whereas Gentiles, who have not that ground nationally before God, are only seen by the prophet, as preserved, after their time of tribulation is over. The grace is the same in both cases; but, God’s purpose about the nation having been previously made known, their future can be declared beforehand, whereas it is the preservation of the Gentiles which manifests God’s purpose about them. C. E. Stuart.

S. Ritualism and Christianity.

Ritualism and Christianity.

1874 232 etc. The epistle to the Hebrews throws great light on the question of ritualism so rife in our days. In the first epistle to the Corinthians is found the christian man's directory for public worship, and the second chapter of the first epistle to Timothy contains apostolic instructions for those who meet together for prayer. No thought have we in the word that assemblies, or churches, have power to decree rites and ceremonies in connection with public worship, nor are individuals at liberty to choose for themselves how they will approach their God. What might be wrong at one time may be right at another. What is suited for a former dispensation may not, in God's mind, be in harmony with the character of a later one. It was wrong for Cain to draw near with the fruits of the ground and not with a lamb like his brother Abel. Yet in after ages the children of Israel were enjoined to present their basket of first-fruits. (Deuteronomy 26:1-19 :) An offering of the fruits of the ground was not wrong in itself, else Israel never would have been commanded to present it; but of the time, and the occasion for its presentation God, not man, was to be the only judge. Again, before the giving of the law there was no distinction, that we read of, between a burnt-offering and a sin-offering; but after God had communicated to Moses that elaborate ritual, which is often called by the lawgiver's name, no one in Israel would have ventured to follow the example of Job by offering a burnt-offering on behalf of those who had sinned. The sole authority however for this change from patriarchal practices was the Lord's revelation to Moses. (Leviticus 4:1.) It was right of Job to offer burnt-offerings for his sons, when he thought they had sinned. It would have been utterly wrong in an Israelite thus to have acted. Job too was free to offer for his children; but each one in Israel had to bring his offering for his own sin, when the law enjoined it, if divine forgiveness was to be assured to him. So what Cain ought not to have brought certainly without a lamb, the children of Israel were commanded to put in a basket, that it might be set by the priest, unaccompanied by any sacrifice, before the altar of the Lord their God. On the other hand, what Job was free to do, would have been disobedience if attempted by any of the children of Israel; and no plea, based on the antiquity of the custom, nor urged on the ground of patriarchal usage, would have availed before God, when once the different laws as regards sin-offerings and burnt-offerings had been communicated to His people. For God was the sole judge of what was fitting for His creatures to do in connection with worshipping Him.

Now this always holds good. And ever since He has been pleased to give His people a written revelation, He has set forth in that word both how He would be worshipped, and the characteristic features of such a service.

Before the giving of the law heads of families acted as priests, officiating, as need might require or desire might stimulate, at the altars reared up by them, wherever in the laud they might sojourn. Thus at Shechem, at Hebron, at Beersheba, at Bethel the patriarchs reared up altars, and sacrificed on them. No one place in the land was regarded as their sanctuary; wherever they were, if so minded (Genesis 12:8), they could erect an altar, and sacrifice thereon. Nor was this confined

to the eldest male line of Abraham's descendants. Job acted in a similar way in his family, and Jethro filled that office, it would seem, among his people. (Exodus 2:16.) By the law however all this was changed for Israel, and for those who might cast in their lot with them. A regular order of priesthood was established, restricted to the family of Aaron, and one altar only was recognised, whereon the sacrifices and the offerings of the people could normally be laid. (Leviticus 17:1-16 : Deuteronomy 12:5-6.) Altars and sacrifices had been resorted to from the beginning, now an order of priesthood and a sanctuary were duly appointed by God, with a ritual of divine institution which continued in force till after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. By His death the house at Jerusalem was left desolate (Matthew 23:38), for never after His resurrection did the Lord enter the temple. He was seen upon earth, He was met with, handled, conversed with after He had risen, but only by His own disciples, whether in Jerusalem or in Galilee. The Mosaic ritual was but a shadow, the substance had now appeared. Types had found their antitype. Things figurative were to give way before that which they prefigured. The pattern or type, shown to Moses in the mount, was to be a substantial reality for the true children of Abraham. The holiest of all in the most complete sense had been entered by the High Priest, who was greater than Aaron, and the people whom God now owned were to go forth unto Christ without the camp. But how were they to go? As exiles carrying with them all that they had once valued, their worship, ritual, priesthood, and sanctuary? or as a people going forth to meet the Lord, to learn what He had to say to them? The epistle to the Hebrews gives us the answer to this question, as it traces out characteristic features common to Judaism and Christianity, and at the same time draws attention in the most pointed way to the marked differences between them.

Now there were four things in connection with the Levitical ritual of which the Jews could boast, namely, a high priest, a sanctuary, a sacrifice, and an altar. Four things are there of which Christians can make mention, a High Priest, a sanctuary, a sacrifice, and an altar. At first sight then it might be thought that Christianity was but a development of Judaism, and that the ritual, given to Israel through Moses, might fitly be regarded as in some measure a pattern for the order and character of Christian worship. Now this is what has really taken place, and sanction has been sought for ritualistic ways and sacerdotal dresses from God's commands in the Old Testament scriptures, men little thinking that such ideas, when carried out, result in the denial of verities of the faith. But some may ask, Are we wrong, when we venture to copy what we find in the word as expressly authorised by God? The answer is simple. Scripture truth may be misused so as to undermine Christian doctrine. Of this the Galatians are a notable example, and the epistle addressed to them exposes the fallacy of such a position. They were right in the thought that they must be connected with Abraham, but they were wrong in the way they attempted to secure it. Their teachers insisted on their submitting to the rite of circumcision, enjoined by God on Abraham and his descendants, and on their observance of the law given by God to Moses, if they wished to be saved. Such grounds doubtless to the uninstructed must have appeared unassailable, and scriptural. The apostle showed them, and teaches us, that such doctrines really subverted the Christian faith. Christ could on such terms profit them nothing. They had fallen from grace. The appeal then to scriptural practices of a former age may be a most dangerous thing. The way of worship before the introduction of Christianity is not of necessity any guide to the true way of worship new, nor can the scriptural expressions of a liturgy make that liturgy scriptural in itself. For our worship to be scriptural we must worship God in spirit and in truth, that is, in accordance with His nature, and in conformity with the revelation which He has vouchsafed us. This, be it

remembered, was the Lord’s deliverance about worship, when questioned by the woman at the well. The claims, put forth by the Samaritans for Gerizim over Jerusalem, He set aside in the most absolute way. But whilst vindicating the claim of the temple at Jerusalem, He announced the change which was to take place. Jewish worship was inseparably connected with the house and the altar. The divine sanction for what then went on at Jerusalem, viz., the observance of the Mosaic ritual was here (John 4:1-54 :) expressly given, though the Shechinah had never illuminated the oracle of Herod’s temple, nor had fire from heaven ever burnt on the altar of stone which occupied the place of the old altar of brass. The Lord however intimated the change that was at hand, and unmistakeably declared, that the closest association would be maintained between God’s revelation and the new character of worship. Not that this in itself was anything new. It has always held good, that men could only worship God acceptably, as they worshipped Him in strict conformity with the revelation vouchsafed to them. It was this principle which Cain ignored, but to which Abel conformed. And we all know with what result.

Now a characteristic feature of Judaism was this — there was a remembrance again made of sins every year. (Hebrews 10:3.) A characteristic of Christianity is this, that by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14.) Perfection is a marked feature of the latter, imperfection stamps itself indelibly on the former. (Hebrews 7:11; Hebrews 7:19, Hebrews 9:9, Hebrews 10:1.) To mingle the two is to spoil both. To graft spiritual worship on Jewish rites is to surrender the foundation truths of the faith. The distinctive features of Christianity are thereby lost sight of by the soul, and the preparative character of the Mosaic ritual, leading men to look forward to a sacrifice to be offered up, is obliterated from the mind. What was meant to give way before the full light of truth is in principle stereotyped, as suited for our day; and the testimony to the finished work of Christ and its results is denied, or at all events beclouded, when the renewal of the offering of the Lord’s sacrifice in some shape or other is deliberately taught, and distance from, instead of nearness to, God in the holiest is insisted on as the right position of true Christian worshippers. That the law had a shadow of good things to come is true, but the scripture which tells us this adds, "it was not the very image of the things." (Hebrews 10:1.) Jewish rites and ceremonies were shadows of things to come, "but the body is of Christ," wrote the apostle Paul to the Colossians (Colossians 2:17). None certainly had been more zealous for Judaism than he; but when taught of the Holy Spirit, he made known that the ritual given to Israel could not even foreshadow all that would be found in Christ. "The body is of Christ." Ho does not say, it is Christ, for there is more in Christ than the rites and ceremonies of the law could set forth. Yet the law had a shadow of these things. It did teach the offerer, as he stood by the altar of burnt-offering, that he wanted an altar and a sacrifice to deal with the question of his sins; and year by year, as the high priest entered within the veil, the people learnt the need of propitiation by blood, of a sanctuary too, and of a High Priest. Thus it proclaimed loudly and clearly what man required, though it never could provide him with the real and abiding remedy. It was a shadow as it had a sanctuary, an altar, a sacrifice, and a priesthood. It was not the very image of the things, since, though it had features resembling those of Christianity, the contrasts between the two are found to be great, distinct, and unmistakeable. And first as to the high priest. The Jews could point to God’s revelation as the warrant for Aaron and his successors, when duly consecrated, to discharge the duties of their office. (Exodus 28:1; Exodus 29:29-30; Numbers 18:7.) They did not seek the office; God chose Aaron and restricted the priesthood to him and to his house. So they entered on it, not only with divine sanction, but by divine appointment. Christians in their turn could speak of the

High Priest of their confession (Hebrews 3:1), who, like Aaron was appointed by God to His office, but differing from Aaron was marked out for it beforehand in the word, and was made God's High Priest with an oath. Each then could speak of a High Priest selected by God, and inducted into the office by express divine authority. Yet how marked was the difference! The Aaronic priesthood was successional, for the individuals among them could not continue by reason of death. The Lord, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Men which had infirmity were by the law constituted priests. By Jehovah's oath since the law a Son, perfected forever, is the High Priest whom God now owns. Aaron as a sinner had to offer up sacrifices for himself as well as for the people, needing atonement himself as much as they did. The Lord did this once for all, when He offered up Himself, His acts and His offering both proclaiming His spotless sinless nature. "He offered up Himself!" A unique, a perfect sacrifice. Differing then from Aaron, as having an unchangeable priesthood, and as having offered a sacrifice — Himself, such as neither Aaron nor his sons could have offered, He is proved to be superior to him in His person and by His position. Aaron was brother to Moses, who was a servant in God's house, over which house is Christ as Son. Greater He is than Moses, and for greater than Aaron, who was punished for speaking against his brother. But more than this. Where Aaron never was, and none of his seed ever will be, the Lord Jesus is at this present moment, — namely, seated on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. Aaron and his sons had their place at God's altar, and in God's sanctuary. The Lord, who as High Priest has entered the true tabernacle, has His place at the right hand of God. Again, Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, the Lord was of the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Now this difference between them is one of immense importance, and we are called upon in the epistle to the Hebrews so to view it, not indeed because it settles the question of tribal precedence, though, when Judah rose into pre-eminence through David's exaltation to the throne, the priesthood, which had held the first place in the days of Eli, settled into a position politically considered second to that of the throne from which it never emerged. But the conclusion drawn from the priesthood of the Lord is this, "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." (Hebrews 7:12.) A change radical in its nature has been thereby introduced. With this scripture before us are we to turn to the Levitical ritual as the pattern, by which as a matter of course we should order the externals of Christian worship? Should not such a decided statement of the sacred writer arrest the attention of the reader, and lead him to search in the word for light on God's mind about worship in our day? "The priesthood being changed." Then is it so certain that God now sanctions, what He established in Israel, a special class amongst His people to be looked at as a holy priesthood? If a change in the law has been made, does that change affect the form and character of worship now? These are serious questions. But they inevitably arise out of this distinct enunciation of the Holy Ghost. And surely that man is not wise, who would regard such questions as of secondary importance, or refuse to examine them in the light of God's revelation. For, if one knows what the Lord as High Priest has done for His people, having found an eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12, Greek), the inability of the law to make anything perfect comes out in redoubled clearness. The recurrence of its ceremonies told of this; but the entrance of the Lord Jesus into the holy place once for all, not by the blood of bulls and of goats but by His own blood, having found eternal redemption, by its contrast confirms it. Distance from God, both of the rest of the tribes of Israel, and of the Levites who ministered to Aaron and his sons, was their position under the Aaronic priesthood. (Numbers 18:3-4; Numbers 18:22.) We on the contrary come unto God by our

High Priest. (Hebrews 7:25.) Would a ritual then, instituted by God for those who were to be kept at a distance from Him, befit those who are allowed on the contrary to draw nigh to Him? Surely men have taken that for granted which needs, if it can, to be substantiated. "Christ suffered once the just for the unjust to bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18.) By the law all were reckoned strangers in the sanctuary but Aaron and his sons. (Numbers 16:40.) Are Christians reckoned strangers in the sanctuary? Hebrews 10:19 emphatically answers — No. Then let them see to it, that they act not as such by putting a class of people between themselves and God, to whom they have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. A holy priesthood is the designation of all Christians. (1 Peter 2:5.) To draw nigh unto God, having access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father, is our privilege now. (Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 7:25; Ephesians 2:18.) To enter into the holiest is a favour granted to us now. (Hebrews 10:19.) What Israel as a nation never were, nor will be; what they never could do individually; and where they never will be, even in millennial times, as Ezekiel 44:15, Ezekiel 46:1-9 distinctly states — all that is ours now who believe through the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our privilege, our position, our character differing thus widely from that of Israel, are we without divine warrant to assume, we may well ask, that Christian worship should be moulded on a Jewish form? The teaching of scripture about the sanctuary will help us in determining this question. To that let us next turn.

Till the national redemption of Israel had been effected we never read of a sanctuary in connection with the worship of God. The patriarchs had their altars, the worshippers of idols had already their temples; but a sanctuary erected on earth for God was, till after the Exodus, a thing unknown and unthought of. Redemption accomplished, a sanctuary was to be provided. "I will prepare him an habitation sang Moses and Israel, when the bursting of the Egyptian fetters from off their hands was fresh in their minds. (Exodus 15:2.) "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them," was God’s gracious intimation some months later that He acquiesced in their desire. (Exodus 25:8.) Thus Israel were allowed to share in the work of erecting it, but the designs, measures, and pattern of it were all revealed by God. Moses was to make all things after the pattern, or type, shown to him in the mount (Exodus 25:40, Exodus 26:30), as David had revealed to him all directions about the house, which Solomon subsequently erected. (1 Chronicles 28:11-19.) The Jews then could speak of a tabernacle ordered in all things according to the mind of God, which He had once graciously inhabited, and of a house very magnifical, of which in the most public manner the Lord Jehovah had taken possession. We can understand therefore how appeals might have been made to Christians in early days not to forsake that sanctuary which they had owned, and that rightly, as God’s house. One can fancy an earnest conscientious Jew, like Saul of Tarsus, reminding the perverts (as he in his blindness would think them) of God’s communication to Moses respecting the setting up of the tabernacle, and how such an one might plead with them not to turn their backs on that house in which Jehovah at the time of its first dedication had vouchsafed to dwell. Where else in the world, he might say, can you find a tabernacle or a temple erected by God’s authority, and to which His people should turn? How clear too the matter might seem to him, that God had owned but one house and had enjoined the erection of but one tabernacle. Were they wiser than Moses? Were they better instructed than David or Solomon? With what confidence in the strength of his position would he await their reply! How could they answer such an appeal? Had God no longer a sanctuary? Were His people now without one? By no means. And the Christian could turn the scriptures against his interrogator, by reminding him that God had another sanctuary of which Moses had a view in the mount. The

earthly sanctuary was the antitype (Hebrews 9:24), the heavenly one was the type, tupos (Hebrews 8:5), the true tabernacle, not made with hands, which the Lord pitched, and not man. Whatever then the Jew might think of the earthly sanctuary and however much the Gentile might admire the magnificence of the temple at Jerusalem, it was through a greater and more perfect tabernacle than Aaron ever traversed that the Lord Jesus Christ, as High Priest, has passed right up to the throne of God. (Hebrews 4:14.) Would any remind the Christian of the antiquity of the house? It was but the shadow and antitype, he could reply of what Moses had seen before the tabernacle was in existence. Neither the place of its antiquity therefore, nor its erection by God's express commands, could unsettle in the slightest degree the Christian who had learnt from scripture or apostolic teaching the ground on which he had through grace taken his stand. For attention to the Old Testament scriptures would remind him of the true tabernacle above, and the teaching of the New Testament would enable him to withstand all persuasion to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the one on earth.

They had, indeed, to break off all connection with the temple ritual and holy places on earth, but only to find the type of all that with which they had been familiar from their childhood far better than the anti-type, inasmuch as it had become to them, though not visible to mortal eyes, a substantial reality. They could surrender all share in the worship carried on in the earthly house, and joyfully submit to excommunication by their countrymen, and perhaps an enforced separation from their home, their kindred, and their acquaintance. They needed no longer to wait for the high priest to come out of the holy of holies on the day of atonement to know of their acceptance by God, for they could enter themselves with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. None but the high priest could penetrate behind the veil in the sanctuary on earth. Through the rent veil, into the holiest, it was given to them to pass, and there to worship. The earthly order of things maintained a veil unrent, and the way into the holiest not made manifest. They knew that by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ all that had been changed, the veil had been rent, and through it they now passed into the presence-chamber of their God. What a change in their position was this! What advantages had they over the adherents of Judaism! Could the character, then, of service appointed for those connected with the earthly tabernacle suit those who now worshipped in the heavenly? Would the language of one who knew not the veil was rent, nor that permission to enter the holiest had been accorded, be the same as that of the man who knew, and consciously enjoyed, the privilege of entrance through the rent veil? Impossible. The latter would be giving thanks for that for which the former would be waiting. Expectancy might characterize the one; acceptance would be known by the other. In Exodus and Leviticus we learn what befitted those who were never to enter the holiest. From the Lord's action at the institution of His supper, we are taught what is the language suited for Christians, and what should be the feelings of their heart, for He instituted a service wholly eucharistic, and unlike anything which had been known by His people on earth. For the character of christian worship we first learn about from His conversation with the woman at the well, and the form of it He Himself has taught us, when, with the bread and wine before Him, He gave thanks. No prayer was wanted to consecrate the elements, no sound of trumpet or cymbal was heard to make that eucharistic service thus instituted more impressive; for the outflow of a thankful heart was what God would accept, and the melody of the human voice was the only music that was requisite.

What a change was this! From the days of Abel, till the Lord Jesus died, an altar of stone, of metal, or of earth, was an indispensable requisite for the acceptable worship of God's saints. Not only had the patriarchs their altars, but the returned remnant, before they were in a position to rebuild the house, felt that they could not get on without the altar. That was their first thought, and to the setting up of that attention was immediately directed. (Ezra 3:2-3.) By-and-by, when God again takes up Israel as His earthly people, an altar, on which to sacrifice, will once more come into prominence. (Ezekiel 43:13-18.) But if we search throughout the Acts and the Epistles (Hebrews 13:10 excepted, of which more below), we have no mention of the term altar in connection with Christianity. And this is the more remarkable, because in the Revelation, when God begins to deal with Jews and Gentiles as such, after the removal of the church, to encourage His saints then on earth, He speaks in language they will understand, and makes frequent reference to essential features of the Mosaic ritual. (Revelation 6:9; Revelation 8:3; Revelation 8:5; Revelation 9:13; Revelation 11:1-2; Revelation 16:7.) It is not, then, that the word altar has become obsolete. The Lord freely used it. John, in the Apocalypse, several times writes it, and at a future day both Jews and Gentiles will be well acquainted with it. Why, then, this silence about the altar when Christians are addressed in God's word? Because they worship in the holiest, entering therein through the rent veil. To the mind of a Jew, and to one instructed in scripture, the language of Hebrews 10:19 conveys a great deal. The holiest was where God dwelt in the bright cloud of glory between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. No altar was there — no candlestick was there — no table of show bread — nothing but the ark with the mercy-seat, the place of God's earthly throne. No sacrifice took place within the veil, nor any ritual service but that engaged in by the high priest alone, when be sprinkled the blood once upon the mercy-seat, and seven times before it. His entrance there followed on a sacrifice already offered up, the blood of which he carried in wherewith to make propitiation for the sins of the people; and while engaged in that work, no other sacrifice was being offered up on the altar in the court: all sacrifices were suspended until he had reappeared to the people without. So, in truth, it is now with Israel, and will be till the Lord re-establishes direct relations with them.

Another thing, too, should be noted in connection with this. All sacrifice to make propitiation ceased from the day of atonement, as long as the atonement then made continued in force. Now these are cardinal truths in connection with the Mosaic ritual. All service at the altar ceased whilst the high priest was in the holiest, and all sacrifice to make propitiation ceased as long as the atonement then made remained in force. Now the Lord, as High Priest, still remains in the holiest — heaven itself — having found eternal redemption. The principles of the Jewish ritual, then, forbid the thought of sacrificial service at the altar, whilst the high priest continues concealed from view. And surely in the days of Aaron and Moses no idea of offering to God a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people could have been entertained for a moment, whilst that which had been already accomplished remained unimpaired in its efficacy. What would have been thought if any priest had sacrificed at the altar whilst Aaron was engaged within the veil? What would have been said, if Eleazar or Ithamar had announced a renewal of the sacrifices prescribed for the day of atonement, between the tenth day of Tisri in one year, and the tenth day of that same month in the next? A priest officiating at the brazen altar, whilst Aaron was inside the veil, would surely have been deemed guilty, and justly so, of despising the work of God's high priest. A priest who should announce that he would engage in a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people, in the interval between two days of atonement, would have shown both that he doubted the validity of the

pontifical work, and also that he knew not the marked difference in status and duty between God's high priest and the rest of the males of the house of Aaron. Now, of the abiding and everlasting validity of the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the word unhesitatingly informs us (Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14); so no sacrifice to effect it can ever again take place; nor does it befit any man to take on himself duties connected with the office of high priest, unless expressly called to it by God. (Hebrews 5:1.) But Ritualism, as it is called, appeals for support to the ecclesiastical arrangements made by God for his people Israel. The altar, the special priesthood of a class of Christians, and the separate place in God's house, to use the current language of Christendom, from which the laity are excluded, show plainly what is in the minds of those who uphold that system, which is really an attempt to join in affinity Judaism and Christianity, those two which can never be united. If it be true — and it is not doubted — that our high priest remains in heaven, the very principles of the Mosaic ritual condemn most clearly the cardinal feature of Ritualism, namely, the pre-eminence now given to the altar. And since by His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, the attempt to amalgamate the two only betrays ignorance of the special characteristics of them both.

For, into heaven itself has the Lord entered, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24), and the only sanctuary now recognised by God is that in which He is. What then should be the character of worship in the heavenly sanctuary is surely the question which men need to have settled before ritualism, as practised amongst us, can make good its claim to be the true form of Christian worship. Actual sacrifices of animals does not, it will be granted, take place in heaven. We are not however left to our own conclusions on such a point, for in Revelation 5:1-14 we have described, both what calls worship forth, and how it is carried on. The presence and the action of the Lamb, which had been slain, awakens every voice among the company of the elders, and moves each one of them to bow down, who before that had been sitting each on his throne. Worship flowed forth, at once, when the Lamb moved towards Him that sat on the throne; but it consisted of praise and thanksgiving. Such is the character of heavenly worship wherever set forth in that book. Whatever class of beings in heaven it may be, who are represented as worshipping God or the Lamb, praise in the case of angels (Revelation 5:1-14 :, Revelation 7:1-17 :) praise, at times with thanksgiving, on the part of the redeemed (Revelation 4:5, Revelation 11:17, Revelation 19:4), is the channel by which it is expressed. Praise with the sound of melody may form part of the worship of God's earthly people. This was the case in the tabernacle and temple service as arranged by David, but then it was in connection with a service constantly carried on at the altar. (1 Chronicles 16:39-42, 1 Chronicles 23:30-31; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13, 2 Chronicles 7:6, 2 Chronicles 29:27-28.) Praise and thanksgiving on the other hand, without any concurrent service at the altar, is the true feature of heavenly worship. And are not the spiritual instincts of believers in accord with this? For what language is more suited even now for them, than that in which the elders address the Lamb? (Revelation 5:1-14) Who, that has learnt what the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ has done for him before God, but must exclaim, "I wait not to sing the new song, till I shall be in person on high, the language of saints in heaven suits me whilst still upon earth?" The thoughts, the feelings, which animate the elders, and move them as one man to bow down before the Lamb, are just those which His people, who know what He has done for them, can enter into and understand. Praise in connection with the sacrificial service at the altar, characterised Jewish worship as finally arranged by David; praise without concurrent sacrificial service at the altar is characteristic of the worship suited for the company of

the redeemed, who have entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, in which the Lord now ministers. Do we thereby then slight the sacrificial service at the altar? To answer this let us next consider the question of sacrifice. Here again Judaism and Christianity are found to have something in common. Both confess the need of a sacrifice, and a sacrifice of God's providing. The constant remembrance however of its requirements, as a want unfulfilled, was an essential element of Judaism; the acknowledgment that it has been offered up once for all, and has been accepted, is the fundamental basis of Christianity. A service at the altar of burnt-offering the sons of Aaron constantly carried on, a sacrificial service, as it were at the altar, has the Lord Jesus Christ once for all engaged in. Bulls and goats Aaron and his sons from time to time offered up. The Lord on the other hand offered up Himself, an offering differing both in character and measure from any before known, or any that can be ever again provided. For He lives, to die no more. No man brought Him to the altar, no one offered Him up. He brought Himself as the offering, prosenegke. He offered up Himself, anenegke (Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 9:28) on the cross. Thus, as the sacrifice which the Lord brought differed widely from those with which Aaron and his sons had to deal, so likewise do the consequences which result from it. By their sacrifices a remembrance was made of sins every year. (Hebrews 10:3.) By His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14.) He has indeed entered by blood into the holiest, and remains there, but not to offer Himself afresh, prosperei as the high priest entered in every year with the blood of others, for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 9:26.) We should mark the language. No fresh offering of Christ in any character is allowed by the sacred writer to be taught for a moment; for, though we may distinguish (for they are distinguishable) between the bringing an offering prosperein, and the offering it up on the altar anapherein, it follows, as we are taught, that, if He often offered Himself, He must likewise often have suffered. There would be no sense in the offering a lamb, without the action is completed by offering it up on the altar. Death must take place if an animal as a sin-offering is brought. Now Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, hapax prosenechtheis eis to pollon anenegkeiin hamartias (Hebrews 9:28), and by virtue of that one offering God forgives sins and iniquities. "But where remission of these is, these is no more offering [prosphora] for sin." Hebrews 10:18.) No words can be plainer. Any doctrine, therefore, which maintains the continued offering of Christ as a sacrifice to God for sin, whether by Himself, or by others, clearly denies the abiding efficacy of His work, and manifests from whence it springs.

How precise is the language of scripture! No more offering for sin have we to look for, no more offering do we want, for by that one offering we, who are sanctified, are perfected for a continuance. An unbloody sacrifice of Christ for propitiation, to be offered day by day in the mass, is both senseless and unscriptural. "No more offering" shuts the door against all such thoughts. And, though men may draw the line in their teaching between the Lord offering His sacrifice continually, and His repeating the sacrifice by dying afresh, the term "offering" prosphora excludes the thought of the one, as much as it shuts the door against the other. No more offering for sin does the Lord contemplate, for we learn, that He has sat down for a continuance, as having finished with that work. (Hebrews 10:12.) Not that He has ceased to do with men upon earth, for He will appear to them that look for Him the second time without sin unto salvation, and now sits on high expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. The full results of His work have not yet been manifested, but its finished character, and our concern with it, are set before us in the word. Thus His present attitude and expectation announce to us His estimate of His own work. God's

estimate of it, and what the consequences are which flow from it, are abundantly declared in the Word. And we, who believe it, are to prove our acceptance of the divine testimony about it, by entering with boldness within the veil by the blood of Jesus, and presenting to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Sacrifices we should bring to God, though no service at the altar of burnt-offering can now be carried on. The holiest is our place of worship, in which there never was, and there never will be, an altar on which to sacrifice. Any form of worship, therefore, which makes the altar its centre-piece is clearly not Christian in its character, however much the name and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ may be on the lips of those who uphold it. Have we then no altar, some may exclaim? "We have an altar" (Hebrews 13:10) is the language of inspiration, so we need not be afraid, as some seem to be, of the bare mention of the word. We have an altar, this we should take care to maintain. It is a scriptural term, but must be used in the scriptural sense. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The Jews might taunt Christians as a people without a country, without a nationality, without an altar. Yet they had all these, and much more. Their country was the heavenly one, God’s people they surely were, and an altar too was theirs, but of which no son of Aaron, as such, could reap the benefit. They indeed were partakers of the altar (1 Corinthians 10:18), and we Christians eat of that which has been sacrificed thereon. But that on which we can feed, the sin-offering whose blood has been carried within the sanctuary, was just that which God withheld from them who served the tabernacle. An altar then is ours, to eat of that which was once brought to it, but not to sacrifice thereon. So that, if the word altar would suggest to any mind the propriety of a sacrificial service to be carried on, the advantage we derive from it as defined in the word, marks at once the immense difference between Christianity and Judaism. We are privileged to share in that of which no priest could ever partake.

How suggestive too is the language here! To eat, not to sacrifice. Surely those to whom the epistle was addressed must have well understood the significance of the term, "to eat." For, before the priests could partake of the altar, the sacrifice must have been offered up thereon. The altar was first attended to, after that the priests, as directed, could eat of that which remained. But none could partake of the bodies of the animals offered in sacrifice for sin, till the ritual, given through Moses, had been duly complied with. Death must take place, the blood be duly dealt with, and the altar have its share, to be consumed by the sacred fire, the emblem of divine judgment, ere the priests could partake of that which God had reserved for them. So, when we learn on what it is we feed, even Him who suffered without the gate, we are reminded that He, the sacrifice, has been already offered up. Should any then think of offering the Lord Jesus Christ to God as a sacrifice for sin in any shape or form, their thought, their act, excludes them from this distinctive christian privilege. For them the time to eat of the sacrifice has not arrived, and it never in that case can arrive. They have forsaken doctrinally christian ground, and with it the privilege which, if believers on the Lord, is indeed theirs.

We have an altar, that on which, as the term implies, the sacrifice for sin was offered up. Is then the Lord’s table correctly termed the altar, as so commonly is done in our day? A reference to the principles of the Mosaic ritual may here also be of use to us. The priests under the law partook of the altar, but they did not feast at the altar. They ate the bread of their God in a holy place, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, but they did not eat it on the altar. On that they sacrificed, elsewhere they ate. And, if in Numbers 18:10 the words "in the most holy place" are to

be understood in their literal import, whilst they ate in person the portion reserved for them in a holy place in the court, they were regarded by God as in spirit partaking of it in the innermost sanctuary, into which through grace we have now liberty to enter by the blood of Jesus Christ. And in that of course there was no altar. At the Lord's table we sit to eat, but the place where the priests were to eat their portion is defined in Leviticus 10:12-13 as being near the altar, and so quite distinct from it. To have turned the altar into their table would surely in their eyes, and in the eyes of all Israel, have been a monstrous thing. But is not the altar, it may be replied, called in the Old Testament the table of the Lord? Malachi (Malachi 1:7; Malachi 1:12) thus writes of the altar of burnt-offering, and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 41:22, Ezekiel 44:16) of the altar of incense. And it is not difficult to understand this, since on both these altars the Lord's own portion was consumed by the fire, which came down from heaven; so what was burnt on the altar of burnt-offering was called "the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord." (Leviticus 3:11.) But, though the altar in the Old Testament could be called the table of the Lord, we never read in the New Testament of the table under the term altar. The altar was the Lord's table, because He there fed, as it were, on the sacrifice which was burnt on it. It was His table, at which He alone fed. The Lord's table in the New Testament is that which the Lord set up, at which too He presided, but off which He did not eat. (Luke 22:19-20.) He ate the passover with His disciples; but did not, could not, partake with them of the supper. We however have a place at the Lord's table, because we have an altar. We eat at the one, we glory in the other. Although then in the Old Testament the table of the Lord and the altar are the same, what is termed the Lord's table in the New is something very different from it. The altar of the Old Testament is strictly speaking the table of Jehovah, but the table of 1 Corinthians 10:21 belongs to Him who by position, dignity, and title is the Lord. On the altar the appointed parts of the sin-offering were consumed by fire, and the rest, when the blood had been taken within the sanctuary, was burned without the camp. So, to feed on Him whose blood has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat, we must go outside the camp, for He suffered without the gate. How little could those have thought, when they caused the Lord to be led to Calvary, to what practical use the Spirit of God would turn that historical fact, supplying an argument and an illustration for real separation between Jews and Christians in their position on earth, their ways, and their worship. Without the camp the blasphemer was to be stoned. (Numbers 15:35-36.) Beyond the walls of Jezreel Naboth was murdered. (1 Kings 21:13.) Outside Jerusalem Stephen was martyred. (Acts 7:58.) Outside the gate the Lord Jesus suffered. So those who confess Him were exhorted to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. But in doing that they turned their backs on Judaism with all its hopes, its earthly position, and its ritual. To feed on Him who is the sin-offering we too must follow whither He went, yet not to eat at the altar, a thing unknown even to the Jews, nor to join in any fresh sacrificial service carried on thereon; for that would imply that He often has suffered, which is false. (Hebrews 7:27, Hebrews 9:25-26.) And even the ritual, ordained of God by Moses, should teach men the incongruity of such ideas, for the body of that which was offered in sacrifice for sin did not remain at the altar, but was taken elsewhere, either without the camp, or was fed on by the priests in a holy place in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. To conclude, the change in the law necessitated by the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the emphatic declaration too of that inspired word, "there remaineth no more offering for sin;" as well as the ritual of Moses, if rightly studied, should surely guide souls in the present day, so as to steer clear of ritualism, as it is called, whether contended for and practised by some in our land, who repudiate all connection with Rome, or as set before

the eye and the senses with all the attractiveness by which that church has ensnared and entranced so many souls. C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 80

S. Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Between the dates of the two epistles to the Thessalonians there could have been an interval of no great duration, both having been written during the apostle’s second missionary journey; for the tide of persecution, which had run so strong at Thessalonica, had not yet turned (2 Thessalonians 1:5-7); and Silvanus, or Silas, who was still with Paul (2 Thessalonians 1:1), is not mentioned as working in his company during any part of his third missionary tour. In the first epistle to the Thessalonians the apostle had corrected an error into which they had fallen regarding the sleeping saints. In this letter he corrects a mistake which was operating prejudicially on those then alive. They thought the day of the Lord* was present (even enesteke), not merely "at hand," as the Authorized Version renders it. (2 Thessalonians 2:2.) He meets this error, first by showing in chapter 1 that could not be the case, for they were still upon earth; and, secondly, by reminding them, in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17, of the apostasy, which must be developed ere that day can come.

*The day of the "Lord" is the right reading, not the day of "Christ." It is called the day of Christ (Php 1:6; Php 1:10; Php 2:16) where it especially concerns the saints, Here it is the day of the "Lord," because it concerns the world.

Commencing with a recognition of their continued faithfulness to the truth, he tells them the effect that had on his soul. He could give thanks for them; for their faith grew exceedingly, and the love of every one of them towards each other abounded, so that he could boast of them in the churches of God for their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations which they endured. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4) Their work of faith, their labour of love, their patience of hope, he had written of on the former occasion with commendation; here he can acknowledge the continued growth of their faith, the undiminished fervour of their love, and their patience and faith in all that they endured. It may have been, as has been suggested, that their patience of hope was not so marked a feature as it once had been. His desire about it, expressed in 2 Thessalonians 3:5, would seem to confirm that. But if that was the case, the love of God at all events had not cooled towards them. This letter was a proof of it, and was surely calculated to strengthen, as probably was needed, that patience of hope in the Lord Jesus which formerly had so characterized the Thessalonian assembly.

What power the truth had over these saints! They could contrast their former condition when idolaters with their present circumstances as Christians. Then, as regards the world, perhaps it had been well with them; certainly persecution they had not known, and tribulation, which now harassed them, had not been their lot. Why not give up Christianity, and enjoy present ease and freedom from persecution? Such may have been, to some doubtless it was, the burden of the siren voice of the tempter. But none of them had listened to it. In an unbroken phalanx they maintained a front towards the enemy. He had not succeeded in detaching one of these simple but real souls from Christian ground, and from open and unflinching profession of the truth. "The love

of each one of them toward the other abounded." A band of men, as firm through grace as a rock, had resisted all the efforts of Satan to penetrate their line of defence. No wonder that Paul gloried in them in the churches of God. It was a spectacle of no common kind; rare probably then, but how much rarer now! Their present condition was patent to all. What did it portend? God, whatever men might be, was righteous. Their heathen friends might point to their sufferings as proof of the righteous displeasure of the gods whose altars they had forsaken, and whose worship they condemned; and they might taunt them with the apathy of their God to interpose on their behalf. The apostle drew from their sufferings a very different conclusion, and here presented it to them. Their sufferings proved that they were God's people, and that rest would be their portion, with Paul and the others of God's saints then on earth, when divine judgment from heaven should overtake the ungodly in the world. So before enlarging on the signs which must precede the day of the Lord, he encouraged them with the assurance that it had not then come. If that day had really come, they would not have been still upon earth. Would Paul and the other faithful workers for Christ be involved in a judgment, which is to overtake those who have rejected God's testimony concerning His Son? Impossible, all will at once exclaim. The faithful when that day comes will be at rest. Hence the very sufferings of these saints were a proof that divine wrath would not overtake them. The day of the Lord is no myth. It will come, and judgment, unsparing judgment, will characterize it; but the judgment will be inflicted on the enemies of God, and not on His people. They knew whose they were. Thus, from their sufferings the apostle draws for them consolation of the most cheering kind; for their God was a God who judgeth righteously, and therefore would recompense tribulation to them that troubled them, and rest to His faithful though then persecuted saints, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Two classes of ungodly ones are here described; first, Gentiles who have not been evangelized; and next, those who, professedly God's people, have rejected the gospel of His grace. Suffering as they were from Jews and Gentiles, the apostle reminds them that both these classes will be objects of divine displeasure, and that for ever, being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all them that have believed, amongst whom these saints were reckoned, because they had believed Paul's testimony. With that hope in prospect the apostle prays that God would count them worthy of that calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in them by the constancy of their faith, and they in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

How the snare of the fowler was broken! Persecuting the saints because they were faithful, the devil attempted to ensnare them by the thought that they were involved in the fearful troubles of the day of the Lord, whereas their very sufferings were a witness to the contrary, and a proof, than which none could be stronger, that the day had not dawned on the earth. The effect of imbibing that error would be seen in carelessness of walk, of which some had already given proof by ceasing to work for their living, and casting themselves on the saints for support. (2 Thessalonians 3:11.) The watchful eye of the apostle detected, and pointed out the incoming of this evil; and knowing how deceitful the heart of man is, after setting them free from all fear that the day had come, or would come and involve Christians in the outpouring of the divine wrath, he prays for

them to be kept on the road to the end. (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.)

After this he enters on the subject of the apostasy, which must precede the day of which he had been writing. So he entreats them, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by their gathering together unto Him, of which He had written unto them in the previous letter (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17), not to be shaken in mind, or to be troubled by spirit (1:e. a pretended revelation by the Holy Ghost), by word or by letter as from Paul, that the day of the Lord was present. One learns how the hope of the rapture is a safeguard from the mistake into which they had fallen. But he does not rest contented with simply correcting it; he goes on to remind them, and thereby to instruct us, as to the characteristic features of the antichrist, who will be the soul of the apostasy on earth. There will be a man, an instrument of Satan, whom Paul here styles "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," and "the wicked," or rather "lawless one," who must be revealed ere the day of the Lord can come. Opposing and exalting himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped, he will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God; and energized by Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, he will effectually deceive those who perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. This is the antichrist of whom John writes in his epistle (1 John 2:22), and describes at length in the Revelation. (Revelation 13:11-17.) Of this same person Isaiah (Isaiah 30:33), Daniel (Daniel 11:36-40), and Zechariah (Zechariah 11:15-17) had previously written; and to him the Lord Jesus Christ referred. (John 5:43.) The prophets and the Lord viewed him in his relation to Israel; for he will be their king, and will be received by the ungodly part of them as their long-expected Messiah. By John and by Paul he is viewed in his relation to Christendom; for he will be concerned with both. As king of the Jews he will be reigning outside the bounds of the Latin Empire, that part of the old Roman Empire within which the imperial power will again for a time as such have sway.* But though outside the limits of the old Latin Empire, he will be the instrument for upholding over the Jews as a protection the sheltering power of the beast (Revelation 13:1-10), who will be the political head of the revived Roman Empire, and also its last ruler. In Christendom he will appear as the false prophet, the leader of the revolt against all that men have venerated or worshipped, setting up the image of the beast in the temple at Jerusalem for all to worship. (Daniel 9:27; Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14.)

*The reader may remember that the revived Latin Empire will consist of the beast and the ten horns. Antichrist, the two-horned beast, is distinct from these, his kingdom being really outside that revived empire.

It is of this one, the false prophet, that Paul writes to the Thessalonians, and not of the first beast; for he will work miracles by Satanic power, which the political head of the empire will not do. As the anti-christ he will personify Christ. So he will turn men’s eyes to one greater than himself, as the Lord on earth spoke of the Father; and will work miracles in support of his teaching, as the Lord Jesus did. Such is the one who is to come, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. Clearly, then, till this one appears the day of the Lord cannot come. He had not appeared when Paul wrote. He has not appeared yet, so that day is still future. But how is it that nearly 2000 years have rolled by, and still the appearance of antichrist is an event to be awaited? The mystery of iniquity, or lawlessness, was working when Paul wrote. Why has the lawless one, by whom it will be brought to a head, been so long in coming? The Thessalonians knew; for Paul had evidently told them. (2 Thessalonians 3:6) But by

none of them, as far as we know, has that knowledge been handed down. Yet we may surely understand what it is of which he writes. He writes of a power (to katechon) "what withholdeth," and of a person (ho katechon) "he who letteth." We believe the power and the person here spoken of are one and the same - the Holy Ghost, by whose continued presence in the assembly of God the development of Satan's plans are delayed. But taken out of the way as He will be, when He goes with the Church at the rapture of the saints, God will cease for a time to dwell on earth, to hinder by His presence the full power of Satan being displayed. The Church must be taken out of this scene of judgment, as the Lord promised the Philadelphian saints ("I will keep thee out of (ek) the hour of temptation," Revelation 3:10), ere the antichrist can openly display himself as the tool of the enemy. The day of the Lord, then, will be a day of judgment, in which those will be involved whom antichrist has deceived, and willingly deceived. But what were those really to whom Paul wrote? They were beloved of the Lord, chosen by God from the beginning to salvation by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and called by the gospel to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.) How marked is the difference between them and those in Christendom who will be involved in the coming judgment, as the contrast between 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 shows. Could the beloved of the Lord be objects of His unsparing judgment? The refutation of the error was complete. Exhortations only were wanting, and such he gives them.

They were to stand fast and hold the traditions (paradoseis) which they had been taught, whether by word or by his epistle. It was apostolic teaching, derived direct from the apostle, whether orally or in writing, which they were to hold. Men in later years have invented traditions about that which the Church held, or taught. It was not of such that Paul wrote. The traditions to which he points them are the truths, the teaching he had delivered to them. (2 Thessalonians 3:6.) An instance of such we have in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. He delivered (paredoka) to them that which he had received of the Lord. The institution of the supper, as there set forth, was a tradition the Corinthians received from the apostle. The injunction too that no one should give way to idleness, instead of supporting himself, was a tradition the Thessalonians had already received. Such were apostolic traditions. Such they were to keep. Besides that, he desired on their behalf an interest in himself and his work, which would be evidenced by prayer for him; and that they should be led into the love of God, so needful and helpful in times of trouble (Jude 1:20), and into the patience of Christ, they waiting on earth for that for which He was waiting in heaven.

Next brethren walking disorderly are noticed. Such were those who walked not after the tradition received from Paul. Insubjection to apostolic precepts characterizes such; illustrated in this assembly by those who cast themselves on the bounty of their brethren, instead of labouring for their own support. From such he commands the saints to withdraw. Such too he commanded to cease from their ways. (2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:12.) Putting out was not here called for. Withdrawal from them was the suited action which he both inculcated, and would have enforced. Would any among them refuse compliance with the apostle's commands and exhortations (2 Thessalonians 3:14), with such an one they were not to keep company, but were to mark him that he might be ashamed, and an admonishment administered to him as a brother would be the suited treatment for such a character in their midst. We should observe that the treatment prescribed in 2 Thessalonians 3:14 would apply both to the one who walked disorderly, and to any who did not withdraw from him as well. Then closing with prayer that they might have

peace always in every way the gift of the Lord of peace, he authenticates this epistle by his salutation, the token by which they would know each one of his letters. Was the token the formula, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," written with his own hand? With this all his epistles are marked, either amplified, as in 2 Corinthians 13:14, or contracted, as in Hebrews 13:25; and during his life no other writer in the New Testament closed his communications in the same way. It had been needful to authenticate his writings (2 Thessalonians 2:2), so he did it with his own hand. C. E. Stuart.

S. Shechem and Sychar

Shechem and Sychar

It may not be without interest to compare the historical notices of Shechem with that one visit of two days spent by the Lord Jesus at Sychar, so many of the events of which Shechem was the theater in Old Testament times appearing, when we read John 4 as foreshadows of what should take place when the Messiah Himself should visit it.

Very early in the world's history after the flood, we have mention made of the land of Canaan, destined to be the scene of the pilgrimages of the patriarchs, the victories of their descendants, the blessings of the people and glory of the kingdom under David and Solomon, the nativity of the Lord, the sphere of His labors, the place of His crucifixion; within whose confines is that mountain from which He ascended to heaven, and on which He will stand when He comes back to earth. How soon after the flood the children of Canaan settled in it is not recorded, but we do learn that about three hundred and sixty seven years after the deluge Abraham first set foot in it. He was " seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran " (Gen. 12:4); and the first place in the land at which he rested, the name of which is recorded, is Shechem. There the Lord first appeared to him; and there he built an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him, the first witness for Jehovah which he set up in that land.

Many years elapse ere we read of Shechem again. Then it comes before us as the first named resting place of Jacob on this side Jordan, as he journeyed homewards to Bethel and Hebron. Returning from the country of his exile he pitched his tent at Shechem, and " bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money," and he erected there an altar, his first altar after his return, to not simply Jehovah, as Abraham had done, expressive of God as the self-existing one, but to God the God of Israel. The treacherous conduct of Simeon and Levi forced him to leave it; but, before he departed for Bethel, he collected the false gods of his family and their ear-rings, and buried them under the oak which was by Shechem, perhaps the very same tree under which Abraham between 180 or 190 years before had spread his tent. See Gen. 12:6, where for the plain of Moreh we should read oak of Moreh. Sometime during his sojourn here he dug that well, mentioned in the gospel of John, and visited to this day by travelers. Owning no other spot in the country besides the cave of Machpelah, which came to him, as we should say, by the right of inheritance, though the reversion of the whole land belonged to him and to his descendants,' he went down into Egypt, and there died, bequeathing as the birthright " the parcel of the field " to his son Joseph. Before his descent into Egypt his children revisited Shechem from time to time with their flocks (Gen. 37:12). But Joseph only entered on the possession of it as his place of sepulture and that, when the children of Israel fulfilled his command in laying his bones in that "parcel of a field," after they had crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua (Josh. 24:32). Before that took place, whilst they lay encamped in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, Moses gave commandment respecting the solemn ceremony, which all Israel under Joshua and Eleazar were to be engaged

in, on the slopes of both Ebal and Gerizim, and in the valley which lies between them. Situated on a shoulder * of Mount Gerizim (hence probably the name of Shechem), it must have been within the limits where the Amen of all the people could be heard; and that shoulder of the mountain on which their forefathers had trodden, was now' the ground which part of the six tribes appointed to stand on Gerizim must have occupied, not to pronounce-the blessings as the others had the curses, but, to hear' recited how, if obedient, God would bless His redeemed, people (Deut. 11, 27, Josh. 8).

(*Shechem may mean "a shoulder."-ED.) The next notice of Shechem which calls for remark is its appointment to be one of the six cities of refuge, to Which the manslayer could repair, and, if subsequently acquitted of murder, where he could remain sheltered from the wrath of the avenger of blood, till the death of the high priest permitted his return to his own place without fear of molestation. To this same spot, rich in patriarchal associations, and where the whole congregation had once assembled, did Joshua assemble them all again to remind Israel of God's great goodness to them in all that he had done, and to exhort them to put away the strange gods from their midst, and to serve the Lord only. The people promised obedience. How long they adhered to their promise is known. " They served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that He did for Israel." Very little progress in the reading of the book of Judges brings us to a passage (2:12) which speaks of idolatry as rife in their midst. And Shechem, one of the cities of the Levites though it was, where the knowledge of God and obedience to Him should have been diligently fostered and enforced, chooses a god for itself, and builds a house for Baalberith, in the hold of which about a thousand inhabitants of the city subsequently lost their lives. In connection with this sad history another chapter in the annals of the city commences It was the first place where a kingdom was attempted to be set up in Israel; it was also the place where the kingdom established by David and carried on by Solomon was divided never again to be united under one scepter, till David's son shall sit on his father's throne. Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal was made king by the plain (rather oak) of the pillar that was in Shechem. Rehoboam went down thither to be crowned king as successor to his father Solomon. After his flight, and the revolt of the ten tribes, it became the first capital of the newly appointed kingdom of Israel. Abraham's first halting-place in the land, the site of Abraham's and. Jacob's first altars, the scene of the first attempt at a kingdom in Israel, and the first capital of the tribes who had revolted from the house of David, it subsequently was famous as the first place where a temple was built professedly for God besides His house at Jerusalem: The first because there was another built in Egypt by Onias in the time of Ptolemy Philometer. The temple at Gerizim was a rival to that at Jerusalem.

Turning to Sychar the notice of it is brief; all that is recorded in the Bible concerning it being found in the gospel of St. John Chapter 4:, yet, though brief, full of deep interest. As Shechem was the first place on record where the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob showed whom they worshipped, so Sychar was the first place where the Lord unfolded the principles of true worship, such as God can now accept (4: 21-24). And as Shechem Was the place where Jacob first erected the altar to God the God of Israel, expressive of the position in which Jehovah had consented to stand to him and his descendants, (for hitherto He had been described by Jacob as " the God of my fathers "), so here it was that the Son of man made known the relationship in which God was pleased to stand to all who should believe on His Son. That God was His Father, He had declared at Jerusalem (John

2:16); that He was God’s Son John had borne witness (3: 35); now the Lord goes further, and speaks of the Father whom men should worship. In that relationship God would now stand to them, and they should know it. In the midst of the Hivites both Abraham and Jacob erected their altars; in the midst of a people worshipping they knew not what did the Lord first unfold what true worship now is. And as Jacob buried the idols of his family under the oak of Shechem, and Joshua had recalled Israel at the same place to the worship of the Lord Jehovah once more; so the Lord Jesus carried on a similar work in separating hearts from the worship of what they knew not, to know, and surely to worship, the Father in spirit and in truth.

There too was the well; and sitting by its side Jesus proved Himself to be greater than their father Jacob. Jacob gave them the well to which they had often to go; not once for all; the Lord revealed, what had hitherto been to them as a fountain sealed, God’s precious gift,- living water, which should be in each believer as the well of water springing up unto everlasting life. And this water once partaken of, the thirst of the drinker would be forever satisfied. How fully He responded to the challenge of the woman! How surprised must she have been, if the truth ever dawned on her, and surely it must have done so when she knew who He was, that He had wrestled with Jacob, thus conclusively in a different manner showing His superiority, for " he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him;" and Jacob went on his way with the marks of that conflict. We can trace, perhaps she did afterward, the same hand in His dealing with her. Both the one and the other had to be brought down ere they could have the blessing the Lord was willing to impart. In both cases he brought them down Himself, and then bestowed it. Jacob asked for His blessing after He had touched the hollow of his thigh; she got the blessing after He had put His finger on her conscience. He could bless, what the six tribes standing on Mount Gerizim could not do, because all who were under law, standing on the ground of creature responsibility, were under a curse; He, who was shortly to stand on another mount to bless (Matt. 5), allowed her and the Samaritans, who flocked to Him, to taste of blessings rich, free, unfading. Moses had said, and Joshua repeated " If thou shalt diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice, of the Lord thy God" (Deut. 28:1,2; Josh. 8:34). Who of all the children of Israel had done this? Which of the Samaritans had observed this? Most 1 certainly that woman could not claim the blessings on that ground. To her however, and to all who received Him was that living fountain imparted which would forever quench the thirst of the soul. With blessing to the soul was linked deliverance from judgment. The Samaritans owned Him as the Savior of the world. This was just what they wanted-a refuge from the wrath of an offended God. However glad the manslayer in former days might have been to gain that city, and to know he was safe from the avenger of blood who followed him in hot pursuit, far greater was the relief of soul those enjoyed, who believed on the Lord Jesus whilst He dwelt for those two days in their midst. It was not with them deliverance from death with restriction as to their movements till the death of the high priest, but deliverance from the second death with the liberty which belongs to the children of God. The conviction grew on their minds, as they heard Him, who He was; and they own His title to the affections of their heart to be this-the Savior of the world.

Another truth remains to be touched on as unfolded at Sychar in perfect keeping with the previous history of the place. Where Abimelech had endeavored by unlawful means to set up a kingdom in Israel, and Rehoboam, by following the foolish advice of the young men, gave the ten tribes an ostensible reason for revolt, in that same place centuries afterward the Son of David announces Himself to be the Christ, the king who was to come. And what Rehoboam could not do, gain the hearts of those outside Judah, and the rent which none of his successors had been able to that date to heal, the Lord did accomplish by drawing hearts to Himself. In Him the Samaritans and His disciples then found a coin-men center. Those who had often maltreated the Jews, and some of whose kindred at a later date refused to " receive Him because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem " (Luke 9:53), now submit themselves to this stranger, as He appeared at first sight, who had come from Jerusalem. Had Rehoboam hearkened to the advice of the old men, " that stood before Solomon his father," all might have been well. " If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever" 1 Kings 12:7. Observe the order here. If you serve them, they will serve you. Sagacious counsel! He rejected it. The opportunity was lost, the kingdom was divided and the heir to David’s throne had to fly from Shechem to Jerusalem How differently did the Lord act. Just what Rehoboam should have done, He did. Though far higher than Rehoboam, His ancestor according to the flesh, He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form Of a servant, and in that character presented Himself to Israel and the Samaritans. In Israel He went about doing good, ministering to the need of those who came to Him. In Sychar He offers the woman the gift of God, and ministers to the souls of the people of the city. He became their servant, and they owned Him as the Savior. He spent His life in service for sinners and even died to serve them. He also spake good words to them. Rehoboam at Shechem showed himself to be unfit to reign over Israel. The Lord at Sychar shows how competent He is to make all hearts bow to Him. He had been in Galilee, and He had visited in Jerusalem; in neither had He announced Himself as the Christ. That was reserved for Sychar. There in the first capital of the ten tribes did He first announce this. Where the link between Judah and Israel had been broken, does He forge a new one to unite Samaritans and Jews, and gathers up as it were, by a secret which He alone possessed, the two ends of the thread, which had been severed after the death of Solomon.

What interesting associations are connected with that spot I Various reasons may have led Abraham and Jacob to select it as the site of their first altars in the land. The lie of the ground many might affirm as the reason for its selection by God for the solemn ceremony under Joshua. Reasons of state craft may have induced Rehoboam to go thither to be made king. But with the narrative of Sychar before us such reasons will surely be deemed insufficient. Why was it that in the days of the patriarchs, at the first entrance of the land, in the time of the judges, and under the kings this place should be the scene of events worthy of note, and of sufficient importance never to be forgotten? Was there not a cause for this, depend-in not on the judgment of Abraham, the sagacity of Jacob, the conformation of the valley, or political designs? God had an end in view, and we see it since the Lord visited Sychar, because there Jehovah should be found to show by His intercourse with the woman at the well, and His subsequent sojourn in the city, that what had taken place there before, however to be explained at the time of its occurrence, was a kind of earnest of what should be, when Messiah should appear to " tell them all things."

C. E. S.

S. Sheltered by Blood

Sheltered by Blood. In no divine communication about sacrifice, to which we have yet turned, have we met with a single word about blood. In God’s instructions to Moses for Israel, concerning the passover, we first learn something about it. The Lord had warned Pharaoh, at the outset of His communications to that monarch, of the penalty He would exact, if His command by Moses was disregarded: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." (Exodus 4:22-23.) Moses, on the occasion of his last interview with Pharaoh, before the execution of this judgment, announced to the king that it must and would be carried out. The day of mercy was over, the carrying out of the sentence was determined upon; and that not only on Pharaoh’s house, but on the houses of the Egyptians likewise, and on the first-born of their cattle as well. Nothing like it had ever been known; nothing like it would they ever again endure; and at midnight would it take place. At the time when men are ordinarily least prepared, then Jehovah would go out into the land of Egypt. (Exodus 11:4-6.) In God’s mind it had all been settled centuries before. He had evidently purposed it when He called Abraham to go out from his country, his kindred, and his father’s house, and thus made him start from his ancestral home, Ur of the Chaldees. For it was at the end of "four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day" that Israel departed out of Egypt. (Exodus 12:40-41.)

Now, from whence are we to reckon this period of time? Its termination being given us, the date of the Exodus, its commencement is not difficult to determine. From the birth of Isaac to the Exodus was to be four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13.) From Abraham’s departure out of Haran to the birth of his son was twenty-five years more. (Genesis 12:4; Genesis 21:5.) It is probable, then, that his departure out of Ur was five years previous to his leaving Haran; thus the four hundred and thirty years are to be accounted for, comprising the whole period of the sojourn of Israel and the patriarchs in countries which they did not possess.* But God did not, that we read of, declare, at the outset of Abraham’s career, what He had purposed as to the duration of the period of their sojourning. His purposing, and the announcement of His purpose, do not always synchronize. He did, however, reveal it to Abraham more than four hundred years before He executed it. Yet He did not carry out His purpose of judicial dealing with the Egyptians till He had warned Pharaoh, and had given him time to avert the impending doom. Thus, on the one hand, we see God purposing to judge the Egyptians; and, on the other, the Egyptians proving by their ways that they deserved it; and God did not carry out His mind, till those who were responsible to obey had refused to let Israel go. Who doubts for one moment that Pharaoh richly deserved his punishment? An opportunity, however, was afforded him of averting it, but he did not make use of it.

*The Hebraeo-Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint read "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, and of their fathers who dwelt in Canaan, and in the land of Egypt, was 430 years."

How this illustrates God’s ways on a large scale. He has announced that He will judge the world in righteousness. He has appointed the very day, and the judge likewise. (Acts 17:31.) Can any

charge Him with injustice for this? He will demonstrate when He judges, as He did in the case of the Egyptians, that He is only acting righteously; for men will have plainly shown that they deserve it. God’s sovereignty, and man’s responsibility, may seem to some impossible to harmonize; but we see how they were harmonized in the case of Pharaoh at the Exodus. Not only, however, had God determined to judge, He had purposed also to shelter from judgment. He had pledged Himself to Abraham to bring up Israel into Canaan. (Genesis 15:1-21) He had promised the same to Jacob (Genesis 46:3-4), and Joseph on his death-bed reminded the people of it. (Genesis 50:25.), The Lord, too, had announced beforehand to Moses, that He was determined to effect it (Exodus 3:8), and now He was about to accomplish it. Hence, whilst announcing to Pharaoh his impending doom, the Lord, by Moses, told Israel how they could be exempted from the visitation of the angel of death. (Exodus 12:1-51)

Here two important points should be noticed. First, though Israel were clearly the subjects of divine counsels, and objects of special divine favours, they had need nevertheless to make use of God’s way of shelter from the inroad of death into their houses. Second, though the Lord made known to them the only way of deliverance, they were in themselves no better morally than the Egyptians. Had any of them rested their hopes of security from the impending judgment on the fact that they were part of a favoured people, they would, in common with the Egyptians, have been bewailing and burying their first-born on the fifteenth day of Nisan. (Numbers 33:3-4.) Had they trusted to any goodness in themselves for exemption from the threatened visitation, they could never have been sheltered from it; for they were at that time idolaters who had positively refused to put their idols away. (Ezekiel 20:6-10; Joshua 24:14.) Thus God’s faithfulness and grace were both displayed on that night, which was to be much remembered (Exodus 12:42); faithfulness in fulfilling His word to Abraham, by judging their oppressors; grace in His dealings with Israel, by sheltering them from the sword of the angel of death. How they had provoked the Lord in Egypt by their disobedience Ezekiel sets forth. So we have to turn to that recital of the nation’s ways by the prophet, when the ten tribes were in the land of their captivity, ere we are in a position to estimate aright this display of grace towards them.

It was nothing new for God to deal in judgment. He had dealt judicially with men by the flood. He had overthrown the cities of the plain; now He was about to destroy the first-born of man, and of beast, in the land of Egypt. The old world being ungodly, and proving itself to be disobedient, was destroyed by the deluge, Noah only and his family having a refuge provided for them in the ark. The cities of the plain - illustrations of apostacy - received their just doom, Lot only, with his two daughters, being saved by the intercession of Abraham. (Genesis 19:29) The ungodly and apostates had been thus punished; now idolaters were to be dealt with; and their lying vanities, to which they had trusted, were to be exposed. For Jehovah, the self-existing one, would march through the land of Egypt, supreme in power, and terrible in judgment. He would take up the cause of His people by manifesting Himself to be the true God.

"Who is Jehovah," said Pharaoh, in the pride and dense ignorance of his heart, "that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2.) Such were the words of a mortal creature. But the Lord is known by the judgment which He executes. (Psalms 9:16.) This Pharaoh found to his cost; so men will find by-and-by. "Known by the judgment which He executeth!" How truly was that the case in Egypt; for on all the gods of Egypt did He execute judgment. He had foretold it. (Exodus 12:12.) He fulfilled His word. (Numbers 33:4

:) The Egyptians discovered by the infliction of divine judgments the inanity of their idols. The proud Pharaoh of the Exodus stooped to ask the blessing of Moses and Aaron, the representatives of the people he had kept so long in slavery, when his first-born lay death-stricken in his house. And Israel could see, surely did see, whilst sheltered in Jehovah's goodness from the infliction of His judgment on their families, the folly of idolatry which they had so long practised.

Against all the gods of Egypt the Lord executed judgment. This is a statement soon read; but how terrible was that of which it treats. Man had no refuge on that day from the avenging arm of Jehovah. The gods of Egypt were powerless when Jehovah rose up to judgment. Shelter, help, deliverance, there was none. The angel of death entered every house of the Egyptians, and with an unerring blow smote the first-born of whatever age or rank he might be. The most exalted in position could not shelter his first-born, the meanest could not escape the observation of God; for "the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; for there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (Exodus 12:29-30.) It was a terrible moment indeed; for the Lord Jehovah was passing through the land of Egypt, and no power could hinder His passage. The angel of death was entering into houses; and no bolts, no bars, no chains, no incantation, nor demoniacal agency, could shut him out. A power which man could not cope with, and which man could find nothing to resist, was carrying all before it, making the first-born of man and of beast its victims. Every Egyptian was made to feel that Jehovah alone was God, who had the life of His creatures absolutely at His disposal, and who could act in discrimination, smiting those He would, by singling out for death the first-born male in each house. Such was the state of matters among the Egyptians. With the Israelites how different. Fear, distress, sickness, death, were harassing their oppressors. Peaceful security reigned within their houses. There is a calm, which presages a storm, when all the forces of nature seem resting preparatory to their re-awakening to action with redoubled vigour and violence. There is a calm, which forebodes no disturbance to be at hand, the effect of an atmosphere perfectly serene; all nature enjoying repose after the disturbing forces have spent their strength. The calm peacefulness, however, which reigned in the houses of the Israelites differed from both of these. It was like a calm before a storm, for they awaited the outburst of the judgment. It was like a calm resulting from the knowledge that the tempest would not expend itself on their heads. But it was more; it was the peaceful serenity, which confidence in God's word can alone give, assuring the one who receives it of immunity from coming judgment. Israel knew both the day, and the hour, when the threatened visitation falling on the land of Mizraim would evoke a wail of distress from every house of their taskmasters; but they were insured against the divine visitation by the blood outside upon the door-posts.

Now, this way of escape was quite new to them, and unheard of before. Further, it was a secret between God and them. No Egyptian was informed of it. Neither man, nor any power known to man, nor all the gods of Egypt together, could keep the destroying angel from entering any house that night; but the blood upon the door-post was to prove an effective shelter. So, whilst the Egyptians were learning the powerlessness of man, and all that they had trusted in, to cope with the power of God in judgment, the Israelites were proving how effectual was the shelter provided by blood. Across a threshold thus distinguished the messenger of death did not pass. Inside the

house they could feed in calmness and security on the lamb, whose blood was on the lintel and the side-posts outside. For God’s word to Israel was: "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.) What virtue could there be in the blood? they might ask, and probably ask in vain. But their security lay not in what they thought of it, but in what God thought of it. With their door shut they could not see it, nor was there any need for them to see it. The point, and the all-important point was, Would Jehovah see it? He did; so not one of the first-born of Israel was smitten that night. Now, no one could have devised such a way of escape from judgment, and none but God can declare what will exempt from His visitation of wrath; for, since it is divine judgment which is to be executed, to God alone belongs the prerogative of announcing what that is which can screen sinners from it. But why was the blood of the paschal lamb to keep out the angel of death? In the blood is the life of the flesh. (Leviticus 17:11.) So, sprinkled outside on the door-posts, it proclaimed that life had been taken on behalf of those who were within. Hence they were secure in the midst of a scene of judgment. Believing God’s word, obedient in faith, they proved the sheltering efficacy of blood. But what virtue was there in the paschal lamb? None intrinsically. It was the type, however, of that, sacrifice which is of priceless and abiding value before God; so there was one mark in common between it and the true sacrifice, which helps to identify it as the type of that which was to be offered to God on the cross. A bone of the former was not to be broken (Exodus 12:46), the foreshadowing, as John the Evangelist points out (John 19:36), of the treatment by the soldiers of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ when dead upon the cross. As then, so it is now. There is a wrath to come. (Romans 1:18.) Of this Christians were fully cognizant in apostolic days, and were awaiting the advent of Him who delivers from it previous to executing it. (1 Thessalonians 1:10.) So the Thessalonian saints, but recently idolaters, when sheltered by the blood of Christ from all fear of the coming wrath, could rest in the contemplation of the future on the simple word of God. For the Lord has said: "He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) Is every reader of these lines, like Israel, sheltered by blood from coming judgment. Is every reader, like the Thessalonians, waiting for God’s Son from heaven, who delivers from the wrath to come. If not, why not? C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 83

S. Simple Papers on the Church of God

Simple Papers on the Church of God.

C. E. Stuart.

Revised from volumes 4 and 5 of "The Christian's Friend and Instructor."

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Chapter 1

Hid in God.

There is a word with which Greeks, Jews, and Christians were well acquainted, though each attached to it a different meaning. That word, which in Greek is ecclesia, is rendered into English by church or assembly. The town-clerk of Ephesus made use of it when he attempted, and with success, to calm the excited crowd in the theatre of the city, which prided itself on being the temple-keeper of Artemis the Great. "If Demetrius," he said, "and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open" (rather the law courts are being held), "and there are deputies (or proconsuls): let them implead one another. But if ye enquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly (ecclesia)." (Acts 19:38-39.) Had a Jew been interrogated about the ecclesia, the thought that would have been uppermost in his mind would have been the congregation of the Lord, a privileged body called out from the rest of the nations, membership of which by birth belonged exclusively to the children of Israel. Of this assembly Stephen made mention in his memorable speech before the sanhedrim on the day of his martyrdom. (Acts 7:38.) Into this assembly no Ammonite or Moabite could enter, even to their tenth generation for ever; and the children of an Edomite, though descendants of Abraham, could only form part of it in the third generation. (Deuteronomy 23:3-8.) It was a privileged company indeed; for it was Jehovah's assembly, and is styled the congregation of the Lord. He had a right therefore to limit it nationally to Israel, and to determine under what circumstances, and at what time, any, who were not of the race of Israel after the flesh, should be numbered amongst it, as well as to declare who those were, not of the seed of Jacob, who must abandon all hopes of ever forming part of it. And how many in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah learnt, surely to their sorrow, that the congregation of the Lord was limited in extent, and was composed of a privileged company, of which they did not, and could not, form part! (Ezra 10:1-44; Nehemiah 13:1-31) In that assembly we too have not, nor ever will have, a part. But Scripture teaches us about another

assembly, called the assembly of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15), and which the Lord Jesus Christ has been graciously pleased to call His own. (Matthew 16:18.) It is with this that Christians are familiar, and of which they form part. It is of this, too, that they speak, when the word church falls from their lips. Very frequently do we meet with ecclesia applied to the Christian assembly in the pages of the New Testament. All the apostolic writers but Jude refer to it, and Mark is the only other New Testament penman who was not led of the Holy Ghost to take notice of it. But the first who applied the word ecclesia to that assembly, to which we in an ordinary way restrict it, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke of it as something new, and not then even in existence. "I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell (or hades) shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18.) An assembly peculiar in its formation, and imperishable in its nature — such are the characteristics of it, as here set forth by the Lord; and as He is the first in the sacred volume who speaks of it, so is He the last. In Matthew He speaks of it viewed as a whole. In Revelation He sends His angel to testify to His saints in the churches, speaking that well-known word in the plural, because viewing the Church in its local aspect, each local company being called the assembly. (Revelation 22:16.)

There was a time, then, when the Church, in the sense in which the Lord used the term, did not exist. The assembly, or congregation of the Lord, had been on earth, and could point to its history of about fifteen centuries' duration, before the assembly to which Christians belong had been once mentioned, or called into being. Yet all that time, and for a far longer period than that, the Church of which the Lord first spoke had a definite place in God's thoughts, and, moreover, had always formed part, and a very important part, of that wonderful plan which God is working out to the display of His own glory, and that of His Son. Of these facts we become cognizant through the writings of the apostle Paul, who alone of the sacred writers treats at length of the Church of God. That the Church formed part of the wonderful plan of God we learn from the epistle to the Colossians, in which the apostle tells those saints, that it was given to him, as the minister by whom the mystery was revealed, to fulfil (or complete) the word of God. (Colossians 1:25.) Now, by this he did not mean that no further revelations on the part of God, beyond those already vouchsafed to him, were to be made. He makes provision indeed for giving a due place to fresh revelations in 1 Corinthians 14:30. Paul was not writing of what we call the canon of Scripture. That was not complete when he died; for John did not lay aside his pen, if indeed he had commenced to use it, till after the departure of the apostle of the Gentiles to be with Christ. Many things were revealed to John in Patmos, for which we should search in vain in the epistles of Paul. In what sense then was it given to the latter to fulfil the word of God? He, the only apostle who had persecuted the Curch of God, was the honoured instrument selected to reveal the dispensation or economy of the mystery of the Christ. The mystery, when thus revealed, completed the range of subjects of which it has pleased the divine Being in His word to treat. Creation, the fall of man, the atonement, and the kingdom, had been declared by other instruments. By Paul was made known the mysteryChrist the Head, and His people the members of His body, the two making up the mystic man called the Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 3:4.) Thenceforth God's counsels, as far as He has been pleased to disclose them, stood all revealed, and the word of God was fulfilled, or completed.

Further we are authorized in stating that the Church, which was not made known in other ages unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets by the

Spirit, was nevertheless no afterthought of His; for from the beginning of the world it had been hid in God, who created all things. (Ephesians 3:9.) The One who had planned the whole work of creation, and by His divine power had carried out His purpose, had all along kept hidden in the recesses of His bosom that wonderful secret, so closely connected with His glory and His counsels about His Son. Of this Paul was singled out from all intelligent creatures to be the first exponent.

Revealed first to a man, it concerns men, and, as the apostle declared, it was a service given to him to enlighten all as to the dispensation of the mystery. To no Christian therefore should God's teaching about the Church be uninteresting. None can say that it does not concern them. But further, angelic beings are instructed by the disclosure of this secret; for not only are all to be enlightened as to the dispensation of the mystery, but the manifold wisdom of God is now by the Church made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. (Ephesians 3:9-10.)

Formed, then, so late in the world's history as the Church was, is it destined, it may be asked, to possess a mere ephemeral existence? By no means. For the epistle, which tells us that the mystery had been hid in God from the beginning of the ages, states clearly that the Church will ever abide. "Unto God," writes the apostle, "be glory in the Church in (or, and in) Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21.) The first heaven and the first earth will pass away; national distinctions, it would seem, will cease; but the Church will throughout eternity exist as something marked and distinct from every one and every thing which does not form part of it. The mystery therefore, we learn, was hidden in God from the beginning of the world, but was not spoken of till the Lord Jesus announced that He would build His assembly; yet we may well believe that it was ever present to the divine mind, though, as God has not stated that, we as creatures are not in a position dogmatically to affirm it. Remembering, however, in what terms it is described in the New Testament, we seem to have adequate grounds to conclude that it was so. For it is the Body of Christ, and will by-and-by be openly owned as His Bride. It is also the building which grows to an holy temple in the Lord.

Surely, then, when God acted in creative power, and brought man upon this scene, a creature so different from all the others which He created and made, we may well believe that He had in His mind that man, of which our frame, as we learn, is a figure. Again, when He provided for Adam the helpmeet, formed her out of the man, and brought her to him, is it too much to suppose that other thoughts than those simply of providing the man with a wife were in the divine mind, even thoughts about that Bride which His Son would die to possess, and would sanctify to present her to Himself for His own joy for ever? And when Solomon's temple was erected, the pattern of which God had given to David (1 Chronicles 28:19), and Jehovah graciously and openly took possession of it by the cloud of glory which filled the house, we may well believe that He looked on to that temple which He would build, formed not of material stones, however large and costly, but of stones infinitely more precious to Him, even living stones, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. But if any think that by such remarks we are travelling beyond the bounds of sober thought, and entering the realms of airy speculation, such must certainly acknowledge that there was a moment in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, when the beauty of His Church, His Bride, came within the scope of His vision. For in the house with His disciples He spake that parable of the kingdom, which tells of a merchantman, who, seeking goodly pearls, was satisfied when he had found just one pearl of great price. None at that time could have understood of what He was speaking. Afterwards they must have discerned the purport of His teaching. The one pearl of great price, its value and its

beauty acknowledged by the merchantman, left him nothing to desire but to possess it. At what a cost was that done!

What then His disciples could not have understood at the first, some in these days have had opened up to them, and when reading that parable know who is intended by the merchantman, how he gave up all he possessed to acquire the pearl, and of what that one pearl is a figure. In future papers we hope to enter more at length into this subject of the Church of God.

Chapter 2. Its Present Relation to God. When God had brought Israel through the Red Sea as a people redeemed by power, they celebrated His goodness in song, and declared their wish to prepare for Him a habitation. (Exodus 15:2.) The thought they expressed as the desire of their heart was a new one, but a right one; for their redemption having been accomplished, God could thus dwell, and, as we learn afterwards (Exodus 25:8), He would thus dwell amongst them. And those who shared in that redemption were privileged to provide the materials, a willing offering from grateful hearts made glad by the exercise of delivering power on their behalf. In the wilderness God dwelt in the tabernacle, in the land His abode was the House; both habitations erected after patterns expressly given to Moses and to David, and from materials offered by His people on the first occasion, and by David on the second. Of course, what ever they brought must have borne in one way or another the impress of the Creator's hand; for they could only bring of that with which their God had enriched them. Creation, both animate and inanimate, was laid under tribute to yield what was wanted for Jehovah's habitation. Things useful, things costly, things precious, things beautiful, were provided in profusion for the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the willingness of the people to offer was only checked by the announcement, that nothing more was required. (Exodus 36:5-7.) The tabernacle gave place to the temple. God, who had dwelt in the former, dwelt in the latter, till the bright cloud of glory, the Shechinah, departed from the house, as seen in vision by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 10:1-22), loth to go, yet unable to stay because of the iniquities of the children of Israel. From that time to the present God has never dwelt in His house at Jerusalem. It was His house when rebuilt; the Lord acknowledged it as such, and He graced it by His presence as God's house, His house, on the occasion of His triumphal entry into the doomed city and temple. By-and-by, as Ezekiel shows, the Lord Jehovah will return to it, never again to leave it, the place of His throne, and the place of the soles of His feet, where He will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever. (Ezekiel 43:7.) In Jerusalem then He does not now dwell. Their house was left to the Jews desolate; that was its condition when God ceased to inhabit it. To outward eyes it looked grand and imposing. In His eyes, whose house it was, it was even then desolate; and that condition cannot alter till the Jews shall see Him, and welcome His return, saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:38-39.) Has God then now no habitation upon earth? A Jew would surely say that He has not. A Christian should answer that He has; a habitation however, different in character, and formed of materials unlike any that Israel, Solomon, or men could provide. For redemption having been accomplished, redemption by the blood of God's Lamb, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to heaven having been effected, God has formed for Himself by the Holy Ghost a habitation upon earth. Of old — men built for God His dwelling-place, now He has built one for Himself; a building to which His people cannot by their offerings contribute, yet without whom it could never have been made. And as the tabernacle and the temple were severally composed of materials provided in their natural state by the Creator of the universe, so God's present habitation bears the marks of the Creator's

handiwork; for in creative power in grace God has acted, and formed for Himself the stones, living stones (1 Peter 2:5), those who are a new creation in Christ Jesus, even believers on His name; and this habitation of God has several names, each one of course appropriate and expressive. It is the house of God, the temple of God, and the assembly of the living God. Of all these terms, when speaking of it, does the apostle Paul make use. Let us look a little into them. A habitation of God. This teaches us that God can still dwell upon earth, though the tabernacle has been for ages non-existent, and the temple at Jerusalem has been for centuries laid low.

What a delight it evidently was to God to dwell amongst His people! He gathered Israel around Himself in the wilderness in an order which He was pleased to appoint (Numbers 2:1-34.), and issued an injunction for the exclusion from the camp of every leper, every one that had an issue, and whosoever was defiled by the dead, "that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." (Numbers 5:3.) Again, at the close of their wilderness life, God reminded them, when speaking of the land of their inheritance, upon which innocent blood was not to lie unavenged, that He the Lord dwelt among the children of Israel. (Numbers 35:34.) And as He told Moses, so He told Solomon, of His dwelling among His people. Whilst the house was building God cheered the kiug with the promise, that, if he was obedient, the Lord would dwell among the children of Israel, and not forsake them. (1 Kings 6:12-13.) After it was built God re-affirmed it, when He appeared to Solomon the second time, twenty years after the king had commenced to lay the foundations of the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 9:1-3.) It is true the continuance of His presence was conditional on the king’s obedience; yet surely God did delight to dwell among His people, and to tell them of it. But not less by deed, as well as by word, did the Lord proclaim this. When Moses had finished the erection of the tabernacle, the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, aud the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34.) Not a day elapsed, after His earthly dwelling-place was made ready for Him, before the Lord openly and formally took possession of His habitation, to which none had invited Him, but out of which He would not consent to remain. Again, when Solomon had dedicated the house at Jerusalem, the cloud, which had rested on the tent of the congregation at Sinai, appeared afresh on mount Moriah, and filled the house; and the glory, which had prevented Moses from entering the tabernacle, prevented the priests from standing to minister; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 8:11.) If God took a delight in dwelling in the midst of His people then, not less does He surely now, since He has made them His habitation in the Spirit. The ideas, then, of God’s habitation, God’s house, God’s temple, God’s assembly too, are not new. Israel, in a way, could speak of them all as terms with which they were familiar, and could have turned to the written word for divine authority as to the use of them. But what was new, and is peculiar to Christian teaching, is the application of the terms "habitation," "house," and "temple" to the company of God’s people upon earth. God is present upon earth, though His Son has been cast out of the world. He dwells too upon earth. He possesses, He acknowledges, a habitation peculiarly, really His own. "In Christ Jesus," writes Paul, "ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22.) To this same building Peter refers. (1 Peter 2:5.) The apostle of the circumcision thus bears testimony to it in common with the apostle of the Gentiles, the one and the other reminding those specially under their charge of the privilege which was theirs. Those who had been formerly Gentiles, and therefore could never have entered within the enclosure of the temple set apart for the race of Israel — those too who had been Jews, but had turned their backs on mount Zion as well as on mount Moriah, when they went forth to Christ without the camp — those both learnt how richly God

had dealt with them in grace, in making them part of that which He deigns to call His habitation. Such was a privilege of those formerly Gentiles, far surpassing anything which they could have enjoyed as proselytes at Jerusalem. This too was the privilege of the believing remnant of the Jews, to which their fellow-countrymen, unless converted before the rapture of the saints, must ever remain strangers. It is, it must be, a privilege of a very high order, to form part of the habitation of God upon earth by the Spirit. This habitation, however, is also called God's house. Now, though to some the distinction between habitation and house may seem a trivial one, it is none the less real. A house is a habitation, but a habitation need not be a house. And though the habitation of God is said to be built, and the assembly at Corinth is called God's building, (oikodome), it is nevertheless true, that where Scripture uses the term house (oikos) with reference to the assembly of God, the context suggests distinctive teaching in connection with it. God's habitation is treated of by the apostle Paul, when dwelling on the privileges of those who formed part of it. Of God's house he writes, when reminding his readers of their responsibility in connection with it. Thus, addressing the Hebrews, he says to them, "Whose house" (God's house) "are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Hebrews 3:6.) They would prove by steadfastness that they really were part of God's house. So Peter, reminding his readers that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), adds, "And if it first begin at us," etc.

Again, addressing Timothy, Paul writes to his child in the faith, to tell him how to behave himself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God. (1 Timothy 3:15.) The rules, the regulations, for a house are laid down by the Master, the owner of it. And since the assembly is God's house, not man's, Timothy was to learn how to conduct himself in it. Every one would reckon it a monstrous intrusion for another person to set about the regulating of a house, unless distinctly authorised by the master to do it. Men would naturally resent such an action on the part of their fellows, and no plea on the ground of taste or judgment would avail against their condemnation for arrogating to themselves a position and authority in a house which did not belong to them. The master, the owner, all would agree, and not a stranger, nor even an inmate, is the fitting person to say how his house is to be conducted. Shall men then be allowed their right in such a matter, and God be denied His? Now has not this been practically the case in Christendom? Christians, and in some cases those not even converted, have taken upon themselves, with the sanction of the community at large, to make rules and regulations for a house, of which, if converted, they certainly form part, but which belongs to another, even to God. And such practices are openly justified, and commended as fitting and proper. Once however let the force of the term God's house sink into the heart, and the impropriety, as well as incongruity, of men drawing up rules for the guidance of that house will be fully apparent. Timothy even, apostolic delegate as he was, holding thereby a position, which, Titus excepted, no one else that we know of was ever called to occupy, could not make any rules himself, but received them from the apostle. Timothy surely never dreamt, the apostle never countenanced the idea of any man, or any company of men, laying down rules formed in their wisdom for the orderly government of God's house. Should not the very term God's house suggest to each one the propriety of learning from the Word, what are God's rules for its guidance and government? But this house is also called God's temple, the shrine, as it were, of the Deity who dwells in it. Twice in the New Testament do we meet with this designation, and both times it is used by the apostle Paul when writing to the same company of Christians, those gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ at Corinth. The context helps us

here also to determine the import of the term, and the reason of its selection. In the first epistle (1 Corinthians 3:16), when warning teachers to beware of what they were teaching, he writes to the whole assembly there gathered: "Know ye not that ye are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, such (hoitines, not which) ye are." With the consciousness that the assembly was God's temple, could they be indifferent to the introduction of false doctrine? Should any too, remembering this character of the assembly, be careless as to the doctrines they taught? The temple would remind all of the holy character of the assembly, and therefore of the holiness which befitted it. Again, when speaking of the general company of God's saints on earth, and not of the local assembly merely at Corinth, the same apostle reminds them that Christians should be separate from evil, and from communion with unbelievers, on the ground that believers in the aggregate are the living God's temple, who will dwell in them, and walk in them. (2 Corinthians 6:16.) One sees at a glance, that there is a force, and a fitness in the term temple, used in this connection of thought, which no other word could so well set forth. Gentiles as well as Jews knew what the word temple would imply.

Here another thing should be pointed out. When the apostle writes of God's habitation, or of God's house, he knows of but one such upon earth. Where then can it be found? For it is no ideal thing, no phantom, since Timothy was to know how to behave himself in it. But where is it? Jerusalem cannot produce it; Peter's at Rome cannot lay claim to be it. No cathedral, no building of wood, brick, iron, or stone, is entitled to this appellation. God does not dwell in any such at present. He dwells in His own habitation, which in Christ Jesus He has made for Himself by the Spirit. Understanding this, we have to correct our thoughts, and to change perhaps our language, which is the index to our thoughts; for we cannot go now to God's house as those of old did, and as saints will by-and-by. (Psalms 122:1-9.) We indeed who believe form part of it. If, however, we talk of going to God's house, when we mean that we are about to assemble ourselves with God's saints for worship or for prayer, do we not by our language show, that we have lost the right thought of what His house really is? We are attaching to a building, or a locality a term, which now belongs only to a peculiar company of people upon earth. Distinctive Christian teaching is virtually set aside, or ignored, as long as such language is accepted as correct. It was correct language for a Jew. It will be correct language for all who worship Jehovah by-and-by. (Micah 4:2.) But scriptural language is not of necessity Christian language, though Christian language — understanding by that what the Bible authorizes — must ever be scriptural, if real. As regards the terms "temple" and "assembly," the usage of Scripture is different. They are applied to the local gathering, as well as to the general company of Christians upon earth. (See 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16, for the application of the term temple; and 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Acts 20:28, for the use of the term church, or assembly.) Nor are these the only senses in which these words are used; for both the one and the other are employed when the true Church universal is the subject in hand. (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 2:21.) To a consideration of the word assembly let us now turn. By God's assembly on earth is to be understood that company of people, which, professedly at least, has been gathered out from the rest of mankind unto Him. At first it was, as in glory it will really be, composed only of true Christians; for such alone at first professed to be believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. After a time the assembly of God included others besides real believers, but none who did not profess to be Christians. Now, wherever the truth has spread, members of the assembly are to be found. And in every place where a few souls professedly own the Lord Jesus

Christ, there an assembly is regarded as existing. It may be like that in Laodicea, in which mere profession was the prevailing characteristic. It may be like that in Philadelphia, where faithfulness to Christ was a marked feature of it. But whatever may be the spiritual condition of the company locally gathered, if professedly called out to God, it is regarded in the Word as God's assembly in that locality, and has responsibilities of no mean order in consequence. How little is this understood by those who only outwardly bear the name of Christ! Profession, of course, should be true; but profession of itself entails responsibility; and all who bear the name of Christ by profession declare that they are members of the assembly of God.

Dismissing at present from our consideration of the subject the assembly as it will be perfect in glory, in which none but real Christians will be found, let us confine our attention to the assembly as viewed upon earth at any one time, whether in its local or general aspect. Of God's assembly we read in the Word, and by that we are reminded of a company of people as such, distinguished from every other assembly upon earth. In what varied lights God's assembly is seen. If those who composed it were before the apostle's mind, he could write of the assembly of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1), or the assemblies of the nations. If the country in which such gatherings were was to be expressed, he makes mention of the assemblies of Galatia, or of Asia. (1 Corinthians 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:19.) If Paul was thinking of the localities in which different companies met, he writes of the church, or assembly, in the house of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15), Philemon (Php 2:1-30), or Aquila. (Romans 16:5.) When he thought of the spiritual condition of the members, he writes of the assemblies of the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:33.) Viewing the churches in relation to Christ, Paul describes them as assemblies of Christ. (Romans 16:16.) When remembering to whom the Church belonged, he styles it the assembly of God. And if its security is uppermost in his mind, he can write of it as in God the Father. (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.) A glance at these different ways of describing it shows this clearly, that men's thoughts about it are not all drawn from Scripture. They talk of a national church and of local churches. In Scripture we meet with assemblies of a country, and the assembly, or church in a town. The assembly of God! What a thought it gives us! God connecting Himself with a company of people on earth, who had need, and professedly at least acknowledged it, of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now we would ask, How does this term 'assembly of God' strike on the ear, or impress the mind of those who hear, or read about it? There was one once who evidently felt in no light way its force. Paul has left on record, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, what it was to him; for, writing of his grievous sin before his conversion, he states that he persecuted the assembly of God. Saints they were. Believers on the Lord Jesus such had proved themselves to be. Yet he does not term them saints or believers, but writes of the assembly of God, thereby exposing his former undisguised and unmitigated hostility to the company gathered unto God. (1 Corinthians 15:9.) Could he have expressed in a stronger way what he did in mistaken zeal for God? How far wrong must he have been when he was a persecutor of the assembly of the living God! Again, writing to the Corinthians to expose the grossness of their conduct at the Lord's Supper, he pertinently asks them, Would they despise the assembly of God? (1 Corinthians 11:22.) An answer to such a question should surely be prompt and unhesitating. Could any one who professed to serve God despise His assembly? To a question so pointed, so searching, surely but one answer could be given. How the need there was for such a question shows of what our wretched hearts are capable. In conclusion, habitation of God tells us of our privilege; house of God reminds us of responsibilities; temple of God warns us of its holy character; assembly of God

proclaims to whom it has been, professedly at least, gathered out.

Chapter 3. The Assembly of Christ.

Till Adam was formed we have no mention of Eve. Till the Second Man appeared we have no doctrinal teaching about the Church. God brought Eve to Adam. Christ came to get His bride. When all was in paradisaical order upon earth Eve appeared upon the scene. Into a world which knew not God the Son of God entered; and upon this globe, on which Adam and Eve first met, did Christ die to possess the object of His choice. Adam had nothing to do but to welcome his helpmeet — God's best gift to that creature whom He had placed as head over this creation. Christ had everything to do to get His bride, and to fashion her according to the requirements of His heart. Unless He died, He could never even possess her. Yet to die was not enough. Service, personal and continuous, was and is still needful, before presenting "the assembly to Himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27.) A state of perfection this is to which fallen man could never attain; yet short of which the Second Man will not rest satisfied.

What interest, then, must Christ take in the Church! What a place must it occupy in His affections, when, to acquire it for Himself, He would die! and to have it holy and without blemish, He would charge Himself with constant service on its behalf! And if such is His intention, and such His service to affect it, none surely of those who form part of the assembly, or church, should think it beneath them to learn from Scripture about it, or count it a matter of small moment whether they know anything of the Church of God or not. Any willingly remaining in ignorance of Scripture teaching about it, either manifest selfishness in only wishing to be assured of their own salvation, or indifference to the grace bestowed upon us in being allowed to share God's thoughts respecting it, and to understand in some measure Christ's interest in it.

What.then are the Church's relations to Christ? It is His assembly, His body, His bride. Something about each of these, as was natural, we learn from His own lips. Of His assembly, as such, He alone speaks. Local assemblies indeed are characterized by the apostle Paul as belonging to Christ. (Romans 16:16.) This is true of all of them. Further, the same apostle describes the assemblies which were in Judea as in Christ. (Galatians 1:22.) This too was common to all of them; but it marked out the assemblies in Judea as distinct from any synagogue of the Jews. They were assemblies of Christ, and in Christ. Terms and truths these are of which no Jew could ever have made use, or have professed even to acknowledge. Christ, however, alone treats of the whole assembly as His.

Here it may be well to state that the Church is distinct from the kingdom. All who form part of the assembly are in the kingdom; but all in the kingdom do not form part of the assembly. Every saint who will have left the earth ere the Lord returns to it shall reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4); but every one of such will not be a member of His body, the Church. Saints before the cross were not members of His body; saints who will be on earth after the rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 will likewise never become part of that wonderful company. Kingdom truth is common to both the Old and New Testaments. It pervades the volume of revelation. Church truth is only taught us in the latter. In conformity with this, it is only subsequent to the introduction of the King upon the scene, and when the character of the kingdom, during the time of His rejection by the Jews and the world, has been sketched out by Himself in parabolic teaching (Matthew 13:1-58), that we have any

mention of His assembly. (Matthew 16:1-28) Just as Eve was the latest production of the Creator's handiwork, so the assembly, the body, the bride of Christ, is the last new subject of which the volume of inspiration treats. Eve, however, appeared when Adam's authority was owned, and his place in this creation unquestioned. The Church is only revealed when the Lord has been openly rejected, and the cross, as the witness and expression of it, has to form a necessary part of His teaching.

Again, the introduction of the Church in its relation to Christ as His body and His bride necessarily reminds us of His manhood; for it is as man that He has both. Now His manhood is dwelt on in the Old as well as in the New Testament. But, since the assembly is only gathered out, whilst Israel has her bill of divorcement, and will be taken away ere Jehovah will comfort Jerusalem with the assurance that He is still her husband, (the whole Church epoch being, as it were, a parenthesis in the prophetic stream of time) one understands why the Church, which has to do with the Lord as man, is nevertheless, though found in the gospel history, not met with in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. They wrote of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories which should follow. (1 Peter 1:11.) Now the sufferings and glories of Christ concern all God's saints most intimately, and are closely connected with kingdom truth. Hence the earthly people require to be informed of them. But the Church is essentially a heavenly thing; so church truth is distinct from kingdom truth, and fitly finds its place in that volume of inspiration which deals with the work of God amongst men during the rejection by Israel of their King.

Further, since the Church is only gathered out from the nations of the earth during the rejection of Christ by the Jews, for Scripture regards, it as distinct from the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 10:32), we may see likewise the fitness of its mention in Matthew's gospel, and of its absence from the histories of the other three evangelists. For since it is as man that the Son of God stands in peculiar personal relation to the Church, it is plain that in the gospel of John, which sets Him forth as Jehovah, such a subject would not be in place. In Luke too, who is occupied with the kingdom and God's grace to man, the Lord Jesus is presented as the Son of man, a character which shows that He has to do with earth and man in the widest sense. One may understand, then, that the Church, which, though formed of believers from any and every nation to whom the word of grace has reached, yet is an election out of Jews and Gentiles, would not form part of the Holy Ghost's line of teaching, as given us by the beloved physician. In Mark's account too, who narrates events very much in historical order, and has presented the Lord in the servant character, as Prophet or Teacher, who is at the same time the Son of God, dispensational teaching is not the character of his gospel; so instruction about the Church lies beyond the limits within which that writer was to confine himself. It is the personal ministry of Christ in the gospel amongst men that he so graphically presents to his readers. But in Matthew the Lord is presented as Immanuel, King of the Jews, though rejected by the people. To him then was it given to hand down the teaching of the Lord about the kingdom duriug the King's absence from the earth. In accordance with this, the character of the kingdom during His absence from the earth is dwelt upon at some length, in those parables which are similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens; whereas in Luke, the blessings to be enjoyed in the kingdom form a prominent part of his teaching about it. Now since that was the line specially appointed for Matthew to take up, it is not difficult to see, that the instruction which he was commissioned to communicate, would not be complete without some notice of the Church. By the one who describes the active service of Christ in the gospel, not a word is said about the

Church. By him, who was empowered to relate what would be seen on earth in consequence of the Lord's rejection, the Church is specially mentioned. So what John must have heard in common with Matthew, and what Peter must ever have treasured up in his remembrance, finds no place in the gospel of the son of Zebedee; nor in that of Mark either, in which, if written, as tradition tells us, after intercourse with Peter, one might naturally have looked for a special mention of it. To the son of Alpheaus alone are we indebted, under God, for our knowledge both of the Lord's remarks about it, and of that service especially entrusted to Peter, the carrying out of which has been recorded by Luke in the Acts.

What a moment it must have been when that secret, hitherto kept concealed, was first touched upon by the Lord! The period of His ministry, the district in the land, as well as the occupation of the Lord at the time, all are noted. After His rejection had been made manifest, and a short time before that brief glimpse of His millennial glory, which Peter, James, and John were permitted to witness, in the extreme north-east quarter of the land, and when engaged in prayer, as Luke only has told us (Luke 9:18), with the twelve around Him, the Lord Jesus questioned them as to men's thoughts about Him. Men's thoughts were various, all wide of the mark, but all agreeing in this, that they did not discern in Him anything more than what they and their fathers had witnessed. John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah, or as one of the prophets — such were the surmises of men, and with them the twelve were well acquainted. To the Lord's first question, then, there was a general response. To His second, "Whom say ye that I am?" addressed though it was to the twelve, one only replied. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." A prophet the Lord truly was, though different in character and person from all who preceded Him. Had Peter more discernment than the rest, that he only answered? He was indebted, we learn, to divine revelation, and that from the Father, for his knowledge of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed was he to have received it; yet it was no glory to him that he knew it. Upon that, as Matthew states, the Lord proceeded to tell him that He would build His assembly; for the rock on which it is built is the truth, as Peter confessed it, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Two things have we here about the Church of all-importance to notice. The one, that Christ would build His assembly. As yet then it had not existed. So none of the Old Testament saints, up to and including John the Baptist, formed part of it; for they had died before it began to be built. The other is, that the rock on which it is built is the truth of Christ's person, as revealed by the Father to Peter. Can then those who receive not that testimony form part of the assembly which is built upon it? How should they be reckoned as part of that building, the foundation of which they repudiate? Take away the foundation, and the Church has nothing to rest upon. Refuse to own that foundation, and such an one has no part or lot in the matter. What is built upon that rock death can never overcome. Against the Son of the living God, who shall, who can prevail? He died. Yes; but He rose, the witness that He could not be holden of death. Something enduring, something which death could not overthrow, something which no creature power should remove, the Lord was about to build, and that something was the Church. The foundation of the assembly thus declared, the rearing of it is written of, and described elsewhere. Peter, a stone in the building — for the Lord distinctly shows that he was not the rock itself ("Thou art Peter (petros, 1:e. a stone), and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church," are His words) — makes clear to us who are the living stones (1 Peter 2:5); and Paul acquaints us with the ultimate destination of that which is thus built. (Ephesians 2:21.)

Remembering the historical associations of the neighbourhood in which the Lord Jesus was at that moment, not far certainly from the site of the city of Dan, the announcement of the stability of His Church has marked significance. Dan had been memorable for the attempt of Jeroboam, and that successfully, to turn the eyes of Israel from Jerusalem and Jehovah, who dwelt therein, to the golden calves which he erected in Bethel and in Dan, that most northern city of his kingdom. The idolatrous worship there established has passed away; the calves, the altars, the priests, all in connection with it have come to nought. What Christ would build, bound to no place upon earth, though existing amongst men, was never to pass away. Against it the gates of Hades should never prevail; for with it He connected Himself, and on the confession of His person as the Christ, the Son of the living God, this new, this everlasting building was to rest.

"My assembly," He calls it, though not then built. 'Tis true there were some of its stones in existence and surrounding the Builder at that very moment; pillars too some of them were, as they are called in Galatians 2:9; but as yet not a stone had been laid in its place; the structure had not even been commenced. "I will build" most pointedly shows that. And that He builds that assembly, which is elsewhere called the Church of God, on the rock, the truth as to His person, is a plain proof that none but those who confess Him can form part of God's assembly, as viewed in its universal character. (Ephesians 1:22-23.) But further, since Christ is the Builder, and the assembly is His, what He builds must be solid, real, and substantial. That must ever abide. Imperfection can have no place there. So in this, the first mention of the assembly, it is brought before us as the company who are really what they profess, Christians, not in name only, but in truth. No hay, no wood, no stubble, can find a place there. Stones, living stones only, are the materials with which Christ builds; for it is the Church, according to God's purpose, of which He here treats. Imperishable is the structure, firm the foundation; for it rests on the truth about His person, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. With this assembly He connects Himself. He owns it as, nay, calls it, His. All that it would appear to outward eyes He well knew. Its great failings, which men, the world, would afterwards chronicle, were before His mind. Its failure in corporate testimony before the world was all present to His vision; yet He calls it His assembly. His name was to be indissolubly connected with it. How precious then must it be to Him! How gracious that He is not ashamed to call it His! From Himself too we learn something of the provision made for it. First, that evil within it may be dealt with; and secondly, that His presence may be counted upon. Of both of these the Lord teaches us in Matthew 18:18-20. As the assembly is composed of those who had once been children of wrath, and in whom the flesh, sin, the old man, would yet remain, Christ well knew both how saints might fail, and the watchfulness of the enemy in order to introduce corruption into that which he cannot destroy. The Acts of the Apostles illustrates this in the history of Ananias and Sapphira. The epistles of Paul, of John, and of Jude attest it likewise. Christ therefore has invested the assembly with authority to deal with offenders in its midst in the most solemn way: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." What an authority is this! Action taken upon earth — if rightly taken, of course — is ratified in heaven. God owns, and will firmly maintain, the judicial dealings of the assembly. If it binds on a person his sin it is bound in heaven. If it looses a person from his sins) by receiving the individual amongst them as one fit to be at the Lord's table, that act is confirmed in heaven. At Corinth that power was exercised, and the offending brother felt it. To the world it might seem a small matter that the individual was put away from the midst of God's saints for grievous sin. Yet, since in heaven the sentence was ratified, what Christian could

afford to despise it? No miraculous power, it is true, accompanied that sentence to strike terror into the heart of the Corinthian community at large; no vengeance from heaven visibly overtook the offender. The power that was wielded was nevertheless very great, and the brother dealt with sorely felt it. (2 Corinthians 2:7.) With what authority then is the assembly invested! That man upon earth should give heed to admonitions from heaven, all would admit; but that the action of the assembly on earth, whether in binding or loosing, should be ratified on high, was something new indeed. To the world, church censure may seem a most impotent act. If done, however, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it is really most potent; for no creature power can annul it. But not only has Christ declared that the assembly is invested with such solemn, such weighty authority; He has also openly assured His people of His presence, even if it be reduced to the greatest possible weakness as regard numbers. Observe with what solemnity this is also introduced: "Again I say unto you" [or if the reading of the Vatican and many other uncials be adopted, "Again, verily I say unto you"], "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." So divided, so rent by factions the assembly might be, that only two or three would be gathered unto His name; but if so gathered, He would be in their midst. Again, the whole Christian community in a place might only number two or three. From that number, insignificant though it might appear, Christ would not be absent. The sole condition for His presence is, "Gathered unto (eis) His name." And when in the attitude of dependence, that is, in prayer — for it is of those met for prayer that the Lord speaks in verse 19 — He promised to be in their midst; and if agreeing on that which they asked, His Father would grant their request. With what authority, again we would say it, is the assembly invested. In what weakness too may it be found; but what a privilege may it enjoy — the presence of Christ in its midst. At first believers were of one heart and one soul. (Acts 4:32.) Would that always continue? It would not. And ere the apostles had left the earth, division had manifested itself amongst the saints. Paul felt this (2 Timothy 1:15); John experienced it (3 John 1:9); and we in our day witness it, and feel it. Believers are divided; the assembly is split up into many sects and denominations. What then are we to do? To meet all as one body seems at present impossible. Shall we acknowledge the evil, and acquiesce in it? Shall we fold our hands, and sit down appalled at the magnitude and hopelessness of the task of getting all to see eye to eye? Christ has set before us a different work; viz., to learn what it is to be gathered unto His name, and to act upon it. Then we know what we could not before — the joy and the blessing of His presence in our midst.

Centuries have rolled by since that promise was given; yet it still holds good. And saints there are in these days who have found it to be still true. How little, however, is it understood! How little is the presence of Christ amongst His people really known! The condition necessary for its enjoyment He has clearly stated — gathered unto His name. He is faithful who has promised; for He cannot deny Himself. Why then should any Christian remain a stranger to the conscious fulfilment of such a promise?

Chapter 4 The Body of Christ. In the closest of earthly associations, connected too by the nearest and dearest of ties known to man, does the Church stand in relation to Christ. It is His body. Nothing can be closer than that. It is His bride, with the assured prospect of being manifested as the Lamb’s wife. Nothing can be dearer and nearer than that. And first, as to His body, God has given "Him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is His body, the fulness of Him that

filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:22-23.) Of assemblies, God acknowledges now but one, called here the assembly, the same which is elsewhere termed the assembly of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15), and is claimed by the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have seen, as His own. (Matthew 16:18.) But this assembly is also the body of Christ, which, viewed in this character, has Him for its head.

Now the headship of Christ is by no means an unimportant subject in the Scriptures, nor is it one in which but few have any concern. Far and wide throughout the universe does the headship of Christ extend. Further than the eye of man has yet penetrated is that headship to be acknowledged; for to three distinct spheres does the headship of Christ appertain. He is the head of all principality and power, as we learn from Colossians 2:10. Headship in this character has of course to do with His place in creation; and the mystery of God's will, now disclosed to us in Ephesians 1:10, but not yet carried out, has made known the divine purpose of heading up all things in the Christ. Again, as the Christ, He is the head of every man, the man being in his turn woman's head. (1 Corinthians 11:3.) There is however a third character of headship in which the Lord is presented. "He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." (Colossians 1:18.) The headship over the universe is His who died, and He receives it who created all things, being the firstborn of all creation, and that by virtue of having called it all into being. (Colossians 1:15.) His headship over every male as distinct from the female flows from His incarnation, who as man is the Christ. His headship in relation to the assembly only dates from His resurrection; for until He had died the assembly had no existence; but since He has died and has risen, He stands as head in relation to it. He is head of the body, the Church (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19); He is also head of the Church, as the husband is head of his wife. (Ephesians 5:23.) Of Christ's headship of the assembly the New Testament alone treats, and that only in the epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. This is a much more circumscribed sphere of course than that of headship over the universe; but we are taught, that it is He, who is head over all things, whom God has given to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. His relation to it, and by consequence its relation to Him, as viewed in this character, was both new and peculiar. Nothing of the kind had Israel, God's earthly people, ever known; nothing of the kind will they ever enjoy. To the Church, whether viewed as His body or His bride, He is head, not Lord. Lord of course He is; God made Him such. (Acts 2:36.) Every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (1:e. all intelligent creatures), must ever own Him as Lord. (Php 2:11.) The Church too knows Him as the Lord; but He is head to, not Lord of, the Church. Headship and Lordship both belong to Him, but they are not convertible terms. As Lord, He stands out apart from all others; as head, He is in close association with that to which He is as such connected. Scripture then never speaks of Him as Lord in relation to the Church; for that clause in Ephesians 5:29, when rightly read, stands thus: "Even as the Christ the Church."* Of this assembly He is the head, and it stands to Him in a relation altogether new, being His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Paul alone of the New Testament writers treats of this branch of the subject, and to him was the truth of it first made known. The foundation on which the assembly was to rest was announced, as we have seen, to Peter in the audience of the twelve. The existence of His body upon earth Christ first revealed to Paul (Ephesians 3:3) when in the company of his fellow-travellers, though in words they did not understand. The Lord Jesus was speaking to Saul, but He did not address them. How near were they to the speaker from heaven, and yet remained strangers to the communication, embodied in that single sentence, "Why

persecutest thou me?" No question surely was ever asked more astounding to anyone than this; no interrogation was ever addressed to a prisoner more condemnatory than this. From One whom Saul had never seen, and from that One in heavenly glory, the light of which the whole company beheld, came that startling, penetrating question to the impetuous opponent of God's saints. All that Saul was doing was known to his interrogator. What Saul was doing was unknown to himself. To turn aside the question was impossible; so personal it was, so heart-searching it must have been. To answer it satisfactorily was equally impossible. It convicted him of ignorance of God's mind, and of hatred to God and to His Son. Paul evidently never forgot it, nor the truth which by it was revealed. As proof that he never forgot it, we find that question recorded in all three accounts of his conversion, two of which are related by himself. Writing to the Corinthians, he tells them too of his sin. (1 Corinthians 15:9.) Exhorting the Philippians, he makes mention of it (Php 3:6); and when unbosoming himself to his child in the faith, he again refers to it. (1 Timothy 1:13.) The truth too which was thus revealed took a firm hold of him.. He taught it, he contended for it, he suffered for it. (Ephesians 3:1.) Further, by that question the Lord threw a shield over His persecuted ones, who were dear to Him, and arrested the arm of the self-constituted inquisitor of the saints. But He did more. By the form of His question He revealed the truth, that His saints were part of Himself. Of old Jehovah had declared of Israel that those who touched them touched the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8); 1:e. that which a man guards most carefully. Here the Lord announced that in persecuting His saints Saul was persecuting Him. Thus the mystery was disclosed of a body upon earth, which belonged to a head in heaven.

*Attention to the phraseology of Scripture on this point will help us to form a judgment as to that disputed reading in Acts 20:28, where many good authorities represent the apostle as having said "the assembly of the Lord" instead of "the assembly of God." The former reading we may dismiss as contrary to the phraseology and general teaching of Scripture. "Assembly of God" is a Scriptural term; "assembly of Christ" is a Scriptural thought; "assembly of the Lord," we believe, is neither the one nor the other. For teaching about this body we must turn, as we have said, to the epistles of Paul; not that he was the only one who knew about it, for to God's holy apostles and prophets was it revealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:5); but to Paul was it first made known by revelation. (Ephesians 3:3.) A body on earth, its head in heaven, this constitutes the mystery of the Christ, the two making up the one mystic man — the Christ. And this body is His complement, or fulness, who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:23). Without it as the ascended Christ He was not complete; with it there is nothing left to be desired. The divine conception of the Christ thus stands forth in all its completeness. But what a conception! His fulness the body is, who fills all in all; thoughts, statements, a revelation, we have about the Christ which far surpass our small intelligence to grasp in their fulness. This however is simple, and within the power of our mental faculties to take in, that great as is His glory, who is God as well as man, when looked at as man, though He fills the whole universe with His divine glory, He, the Christ, is not complete without His body, the Church. What an interest He must take, He does take, in that which stands in this relation to Him! It is His body. How close to Him! how really a part of Himself! How full of meaning, then, was the question, "Why persecutest thou me?"

Now this body, in common in this respect with the assembly of God, is presented in the Word in three different lights. All the saints, from Pentecost to the rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, form part of it, and together compose it, according to Ephesians 1:23, Colossians 1:18. And although as

saints they will reign with Christ, and as the assembly, the Lamb's wife in glory, will be the metropolis of the kingdom, the new Jerusalem, it would nevertheless appear, from the revelation of the body being His complement; who fills all in all, that this relation of the Church to Him, its head, will for ever abide; for viewed as the risen man, He is not complete without it. The body then will not, like a dissolving view, merge into the bride, the former disappearing when the latter is publicly displayed. These two characters of the Church are quite distinct now, and will be for ever.

Again, all the saints upon earth at any one time between Pentecost and the rapture are viewed as the body of Christ. Of this we learn from Ephesians 4:16, Colossians 2:19. Hence, at no time of its existence upon earth does it ever lack a limb. It is never as respects its members defective. A maimed body, a defective body, forms no part of Scripture teaching about the assembly or Church of God; and it should be noticed, that only when Scripture treats of the body as wholly in existence upon earth, do we read of its members, or of its joints and bands. Without all its members it could not of course rightly grow, nor properly discharge its functions. But we are plainly taught that it should grow, and as occasion requires should act, and it is to do both upon earth. Hence it is regarded as at all times fully furnished with its members whilst here below. Had we simply man's thoughts about the body of Christ, we should probably have had it depicted as fully furnished with its members, only when viewed in its most comprehensive character, embracing all the saints who do, or will form part of it. This however is the only light in which, when viewed in the Word, the existence of its members is unnoticed. The wisdom of God in speaking of the members, when the body is looked at as on earth, all may discern. The absence of all mention of the members, when the body is viewed as complete in glory, we may surely account for satisfactorily.

Further, each local assembly, meaning thereby all the saints in any given locality, has the characteristic in Scripture of Christ's body, soma Christou. (1 Corinthians 12:27.) We must say it has this characteristic; for the language of the passage, by the omission of the definite article before the noun "body," whilst defining the character of the local assembly, excludes most carefully the thought of independency. The local assembly is charged with the responsibility which belongs to Christ's body. Yet it is not the body of Christ to the exclusion of any of the saints elsewhere; for the saints in any given place are really only part of the body of Christ, though viewed in their local character they are responsible to act for Christ as His body in that place. And whether they understand it or not, whether they act accordingly or not, Scripture regards all saints in any one place as together Christ's body, however many and diverse may be the names which they give to themselves. For there is but one body, as of course the head can have but one. Now this truth, when apprehended, deals a death blow to any denominational position or association. "There is one body, and one Spirit." (Ephesians 4:4.) Of this body Christ is the head (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19); and from Him as such, "all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." One learns from the Word of a double work constantly going on. By the gifts from the ascended Christ, labourers in the Word and doctrine (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers), souls are reached, and the body edified. But beside this we are taught of another work, the increase of the body. For this the service of all the members is requisite, but in connection with, and in subordination to the head. "From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:16.) Thus does the

head care for His body, and provide for its edification and growth. The body is to increase, and that according to the effectual working in the measure of each one part. Are all Christians alive to this? By the gifts of Christ souls are converted, the body is edified, the saints can be perfected. (Ephesians 4:11-12.) The increase of the body, however, is only mentioned in connection with the proper working of each one part. Surely there is something here which is too much forgotten. Edification by gifts of ministry is generally understood. Is the increase of the body by the effectual working of each one part as generally acknowledged? Is it generally remembered, that to "every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ"? (Ephesians 4:7.)

Now, were this the case, would there not be a marked difference in the outward aspect of the Church of God? Instead of casting all responsibility of the assembly on those who labour in the Word, which has too generally been done, being content just to receive from such what they may have to give, would there not be more real fellowship and a more general care for the increase of the body? Now where this is forgotten can it be said that Christians have entered in a broad Catholic way into that which interests Christ upon earth? Are any contented with seeking their own profit merely? Are any satisfied with, in addition to that, helpiug on the spread of the gospel of God’s grace? A happy, blessed service that surely is. But is that all that is put before us in the New Testament? Are we desirous of, and helping forward as far as we can, the increase of the body of Christ? Has the truth of the increase of the body, by the effectual working of each one part, dawned upon the reader, if a Christian, as that which very closely concerns him?

There is a circle of interest very dear to God, within the limits of which the whole race of man upon earth is included. This the Lord Jesus set forth on the day He rose from the dead, when He commissioned His disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Nothing less extensive than this for evangelistic work should bound the sympathies and desires of God’s saints. There is, however, another circle of interest, less extensive in its limits, yet not less important, and very dear to Christ. Within its range none but true Christians are numbered. It is the body of Christ, the increase of which He desires, and in the work of which each part of the body should take its part. Again we would ask, Has the reader acknowledged his responsibility in connection with it? The lack of apprehension as regards this is however of no recent date. Denominational differences have but fostered it and strengthened it. The language too of men, accepted as perfectly proper, bears witness to it, as they talk of "this cause," "that cause," or "our cause." Yet however widely extended may be the cause for which they plead, or which they support, it is far less comprehensive than that of the body of Christ. But to a much older date than that of Luther and Calvin must we trace back this evil. For we see it in those communities in which the clergy are looked upon as the church, and in which they arrogate to themselves all church action and authority. Herein they are wrong. Those who minister the Word are not the church, though part of it. The distinction, on the other hand, between those who do minister and those who do not is perfectly Scriptural, and all should maintain it. But the delegating to the clergy all church power and action, resulting very probably from the decline of spirituality in early days, this it is which has deadened the sense of general responsibility in reference to the increase of the body, till what Scripture teaches upon it has been wholly and for centuries forgotten. The question then may be asked, What am I to do? How can I contribute to the increase of the body? The head, we would reply, will surely teach each member what is its place in the body. To Him we should look for direction; for it is His body, and He knows the part

which each can take for the increase of the whole. How often have Christians looked to men for guidance as to their line of service. How often have godly men set others to work, instead of leaving that to the wisdom of the head, thus practically ignoring the head. Brotherly counsel is one thing, human direction is another. Apollos, as the servant of Christ, would not be directed even by Paul. Paul acknowledged the freedom of the workman from human control. But if we have to own failure in so little apprehending Scripture teaching about the body of Christ, if from the natural selfishness of the human heart we have hitherto restricted our interest to a range less extensive than that of Christ's body, the head, we have to thank God, has never ceased to care for anything less than all His members. And His unwearied devotedness is seen afresh in recalling the attention of His people to important and practical truths so long forgotten. How small, how narrow, how contracted, are men's thoughts compared with the revelation of the body on earth united to the head in heaven! What it is to have such a head, and who is the head, the apostle Paul dwells upon in the epistle to the Colossians. What becomes those who are members of the body is specially set forth in that to the Ephesians. To a study of these epistles under the teaching of the Holy Ghost we recommend any who desire full instructions on the subject.

Nothing can be closer to Christ than the being a member of His body. A privilege indeed; but a privilege connected with great responsibilities. As thus connected with Him, sectional distinctions should drop, and denominational position be surrendered. As members one of another, there are responsibilities likewise. On these we hope to touch in a future article. Meanwhile we here close for the present, hoping in our next to look at the church as the bride of Christ.

Chapter 5 The Bride of Christ. As the assembly of Christ, the Church is told of its everlasting security; as His body, it is reminded of its responsibility; as His bride, it even now enjoys in a special manner His love; "for Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25.) To her present position of bride the attention of the reader is requested. The appellation of bride, used of the Church, is only met with in the Apocalypse (Revelation 21:9; Revelation 22:17), in which book she is also called the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 19:7; Revelation 21:9.) She is the bride of the Lamb, and to Him only of course does she stand in this position, to be openly manifested as such, after that which professes to be the Church shall have been publicly judged as the great whore (Revelation 19:2), the Babylon of the Apocalypse. Now from three of the New Testament penmen do we learn about the Church in this special connection with Christ. Of her beauty in the Lamb's eyes Matthew tells us; of Christ's care and service, to make her answer to the desire of His heart, Paul informs us. To John was it permitted to behold in vision something of her personal glory, when she shall be displayed to the world as the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Now such teaching is peculiar to the New Testament. No Old Testament prophet ever touched upon this theme. No Old Testament poet ever descanted upon such a union; yet David was inspired to sing of the King's consort (Psalms 45:1-17.); Solomon composed the "Song of songs;" Isaiah described the future glory and greatness of her to whom Jehovah will be an husband. (Isaiah 54:1-17.) These inspired men, however, were occupied with something very different from the Church of God. A little attention will make this clear.

Isaiah makes plain that it is of Jerusalem he writes (Isaiah 54:1-17), to which Jehovah formerly acted as husband (Ezekiel 16:8-14), till forced to cast her off for a time for her whoredom with the nations, her lovers. Having learnt to her sorrow what widowhood and shame are, she will by-and-by enjoy restoration to divine favour, and be publicly reinstated in her proper relation to

Him who is Israel’s King and her husband. It was of this bright future that David sung when he penned that "song of loves" (Psalms 45:1-17), in which the queen is introduced, and described as accompanied by her virginal train, when she has received from the king the place of honour, and her favour is to be sought after by the rich among the people. But is not the Church, it may be asked, made mention of in this psalm? Heavenly saints, who form it, are expressly noticed therein, though as quite distinct from the queen. They are just touched upon under the term "His fellows" (Psalms 45:7), among whom, as Hebrews 3:14 in the original makes plain, we must include all those who are now saints upon earth, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. The "fellows" of the King must be very different from the queen. Both indeed have to do with Him who is the King, though clearly distinct the one from the other. Of Jerusalem’s past and future the prophetic word instructs us. Her restoration to favour, and to her proper position before all the earth, the prophet Isaiah predicts, and the psalmist graphically depicts. But for this to be righteously effected there must be the moral restoration of the remnant of the people. Now it is of this Solomon writes in the Canticles, the purport of which, briefly expressed, is to show the pains taken by the Beloved to get hold afresh of the full affection of His loved one;* for the two are not described therein as meeting for the first time. Canticles then does not set forth the intercourse of the Church with Christ. The Church is not mentioned in the Song of songs, though Christ is prominent in the book, and the affection of His heart toward His earthly people is beautifully set forth. Yet there is much instruction for the individual Christian in that unique composition of the son of David; and many a believer, tasting of the unwearied love of Christ, after he has wandered in heart from Him, has found therein language just suited to him as a saint. The Church’s position however, in reference to Christ, and His dealings with her, are very different from both the one and the other as set forth in that book.

*For though Jerusalem, not the nation, is the queen, Jehovah will stand to the nation also, as He has done once, in the relation of her husband. (Hosea 2:16-20.) So, before Jerusalem can have her place of honour by the King’s side, the remnant of the people must be restored in heart to Him from whom they have revolted. Canticles describes Christ dealing with hearts. Isaiah 54:1-17, Psalms 45:1-17 acquaint us with Jerusalem’s future glory. For all teaching then about the Church, as the bride of Christ, we must turn to the New Testament. To that let us now direct our attention. On the shore of the lake of Galilee, in the audience of the multitude, the Lord spake the parables of the sower, the tares, the mustard tree, and the leaven. Inside the house, when alone with His disciples, He expounded the parable of the tares, and gave to them in addition those of the treasure, the pearl, and the net. (Matthew 13:1-52.) The outward character of the kingdom of the heavens, as men would see it, the Lord spake in parables to the multitude. Its aspect from God’s point of view He reserved for the special information of His disciples. They, and they only, were then permitted to learn what a treasure His saints were to Him, what a beautiful thing the Church would be in His eyes, and how He would care for His own people — symbolized by the good fish — through the instrumentality of His ministering servants: For the reader will remark, that in the parable of the net the good fish only are cared for, in the supplementary remarks the bad fish only are dealt with. On that occasion, in the house, it was disclosed for the first time, that there should be an object of surpassing beauty in the eyes of Christ, which He would die to possess. He would buy the field for the sake of the treasure concealed in it; but He would purchase the pearl for its own preciousness.

Seeking goodly pearls, the merchantman is arrested in his search by the sight of one pearl of great price. His search is stopped; he goes no further; he desires nothing more. Pearls he was seeking for; one pearl when found has satisfied his heart's desire. To possess it now is all his aim. He has valued it, and valued it aright. What is that value? Who shall determine it? Who shall give the price? One alone does that; the merchantman himself. He went, we read, and sold all that he had, and bought it. Its value to him is attested by that which he gives to possess it; for he must possess it. In plain language, Christ would die to possess that one pearl. It is of His death, then, that He here makes mention; and it is in these two parables that the Lord in this chapter speaks of His death. Other Scriptures acquaint us with the atoning character of His death. These parables acquaint us with another reason why He died. He wanted to acquire the treasure; He desired to possess the pearl. How precious, then, to Him, how satisfying to His eye and heart, is the one pearl of great price, for which, in order to purchase it, He has given up all that He had, speaking of Himself here of course as a man. The language of Scripture we must remember is definite; no waste of words do we find in that book. Whenever then we meet with epithets, we maybe sure that there is force in them. So here let the reader note the language of Christ Himself: one pearl of great price (politumon). No mere man surely would ever have dared thus to characterize the Church. Many and many a saint has heartily, truly declared, that Christ is to them the chiefest among ten thousand; but Christ by this epithet tells us what His Church is in His eyes. Of the Church's affection for Christ we read elsewhere; but in the parable, and in Ephesians 5:1-33, it is His estimate of her, and His love to her that is dwelt upon. What her joy will be might be conceived; what His delight in her would be had need to be revealed, and that He Himself first touched upon.

Passing from the parable to the doctrinal teaching of Ephesians 5:1-33, where Paul writes of the Church in its spousal relation to Christ, we are taught of His love to her, the way in which He has shown it, does prove it, and will yet manifest it. But, as is often the case in Scripture, the Spirit of God, whilst touching upon what has already been revealed, adds to its fulness. The parable described Christ giving up all He had to possess the pearl. The Holy Ghost, in the Ephesians, speaks in language, if possible, yet more full. For the apostle wrote: "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25.) All that He could give for it, all that He can be to it, she is assured of in these words. A pearl of great price! But who would have discovered that? who, looking around on the Church of God, remembering the sadly-blotted history it possesses, surveying what it is at present, who indeed would ever have discovered that it was a pearl, that it had any beauty, and that it was an object of great price? To bring this out, to make manifest its beauty and preciousness, Christ has and does miuister to it.

We should mark the progressive stages of His service which the apostle traces out for us. First, Christ gave Himself for the assembly. He died to possess the Church, and that because He loved it. The motive, the reason for thus dying, was simply the love of His heart. The parable tells us He desired to purchase it. The teaching of Ephesians acquaints us with the secret motive-love for it. His service for the assembly did not however end there. Man's devotedness can proceed no further than to die instead of his object; but in dyiug, man loses any earthly object. Christ, on the contrary, died to possess the assembly, and His service for the object of His heart begins, where that of a mere man's must end. So, secondly, He sanctifies it and cleanses it with the washing of water by the word. As first possessed then by Him, it does not answer to that which He desires. A pearl it is in His eyes, but He must bring out its beauty. This He does by the application of the

word. Once it was not His, but He bought it. It was not clean, so He would cleanse it. It was not set apart, but He would sanctify it. These are tokens of His love to His assembly. By-and-by He will present the assembly to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Such is the end He has in view. What a service has He undertaken! What an end has He proposed to Himself! What delight will He have when He presents the assembly to Himself glorious, without any blemish. Throughout this passage the reader should remark, we have nothing told us of the Church's joy. Christ's love, Christ's present service, the end He has in view, on these points the Holy Ghost delights to dwell.

What a condition must the assembly be in when He has to sanctify and cleanse it (or, as some would translate, "having cleansed it,") by the washing of water by the word, a plain declaration that it is not what He wants; yet He will not rest till He has made it all He desires. But more, He" nourisheth and cherisheth it." (Ephesians 5:29) All that it needs in its spousal relation to Him He supplies. To make it conformable to His desire He applies to it the word. Besides this, He ministers to it all that it wants. Nourishing and cherishing! What grace is there in that! Giving Himself for it, sanctifying it, cleansing it. What grace, too, in all this!

Viewed as man views the assembly, could we say that it has requited such care and love? How little have those who form part of it had intelligence as to that which Christ is doing. There was surely a time in the history of every believer whose eye may light on this page, when salvation from wrath was desired, and perhaps known, but Church relationship to Christ unknown, or ignored. Can all the readers of this paper say that such is no longer true of them?

Unchanged however is Christ's estimate of the assembly's worth. What the parable sets forth, His constant service on its behalf confirms. Yet how soon had He to tell one assembly that it had left its first love, and to charge another with having in its midst that doctrine which He hated. (Revelation 2:15, compared with Ephesians 5:6) How early in the history of the Church had Jezebel been allowed a footing in that which bore His name, and He Himself had to stand without, knocking to learn, as it were, whether there was in the assembly at Laodicea one heart faithful to Him. This personal ministration of Christ testified to the unchanging affection of His heart (Revelation 3:19), and evidenced that He well knew the condition and position of His people, and most truly desired their welfare. But this was in the past. Is He still unchanged? Those surely who have learnt in these days truth about the Church so long neglected, and even forgotten, can testify that His love and service are as unwearied as ever. Blessed for them that it is so. For what must those who form part of it be by nature, when, to enforce the observance by the husband of his duty and bearing towards his wife, the love of Christ and His service to the Church is set forth as a fitting illustration. What creatures to need such an exhortation! How richly blest to be objects of Christ's love!

By-and-by His object will be accomplished. His present service to the assembly will cease, only because it will not be required; and He will present it to Himself glorious, answering to His wish about it. At this point, however, we must pass from the writings of Paul to those of John. Paul has set forth Christ's love to the Church, and told even an assembly of its relation to Christ, as representing locally the Bride. (2 Corinthians 11:2.) John writes of the time when the marriage of the Lamb shall have come (Revelation 19:7); but the actual marriage he never describes. For, like the inside of the Father's house, it is essentially a scene fit only for heaven, and never therefore

disclosed to the view of men on earth. We hear of the marriage of the Lamb. We are shown the Bride, the Lamb's wife, after the marriage, when displayed to earth; but her presentation to Him is carefully hidden from us. Heaven rejoices at it, we learn. Blessed too, we are told, will those be who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7-9.) Here again all is looked at from the Lamb's point of view, not from that of the Bride. It is the fulfilment of His long-cherished desire that the great multitude unanimously announce. What her feelings will be John was not directed here to declare.

We do, however, gather from his writings something of her feelings towards Christ; for when He announces Himself at the end of the Revelation as the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star, an immediate response is made to Him by the Spirit and the bride, who, both addressing Him, say, "Come." Her desire is to see Him. She wishes for His return. She asks Him to come. That is the voice of the Church as a whole. When it was in its pristine condition one could have fancied the whole assembly, with one heart and voice, uttering that word, "Come." In the present condition of the assembly that cannot be done. Some there are, really part of the body of Christ, who understand not the truth of the Lord's return. Some too have taken the place of being Christians — are such in name, but in name only. How could they join in that cry? Are souls then to be deprived of the opportunity and joy of echoing that cry to Him, the Morning Star, by reason of the present condition of the assembly of God upon the earth? By no means; for the Word immediately adds, "Let him that heareth say, Come." God thus provides, that even in the disorderly condition of the Church souls should be allowed to welcome the coming of Christ. Not only does the bride, however, desire His return; for we read in Revelation 19:7 of the bride, when the marriage day has come, having made herself ready, being adorned for her husband. And her bridal attire, how simple it is, yet how comely! "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." (Revelation 19:8.) What a contrast to that of the great whore, who is described as clothed in purple and scarlet, with ornaments of gold, precious stones, and pearls! (Revelation 17:4.) On the person of the whore was seen that which attracts and pleases the natural eye. On the bride was just that which would please the Bridegroom's eyes — the righteousnesses (dikaiomata) of the saints — what they have done, it is true, but all the fruit of divine grace, and of the energizing power of the Holy Ghost. The whore delights in meretricious splendour; the bride is arrayed in that which witnesses of grace bestowed on her. The bride too is the pearl of great price in Christ's eyes. No need then could she have to deck out her person with pearls, etc. Such an attire, such ornaments, would only dim instead of enhancing her beauty in His eyes. Gold, pearls, precious stones these speak of God as Creator. He made them. Righteousnesses of saints — these are the fruits of that new creation, of which Christ is the beginning, and in which all who form the bride have their part. The significance of her clothing we can all therefore understand. But observe, the marriage is not described as taking place immediately on the rapture of the saints. In Revelation 5:1-14 they are seen in heaven already. It is not till Revelation 19:1-21 that the marriage day is spoken of as having come. Then she will be found ready. Till the rapture she can say to Him, "Come." But through out all this time she proves His love and care. Her beauty He discerned at the outset. His love and service to her make it manifest; and when the time arrives for the marriage, He who has nourished her, cleansed her, and sanctified her, will find her prepared for Him. His service to her, it will then be seen, has not been in vain

Chapter 6 Its Relation to the Holy Ghost. In treating of the assembly of God, we must remember the work of the Holy Ghost in connection with it. But how different are the relations of the Holy Ghost to the assembly from those of God, and of Christ! It is God's assembly, it is Christ's body, but in no sense does it bear the Holy Ghost's name; yet without the Spirit's work, and that not only in converting power, the assembly, or Church, would have no existence. To understand, then, Scripture teaching about the Church, we must acknowledge the Scripture doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; three persons, yet but one God. For the assembly, which is the Church of the living God, is in God the Father (1 Thessalonians 1:1); has for its foundation the truth of the person of Christ as the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:18); and is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, thereby becoming the habitation of God. (Ephesians 2:22.) God in the person of the Holy Ghost has by His indwelling presence made it His temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16.)

Further, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly is constant and unconditional. Till the Lord Jesus Christ went on high to the Father, the Holy Ghost could not come thus to abide on earth. (John 16:7.) After Christ had ascended, the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, and has ever since dwelt in the assembly of God here below. Ananias and Sapphira learnt the reality of His presence when Peter, charging home on them their sin, told the man that he had lied to the Holy Ghost, and asked the woman why they had agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord. (Acts 5:3; Acts 5:9.) The assembly at Antioch proved the truth of His presence, when He told them to separate unto Him Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them. (Acts 13:2.) The Lord too had announced beforehand that, when the Holy Ghost came, He would abide with the disciples for ever (John 14:16); and the Spirit's response, with that of the bride, to the Lord's announcement that He is the Morning Star, demonstrates that the divine prediction has indeed come to pass. The Spirit is with the assembly for ever; so that it will never, whilst on earth, be deprived of His presence. He dwells, it is true, in each believer; but He dwells in the whole assembly as well.

These truths are quite distinct. They must not be confounded; nor should the one be held without the other. The difference too between them is very marked; for the Holy Ghost, as dwelling in each believer, makes that saint's body His temple. But as dwelling in the assembly, the assembly becomes the temple of God. A temple of the Holy Ghost is the body of each believer; a temple of God is the assembly of God upon earth. Whilst stating all this, it should, however, be clearly understood that the Spirit of God had been, throughout all ages since man was created, working upon earth. From the commencement of the book of Genesis to the close of that of Revelation, the Holy Ghost is seen having to do with earth and with men. Yet never, till the last time that the feast of Pentecost was observed according to God's mind, did the Spirit take up His abode on earth as the third person of the Godhead, forming a habitation, a temple in which He dwells. This is Christian truth, and distinctive Christian truth; for as He did not dwell on earth before the cross, so He will not dwell on it after the rapture. Constantly working before the cross, He will as certainly work on earth after the rapture of the saints; but will not dwell here as He does now. To be poured upon all flesh is one thing; to dwell on earth is another.

Till after the exodus of Israel from Egypt, God never dwelt upon earth. He first dwelt in the tabernacle. He dwelt too in the temple, until Nebuchadnezzar came to destroy it. From that time God did not dwell on earth till the Lord Jesus Christ entered this world as a babe, at the hour when men for the most part were wrapt in slumber. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead

bodily." (Colossians 2:9.) Created things, animate and inanimate, acknowledged His presence and power by obeying His word. The fishes in the sea, the wind and the waves, were subservient to His will. But His presence here was but for a time, and that a very limited one. He died, and left earth, no longer to be found dwelling upon it. For a very brief period it was again true, that God was not dwelling on this globe. But when the day of Pentecost had fully come, this earth became once more a dwelling-place for God in the person of the Holy Ghost, who has never been absent from it for a single moment since that sound as of a rushing mighty wind was heard, which filled all the house in which the disciples of Christ were sitting in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:2.) God had come to earth to dwell on it for the third time in the world's history. How favoured is this earth! A globe so small, yet God's habitation is found on it! For the fact noticed about the Spirit's coming is instructive and significant. He filled all the house, but He did not fill all Jerusalem. He was upon earth, but He did not then dwell in every part of it. In that house He was that morning, but He was not in the temple on mount Moriah. The building, which the Lord entered as God's house at Jerusalem, was never part of God's habitation in the Spirit. The majestic structure of the temple never received as its occupant God the Holy Ghost; and though He came that morning to dwell on earth, He did not fill the world with His presence. In like manner the habitation of God, as it at present exists, though reaching far beyond the bounds of the nation of Israel, has nevertheless limits which fall considerably short of the boundaries of this terrestrial globe. It had limits on that day, when the Holy Ghost filled the house, but did not fill Jerusalem. It had limits in apostolic times; it has limits still. It is true that no individual upon earth need remain outside of them, on either natural or moral grounds, if the grace of God reaches the heart, and the conscience is dealt with. Souls from amongst the Hottentots and the Esquimaux, the South Sea Islanders and the Red Indians, as well as from amongst the most refined and intellectual members of civilised society, can each and all form part of God's habitation in the Spirit; for God now commands all men everywhere to repent; and if any man enters in by Christ (the door) he is saved (John 10:9), and finds himself a member of the assembly of God.

Yet it is a fact that the assembly does not embrace within its limits every soul dwelling upon earth, and indeed it was never intended so to do; for God was visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. (Acts 15:14.) He is saving also now a remnant according to the election of grace, in contradistinction to the saving of all Israel by-and-by. (Romans 11:5; Romans 11:26.) The conversion of all the world never was the divine purpose to be effected during the absence of Christ from earth. The gospel of the kingdom will indeed be preached in all the world before the end comes (Matthew 24:14); but that is a very different message from the gospel or glad tidings of God's grace. The limits of the assembly therefore, within which the Holy Ghost dwells, are really very far from being coterminous with the bounds of earth; or even coincident with the habitable parts of it. There is a within and a without, as expressed in God's word, which, when using such language, has reference to the confines of the assembly of God. "Walk in wisdom," we are told, "toward them that are without." (Colossians 4:5.) "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." (1 Thessalonians 4:12.) Again, writes the apostle, "What have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." (1 Corinthians 5:12-13.) Within, the Holy Ghost dwells; without, Satan, who is the god and prince of this world, exercises sway. But besides dwelling in the assembly, which thus becomes God's habitation, God's temple, the Holy Ghost has also formed the body of Christ. "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.) It is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost that the body of Christ is formed, to which we have already directed the attention of our readers. This was effected at Pentecost for those who had been Jews; and Gentiles were first brought into the body by sharing in this baptism in the house of Cornelius. And Paul, as we here read, though he was not converted on the day of Pentecost, neither was present at Cesarea when Peter visited the Roman centurion, yet shared in that baptism, as did all the Corinthian saints to whom he wrote; for saints only can share in it. Saints only can be members of the body of Christ, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, though the Spirit dwells in the assembly in which there may be some who are only professors. (1 Corinthians 3:17.) He is not said however to dwell in the body, though He does dwell in every individual member of the body. In the body of Christ so formed neither national nor social distinctions exist. Baptised by one Spirit, the unity of the Spirit of Ephesians 4:3 is called into existence. Having all been made to drink into one Spirit, the unity should be acknowledged and manifested; and the Scriptural way of manifesting it is by breaking bread as the Lord has appointed it. (1 Corinthians 10:17.) Whatever would practically deny the oneness of the body of Christ we are clearly to turn from; and it should be remembered, that the only divinely appointed way of showing it is by our presence at the Lord’s table. In Christ, we have said, all distinctions cease. We must however remember that this is not true of the Church. There are distinctions in the assembly. In Christ we are all one. Further, Christians should remember who have known it, or be taught if they have not hitherto understood it, what the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 writes about the body, for it is most important. Taking as his illustration the natural body, he sets forth four points of great practical value.

First, we can never, if part of the body, get out of it. "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" The foot or the ear cannot help themselves; they are part of the body. They may deny it, they, may repudiate all connection with it, but they cannot get free from it unless by amputation, which, if a loss to the body, would be death to them. The members then have no choice about it. They are in the body, they are part of the body. Just so is it with Christians and the body of Christ. They may be ignorant of it, the, may refuse to learn about it, they may repudiate all connection with it; but they cannot get out of the body. For as none but true Christians are members of the body of Christ, none such can be finally lost; nor can excision of a member of the body of Christ ever take place. In the body they are, and to it they must ever belong. But the body is but one: two bodies united to one head is contrary to all order in creation. So with the body of Christ; there is one body, as there is one head. But here the common thoughts and language of Christians are at variance with God’s truth. Bodies of Christians men speak of, and approve of: one body is all that God owns, and Scripture teaches. If Scripture is to teach us, we must own only one body, and so be on true Church ground, on which all Christians, if simply in subjection to the Word, could meet; and once there, we must stay there. Thus the foot cannot get free from the body, whatever it may say about it; no more can Christians shake themselves free of their responsibility to acknowledge and maintain practically the truth of the oneness of the body of Christ.

Secondly, we must ever remember that one member does not constitute the body. "If they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body." For one member then in the body of Christ to arrogate to itself the functions of the body must be clearly

wrong. Wherever that is done, the individual so acting, if in selfwill, is wrong; if with the cordial agreement of others, is both wrong himself, and those who allow it are abetting and fostering the evil. But is this understood?

Thirdly, we cannot do without every member. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." It may be, and it surely is the case, that from the disorder in the assembly of God we cannot avail ourselves of the help of every member of the body of Christ; but for our part, though deprived in a great measure of their assistance and service, we cannot without suffering loss be independent of one of them; so closely are the members of the body bound up one with another. But all this denominationalism ignores, and thereby robs, the whole Church of that which has been provided for the benefit of all. How little is this seen! The Corinthians, when split up into parties, were robbing themselves of the gifts given for them all. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23.) How suicidal to the Church's best interest is her advocacy of denominational ground!

Lastly, God sets the members in the body as it hath pleased Him. None, therefore, can choose their place, though each may have to learn what it is. But, reminded of this, all envying of another's place, all imitation of another's service, should be carefully guarded against. Each has his own place, each his own service, which if rightly carried out will conduce to the healthy increase of the whole body. What a busy hive the assembly at Rome must have been, judging from the remarks on individuals made by the apostle in the last chapter of his epistle to that assembly! All the service there enumerated might not be what men call great, but it was true, and accepted of God.

Most practical is the truth of the oneness of the body of Christ. Formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that oneness exists now on earth. May each one who forms part of it, discovering his place, and the character of his service in the body and in the assembly, keep the one, and perform the other.

Chapter 7. Of Whom Composed. When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon earth He spake of His assembly as then non-existent. He had not yet built it. (Matthew 16:18.) Till the Holy Ghost came, consequent on His ascension, it was not, and could not be formed. The Spirit's presence, however, inaugurated a new era; for by the baptism of the Holy Ghost the body of Christ was called into being. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) No Old Testament saint then could have been a member of the Church, or assembly of God, which is the body of Christ. In the kingdom of God every one of them will be found, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in power and great glory. But part of the Church of God they never were, nor, we can add, ever will be; for in heaven, as well as upon earth, the Church is viewed as distinct from the worthies of old. This we are taught in the epistle to the Hebrews, and the point is an important one to keep before the mind; for unless the great landmarks of Scripture are known, and dispensational teaching is apprehended, we cannot rightly divide the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15.) How such a thought should make one careful in the putting forth of truth, as well as diligent in acquiring an understanding of it! The word of truth should be rightly divided. The apostle gently intimates by this remark to his child in the faith, that unless the workman was careful he might fail to do it. With Paul, then, the unfolding of Scripture was not the giving out of man's opinion upon it. It could be rightly divided; yet, unless Timothy was careful, that might not always be the case.

Now, important as it is for us to be taught correctly about the Church of God, it was of all importance for those in apostolic times, who, formerly Jews, were such no longer, in order that they should clearly see how distinct was their proper Christian position from that which they had previously prized, and with which they had been associated. To such Paul wrote in Hebrews 12:22-24. Going forth to Christ without the camp, they would surrender much which they had previously valued, and valued very highly. Would they be losers thereby? To answer such a question he introduces his readers to a millennial scene, and lays open to their gaze the court of heaven, arranged, so to speak, in the order of precedence, and shows the connection between the earthly seat of the kingdom and the real metropolis of the universe: "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, a general assembly, and to the Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (rather, better than Abel). To all this had they then come, though in spirit only as yet. Thus, that to which the Jews in millennial days never will attain, what the earthly people never can have, was theirs, who from amongst them had confessed the Lord Jesus, theirs really, though not then enjoyed. All that they had come to the apostle enumerates, but marks off each thing distinctly from the rest by the conjunction "and." The position therefore of the Church in heaven this passage points out. The assembly of the first-born ones (prototokon), as the Holy Ghost here designates them, is seen next to God on His one hand, and the Old Testament saints — the spirits of just men made perfect — are seen as equally near to Him on the other; but two distinct companies never amalgamated. Both are equally near to God (that we must ever remember); but the Church of the first-born ones and the Old Testament saints are described as separated companies in heaven, each having their own proper position on high. Who then, it may be asked, form the Church of the first-born ones? Some formerly Jews, and some formerly Gentiles; for the Scripture recognizes three classes as at present existing upon earth — the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God. (1 Corinthians 10:32.) Before the cross there were but two classes — the Jews and the Gentiles. By-and-by there will again be but two upon earth, when the word by Moses shall have its accomplishment: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people." (Deuteronomy 32:43.) At present there exists also the third — the Church of God. To this company the Lord made reference in John 10:16, when He announced the formation of the one flock under the care and the guardianship of the one Shepherd; for the reader should mark the Lord’s language. One flock He speaks of, (poimen), to be composed of the sheep in Israel, whom He was about to lead out of the fold, (aule), and of the sheep from amongst the Gentiles, who were never in it. This flock then was something quite new, and unthought of, till the Lord taught men about it. Observe, that to make the one flock, He first leads out of the fold those which had been in it. It was not the bringing those formerly Gentiles on to Jewish ground that He had here in view. That in its full sense never was done, and never will be done. It was not making proselytes to Judaism of Gentiles who hearkened to His teaching. That the Lord never did. The time too for that, in accordance with God’s thoughts, was then passing away. What the Lord treats of is the getting the two companies, who were to form the one flock, on to new ground altogether. The flock therefore of which He speaks could not be formed, till God dealt with Gentiles in grace equally with Jews. From the days of Abraham to the cross God was acting in a different manner. None therefore, who died before the cross, could form part of the one flock, the assembly, or Church of God.

Years after we get this truth of the component parts of the flock affirmed by different apostles. James, in the council at Jerusalem, endorsed Peter's statement, that God had visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. (Acts 15:14.) Later on, Paul, writing to the Romans, bore witness that there was, from amongst Israel, "a remnant according to the election of grace." (Romans 11:5.) The apostle of the circumcision spoke of believers from amongst the Gentiles. The apostle of the Gentiles acknowledged the presence in the assembly of some who had once been Jews. But, both Peter and Paul distinctly pointed out, that it was only an election from the one and from the other. Those from the Gentiles did not become Jews; those from amongst the Jews did not become part of the one flock by virtue of their descent according to the flesh. Yet there is but one flock, one assembly — "God's flock," as Peter calls it (1 Peter 5:2-3), "God's Church," as Paul designates it. (Acts 20:28.) Both terms, it will be seen, are instructive, attesting to whom those comprising the flock and the assembly belong, even God, but without referring to their former condition, whether moral or dispensational. The truth, therefore, was owned by Peter as well as by Paul, though it is only in the writings of the latter that we find it dwelt on, and treated of doctrinally. At the end of Ephesians 1:1-23, Paul introduces the subject of the Church of God, when writing of the present place on high of Him who is its Head. In the second chapter he develops the subject, and shows us who those are that compose it; first setting forth what they had been morally (Ephesians 1:1-10), and then what had been their condition dispensationally. (Ephesians 1:11-22) Morally, nothing could have been more hopeless; spiritually dead, they had required quickening power to be put forth on their behalf by God for them to live. How wholly were they, one and all, dependent on the love, and mercy, and favour of God! For if they needed quickening power to be put forth by God that they should live, the putting forth of that power depended solely on the activity of God in grace. But what a comfort to remember the class of persons morally on whose behalf He thus acts. Dispensatioually, the Jews had been nigh, and the Gentiles had been far off. The former had thus occupied a vantage-ground, which the latter had not. For the Church that vantage-ground has disappeared; for those, once far off, are in Christ made nigh by His blood, and those, once Jews, with those once Gentiles, are created one new man in Christ. A new kind of man (kainon), such as had never existed before, the twain made one in Christ. Learning this, we should not, it is clear, look to the Old Testament for instruction as to the formation of the Church, nor for guidance its to its worship. It did not exist in those days, nor was there anything like it ever called into being. Nothing analogous to it can be traced in the pages of the Hebrew writers. Any incorporation then of Jewish practices with Christian worship should have been sedulously guarded against, and that which the New Testament teaches about the Church, the new man, the body of Christ, should have been sought out and conformed to. Has this been generally done? But is there not, some may ask, anything in the Old Testament which refers to the Church? Surely there is. For, although its then future existence was not made known, we can trace in the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures typical teaching about it, both as the bride of Christ, and as formed of believers from Jews and from Gentiles. There are personages in the Old Testament history who shadow forth in some way or other the Lord Jesus Christ. Of these we would here mention but two, Isaac and, Solomon; the former, the type of the Lord as the risen one, and the heir of all things that belong to His Father; the latter as King of peace, and the King's Son who sits upon the throne of David. To Isaac Rebekah was brought as his bride, but not till Abraham had received him back, as it were, from the dead. Solomon had a bride — Pharaoh's daughter — connected in the closest way with the king, yet distinct from Israel, and who lived in a house prepared for her by her

husband. She had part with him, yet was apart from Israel. Isaac with his wife, and Solomon with his, are both typical of Christ and the Church. The former shadows out that it is, as risen, Christ has His Bride. The latter delineates the King's Son in His royal state in connection with Israel, yet in the closest possible way connected also with one, who has no part with the earthly people of God.

Besides this, we can trace out in Leviticus 23:1-44 something of the peculiar composition of the Church which we have been considering. The feasts of the Lord therein described were important elements of Judaism; and Moses, in three out of the five books which bear his name, dwells at some length on them. In Deuteronomy 16:1-22 he describes the character of each of the three great feasts, as he sets forth the spirit in which they were severally to be observed. In Numbers 28:1-31; Numbers 29:1-40 the special offerings for each Jewish festival, with their number, and accompanying meat-offerings and drink-offerings, are detailed at length. From this we learn, which of the feasts had reference only to Israel, and in which of them, that which they prefigured, concerned Gentiles as well. In Leviticus 23:1-44. Moses gives to Israel what may be called their ecclesiastical calendar, specifying the order in which the different festivals were to be kept, and the months and days appointed for their observance. So if we wished to understand the spirit in which any of the three great festivals were to be observed, we should turn to Deuteronomy 16:1-22 to find out. If any enquired about the number and character of the different offerings, Numbers 28:1-31; Numbers 29:1-40 would supply the answer; and Leviticus 23:1-44 would be consulted as the sacred calendar, informing all of the time, and duration of each feast throughout the year. But to this arrangement there is one remarkable exception. Certain rites and sacrifices, connected both with the morrow after the paschal sabbath, and with the feast of first-fruits, are mentioned in Leviticus, but are passed over in Numbers. Now why is this? Is the omission intentional, or is it accidental? It cannot be regarded as accidental, because, though some offerings specially appointed for the feast of first-fruits are enumerated in Numbers, where we should have looked for them, the new meat-offering, only described at length in Leviticus, is just mentioned in Numbers, though without a word being added in explanation of it. Evidently the sacred writer supposed his readers were acquainted with what had been written in Leviticus about it. He had not forgotten it, nor, from the way he introduces it, can we suppose that he was reminding his readers of it. He mentions that with which he and they were perfectly acquainted; but does not enter at length on the subject. The omission therefore of special instruction about it from that, the forty-first section of the law according to the Jewish divisions. of the Pentateuch, must have been intentional. Naturally we should have expected an account of it in Numbers, whereas we only learn about it in Leviticus. Had the Pentateuch been a mere human composition, would this arrangement have been met with? Had it been written by Moses simply with an eye to Israel, and what then concerned them, would he have thus arranged it? Surely not. But, as God's book, written under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the subjects are treated of in God's order, and the wisdom of the divine plan becomes apparent. A glance at Leviticus 23:1-44 will make this plain. And first, as to the new meat-offering presented to God at the feast of first-fruits. It was composed of two wave-loaves, as they are called, baked with leaven; these two loaves typifying those from Jews and those from Gentiles, who as Christians are together presented to God, a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. (James 1:18.) It was not the oneness of the body of Christ that they portrayed, but that of which the body is composed, the two companies which together make up the one flock of John 10:1-42. Baked with leaven, we learn that they represent saints still in their bodies on earth,

and in whom the flesh exists. Made from the produce of the new harvest, we understand that they typify those, who are before God as risen with Christ; for the close connection of Christians with Christ is set forth in the fact, that the instruction about these two loaves is included in the same divine communication to Moses (Leviticus 23:9-22), which contains the ordinance concerning the wave-sheaf, the type of the Lord Jesus Himself as risen from the dead. Waved before the Lord, we see that the saints are claimed for God. Thus these loaves typify what a Jew, as long as he remained a Jew, never was — a man on earth, yet risen with Christ. Typifying therefore those once Jews and those once Gentiles, brought to God on common ground, they speak of something really distinct from the earthly people, even the presentation to God of souls from Jews and Gentiles whom He can receive in connection with, and by virtue of, His acceptance of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that whilst the Lo-ammi condition of Israel as a nation (Hosea 1:9) has not terminated. But further. The feast of first-fruits was typical of the whole Christian era, which, commencing with the day of Pentecost, goes on to the rapture of which 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 has apprised us. It prefigured therefore the time between the rejection of the Lord by the Jews, and their being gathered again to their land, to await His return previous to the commencement of millennial rest, of which the feast of Tabernacles is the type. As a feast of the Lord, it had its place in the sacred calendar; that is clear. But this chapter in Leviticus, besides serving as a sacred calendar for Israel, gives us in outline God’s dealings with souls from Exodus to the eternal state; hence God’s ways on earth, when Israel nationally are disowned, but the godly remnant saved, are fitly traced out in this portion of the Word. And had they been here omitted, there would have been, we can see, a gap in the prophetic outline of God’s ways. But who, at the time when Moses wrote the book, could have discovered that? God alone, we may surely say, then knew it. The Church then, we again see, was in the mind of God before it was presented to the eye of man; and as He divided to the nations their lot on earth with reference to His future dealings with Israel, so He guided Moses in the writing of His word with reference to that subject of revelation, kept secret till revealed to Paul — the Church of the living God. (Ephesians 3:3; Colossians 1:25.) And when the wave-loaves were brought to Him, and waved before Him, God looked on to that of which the Jews could never bear to hear — the presentation to Him of some, once Gentiles, on common and new ground with some formerly Jews. We may glory in this grace; yet let us remember that the thing waved was thereby publicly acknowledged as belonging to God. There is grace in being brought to God; there is responsibility in belonging to God.

Chapter 8. The Unity of the Spirit.

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Such is the word of exhortation addressed by the apostle Paul to Christians in the epistle to the Ephesians. (Ephesians 4:3.) Then this of which he writes concerns Christians. As an exhortation, it acquaints us with God’s desire for His children; but at the same time it indicates that we are in danger of not keeping the unity here mentioned.

Now the wisdom of this exhortation, and the positive need of it, has been abundantly manifested from that day to this. If we look at the state of Christendom, notably since the Reformation, but also before it, do we not learn from the pages of ecclesiastical history, how this not merely apostolic, but divine injunction has been sadly and systematically forgotten? Had it been remembered, and acted upon, one local assembly would never have been permitted to arrogate to itself control, by means of a local officer, over the actions and government of other assemblies, as

the assembly at Rome has done, claiming for its bishop (a mere local officer, according to Scripture) jurisdiction over all the assemblies in Christendom. Had the apostolic injunction been practised, the question of precedence among what are called patriarchal sees would never have arisen. In the place of striving for pre-eminence, they would all have been jealous for the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit. Again, had the unity of the Spirit been understood, the rise of denominations in this country and elsewhere would have been checked, and the oneness of the body of Christ asserted, and upheld.

Unmindful of the existing unity of the Spirit, those in earlier days who had power and influence exerted it to organize the Church of God somewhat after the manner of the political administration of the Roman empire. Their acts prove how completely men had lost sight of the unity of the Spirit, and were substituting human organization for the authority of the divine word, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. What a monstrous assumption this was on the part of professing Christians! The sovereign action of the Holy Ghost was superseded, and His real presence ignored; and God's house, God's temple, received at the hands of His servants a constitution of man's devising! The Reformation afterwards took place. Many abuses were corrected, false doctrine on some important points was rejected, truth was disseminated in a way it had not been for ages; but the Scripture teaching about the Church was not discerned, or if by any discerned, it was not acted upon. It did not apparently dawn on men's minds that God should direct as to the government of His house; for, whilst differing among themselves as to the form of church government, they all assumed that to man was left the power, and authority of organizing the Church of God.

Brought up in one or other of those forms of man's devising, as most readers of these pages have been, and with the different schemes of church government in active operation around us, it becomes none of us, who through grace have been led to take a place outside of them, to point the finger at those who still adhere to, and uphold them. Rather be it our part, whilst keeping aloof from denominational ground, and helping others to see the solemn mistake of countenancing it, to be humbled at the recollection that we, however well intentioned, once helped on that which must in God's eyes savour of the grossest presumption; for it is presumption to suppose that God has left His house without any directions for its government. It is presumption for the servants of God practically to depose the Holy Ghost from His place in the assembly, who has formed the unity which they are admonished to keep. What then is here contended for is not the liberty of any number of Christians to act as they will in the Church of God, a principle to which Scripture is wholly opposed; nor is it the liberty of private judgment which is insisted on, though we are individually responsible for our actions, and will be judged as individuals, but the positive duty of every Christian to submit in matters of church organization to the teaching of God's word, and to acknowledge the presence in the assembly of the Holy Ghost, who divides to every man severally as He will. (1 Corinthians 12:11.)

Now what is it which Christians in general desiderate? Is it the manifestation of a oneness, the fruit of brotherhood? is it the oneness of communion? or is it the oneness of the Spirit? All these are to be valued, and short of them all we should not any of us rest content. Would any settle down satisfied with manifesting the first? Then surely such have not entered into the mind of the Lord, as expressed to His Father on the night before His crucifixion. Would any remain unconcerned about the last? Then they would fall far short of God's desires for them.

Now the unity arising from brotherhood is nothing new. A Jew could speak of it, and Israel under David and Solomon must in measure have enjoyed it. The psalmist writes of it: "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1.) All will echo this. The fruit of a tie formed by birth (for "brethren" the psalmist writes of) reminds us that those here contemplated are members of one family, bound together by that bond which nothing can sever, and which no circumstances can really alter. One's brother must remain in that relation whatever may be the vicissitude of his affairs, or the character of his ways. The elder son in the parable was reminded that the prodigal was his brother. (Luke 15:32.) The Thessalonian Christians were exhorted to count the saint their brother, even though he were walking disorderly, and not subject to the Word. Admonition under such circumstances would be needed. That was not to be spared; but the spiritual birth-tie existed, and was to be remembered. Of this they were reminded for their guidance in circumstances, when there was the greatest danger of forgetting the link that God had formed between them. (2 Thessalonians 3:11-15.) Of course the birth-tie of which the psalmist wrote was one after the order of nature. By-and-by Israel will fully enjoy what the writer describes, when the brotherhood between Israel and Judah, so long broken, shall be again owned, as Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:15-22) has predicted. On the other hand, the tie of which Christians can speak is after a different order altogether. (John 1:13.) Still the statement of the psalmist will always hold good. It is good, it is pleasant, for brethren to dwell together in unity; yet this oneness, it is clear, may not always be manifested or enjoyed. It depends on the condition of those who, being brethren, ought to dwell together as such. As brethren, children of the same Father, Christians ought to dwell together in unity. Viewing their unity in this aspect, it is the family relationship, and what should flow from it, that rises up before the mind. Have we to speak of nothing else? The New Testament furnishes us with a decisive answer to the contrary. To that let us now turn. The Lord Jesus Christ on the night before His crucifixion addressed His Father in the audience of His disciples. About to leave those whom He had drawn around Him during His ministry upon earth, He allowed the disciples to hear what was the nature of His desires on their behalf; and looking forward to the spread of the work which He had commenced, He embraced in the range of His petition every saint who should believe on Him through their word. "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 that Thou hast sent Me." (John 17:21.) His prayer for oneness supposes both their need of it, and the danger there might be of their not enjoying it. He does not ask that the oneness of brotherhood should be formed; that takes place by birth. He asks that the oneness of communion should exist and be seen, explaining what He means by the illustration He adduces; "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." The Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father, there must be between these two perfect communion. No thoughts, no desires, has the Son which are opposed to the Father; no thoughts has the Father which are not in fall accord with the wishes of the Son. This oneness of communion He desired for His people. They would in this manner be one, and the world would believe that the Father had sent the Son. Of this character of oneness Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:10), and presses earnestly on the Philippians. (Php 2:3; Php 4:2.)

Now the continuance of this oneness depends on the condition of the saints. Communion one with another, as we but too well know, may be easily interrupted and broken. The nature capable of enjoying it Christians possess; but they have also a nature strongly opposed to it. Hence the oneness the Lord prayed for depends on the state of the saints. His wish about it is plain; the result

of it as regards the world He also declares. The world could take cognizance of it, and be affected by it. One in the Father and in the Son, there would be amongst God's people real and perfect communion.

There is, however, a third oneness of which the Word treats, and treats in a different way. It did not form the subject of the Lord's petitions on the night before His cross. It did not then exist; for it had not been formed, and could not be formed, till the Lord had gone on high. It does, however, exist now; because the Holy Ghost has made it, by baptizing all believers into one body. It is of this Paul wrote, when he exhorted believers to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In the gospel, where the Lord explains His meaning, He speaks of the Father and of Himself. In the epistle, where the unity of which the apostle writes is to be defined, it is called the unity of the Spirit. Of course it is only by the Holy Ghost acting in us that we can manifest oneness of communion. To illustrate it, however, we are reminded of the Father and the Son, between whom there was, there is, perfect, uninterrupted communion; for the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. By being one* in the Father and in the Son, the saints would manifest a oneness of the same character. In Ephesians, on the other hand, there is nothing of all this. There is a unity mentioned as existing, which they are exhorted to keep. For oneness of communion to be manifested and maintained, prayer was made by the Lord on our behalf. When the keeping the unity of the Spirit is the subject in hand, exhortation, not prayer, is immediately called forth.

*The uncial MSS., BCD., omit "one" before in the Father. This reading, adopted by Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Alford, makes no real difference in the sense of the passage.

Now this of which Paul writes is not oneness of spirit. Often it may have been mistaken for that. To view the exhortation in that light is really to confound what the Lord prayed for with that of which the apostle here writes. How could oneness of spirit be maintained except in the bond of peace? The words of the apostle, however, suppose there may be a difficulty in thus keeping it; for he writes, "Endeavouring to keep it in the bond of peace." One body formed by one Spirit existed, and all true believers belonged to it. They did not themselves originate the unity, nor could they break it; but they were to keep it in the bond of peace. Its formation, its continuance, are both independent of the spiritual condition of God's saints, though none but real saints can form part of it. It concerns them then very closely, for they are the body of Christ, and God's habitation in the Spirit.

Into the closest of associations believers are therefore now brought. One new man in Christ, the body of Christ, God's habitation now in the Spirit, stones too of the temple of God which is in process of erection — these are the terms used by the Holy Ghost of those, once dead in trespasses and sins, who have been quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. As new creatures in Christ, they are brought into this unity; whilst the old man, the flesh, is still within them. Hence exhortations are added that they should "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." For a position of such close relationship calls for much consideration and activity of love one towards another. The fact that we are exhorted, proves we may fail in acting aright. The burden of the exhortation indicates what should characterize each one of us. Care, thoughtfulness, forbearance, love, should be manifested; but at the same time the saints are never

to forget that unity which the Holy Ghost has formed; nor is the keeping of it to be sacrificed to the maintenance of friendliness, or what is miscalled love; for the love of God, will not be manifested unless we keep His commandments. (1 John 5:3.) In this way, then, are we to endeavour to keep it.

Now the term, the unity of the Spirit, points to that with which He is in a special manner connected, even the body which He has formed, according to 1 Corinthians 12:13. If, then, we are to keep it, the common idea of agreeing to differ on matters of church organisation must evidently be abandoned. Nor that only; for the exhortation leaves us no choice, no alternative, but to own, and, as far as in us lies, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. For since the component parts of that unity are those in whom the flesh still exists, the reminder of the uniting bond of peace is not without significance and use. And since this unity exists, Christians should learn about it; for how can we endeavour to keep that which we do not know exists? But is this what all are desirous of? It is no secret that there is the consciousness in many a heart that Christians are not practically united as they might be, and should be. One they are before God, members of the one body, being united by the Holy Ghost to the one Head, baptized by Him into one body. All ideas, then, of merely acknowledging that we are one, without seeking practically to own it in God's appointed way, are clearly not in harmony with God's will or God's word. How, then, shall we correct what is wrong? By forming some new union? by maintaining denominational ground? Clearly neither of these expedients is right. We are to keep what the Holy Ghost has formed, and to endeavour to do it in the bond of peace. To form a church, or to organize a union, is virtually to fly in the face of God's injunctions for His people. To attempt to make something for the uniting together of God's saints is virtually to disown what the Spirit has already done. To continue on denominational ground, when once we see it to be wrong, is openly to ignore what has been formed, and to hinder ourselves and others from keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Chapter 9 The Ministry of the Word.

Having viewed the Church in its relation to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Ghost, and having also seen how the Body is formed, we would next direct the reader's attention to the way in which the work of God is carried on during this dispensation. The assembly of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15.) Outside of it God's truth has no resting-place on earth. In it only can be found the truth of which that passage speaks. And it is only by the ministry of the Word, in some form or other, that the work of God upon earth can make progress, and the number of His children be increased. Now when God was dealing with His chosen people Israel, He raised up prophets to speak to their consciences, and to acquaint them with the purposes of His heart. To the nation of Israel they for the most part exclusively addressed themselves, having for their audience those who were of the seed of Jacob. In so far as their ministry took effect on souls, its then present purpose was accomplished. But all the labours of the prophets, however successful they might have been, could not have increased by one single soul the number of God's earthly people. Their service was to act upon God's people already in existence upon earth by the process of natural generation. With the rejection by the Jews of the testimony of the Lord a new work commenced; viz., the forming of a company upon earth whom God could regard as His children, and as His people. Into this family none could find an entrance on the ground of earthly ties, or by the effort of human will. In it relationship by birth was acknowledged, but blood-relationship was unknown. To become children of God souls must be

born of God. (John 1:12-13.) Hence this mighty change could only be effected by the will of God. Of God's will in the matter James writes (James 1:18); of the instrumentality of the Word that same apostle, in common with Peter, (1 Peter 1:23,) makes distinct mention. And it seems fitting that these two of the apostolic college, whose work lay especially amongst God's ancient people, should insist on the truth of a new birth, when writing to those who had been regarded as children of the kingdom on the ground of their Abrahamic descent. In the synagogue service, after the reading of the law and of the prophets, there was room for exhortation (Acts 13:15) to press home on the hearts of those present the lessons to be deduced from the Scriptures. But more than this, it became evident, was required, if the number of God's children could only be increased by the action of the divine Word upon the soul, and if some from amongst Gentiles were to be come children in common with some from amongst Jews. A ministry therefore which could first convert, and then build up the converts, was called for. How well did Paul at Antioch understand this, who when invited to exhort the congregation, preached the gospel of the grace of God instead. (Acts 13:15-42.)

Now this God provided, and the Lord in the parable of the sower indicated. For God was not about, any longer, to seek fruit from those who were His people on the ground of their descent from Abraham; He was henceforth going to beget children by water and the Spirit, who should be able to be fruitful for Him. Not that the exercise of quickening power by the Word was anything new in itself in the ways of God for every saint, from Abel downward, had been born of God; but those whom He would now own as really His people, would only be such as were in truth His children. Hence God commenced to work afresh, and the Lord appeared in the character of the sower. Now a field till sown can manifestly produce no good crop. The ground may have been all prepared for the seed, but unless the seed is sown no good results can be expected. To sow then indicates the commencement of a work, and the place of the parable of the sower in the three synoptic gospels agrees with this. In Matthew, who gives us dispensational teaching, the parable only comes in when the ground has been cleared by the Lord's judgment of the cities where He had worked (Matthew 11:1-30), and of the nation amongst whom He was labouring. (Matthew 12:1-50) Then, declaring the character of the relationship of Himself which He would hence forth acknowledge, even that of the new birth, evidenced by the individual doing the will of His Father who is in the heavens, He left the house, and sat by the sea-side, and there, with multitudes collected from various parts of the land (Luke 8:4), He gave utterance to the parable of the sower, His very action, and place of teaching, both harmonizing with the work which God was commencing. In Mark the parable is given us in the fourth chapter of his gospel, as forming part, and the commencing part, of the Lord's instruction to His disciples ere He sent them forth to preach. For the reader may observe that, though chosen in Mark 3:14-19, they are not sent forth to preach till Mark 6:7; the intervening part of the gospel being occupied with instructing them in what God was doing, in order to fit them to do their work for God, and for the Lord. In Luke the same parable appears (Luke 8:1-56), in common with several things which are characteristic features of the kingdom. With this ministry of the Lord then a fresh beginning was made. He sowed the word of the kingdom, the word of God, and thus taught us how the kingdom, during His rejection, can be really advanced. Going about from town to town, and from village to village, He preached and showed the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1.) In this He was followed by the twelve, when sent forth by Him on their special mission to Israel. (Luke 9:2; Luke 9:6.) After He rose, the field of labour became enlarged, reaching even to the utmost bounds of the earth; so that

wherever there should be a soul to hear, and a messenger to carry the Word, there was a sphere in which God's servant could work in accordance with the divine mind. The effects of the sower's labours the parable describes. The seed was pure; it was the word of God. Of its germinating power there could be no doubt; for that Word liveth and abideth (1 Peter 1:23); so the only hindrance to a full crop, wherever it fell, would arise from the condition of the ground, in other words, the man's heart to whom it might come. Men might think of blaming the Word for the apparent failure of the work. Against such thoughts the Lord would warn us, and the continued going on of God's work should guard us. For as the seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11), the word of the kingdom, as Matthew (Matthew 13:19) describes it, the lack of full results must evidently arise from other causes than the character of the Word, and to these the parable directs us. In saying this, however, it must be borne in mind that we are only treating of the seed, and not of any instrument by whom in these days the seed may be scattered. Through admixture of rubbish with the seed, from a want of a right apprehension as to what the seed is, much labour may be in vain, and efforts be found to be fruitless. But where the real seed is sown, the want of a crop will not arise from lack of its germinating power. It is the living word of God. We do well to remember this, that all who preach or teach may make sure that it is the word of God they are using, and count on its sufficiency, as applied by the Holy Ghost, to effect a divine work in the hearts and consciences of men. The causes which hinder a fruitful crop are three. First, some men do not desire the Word, in which case the devil takes it away. Secondly, the conscience has not been reached by the Word, so the apparent work is but ephemeral, and dies away. Thirdly, the attraction of, or occupation with surrounding things, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. For those only are fruitful who hear the Word, understand it (Matthew 13:23), receive it (Mark 4:20), aid keep it. (Luke 8:15.) Two important things then are manifested by this way of working: the first is the condition of man's heart by nature, and the second is the positive need for God to work in it, if fruit, which He can acknowledge as such, is to be produced at all. The wisdom too of this way of working becomes apparent. For what penal restrictions could not accomplish (Genesis 8:21), nor law effect, God does by His word, winning souls to Himself, and making them willing servants of Christ. And Satan, by taking away the seed sown where he can, or by imitating God's method of working, and becoming a sower himself, as the parable of the tares and the wheat teaches us, attests the wisdom of God in thus working by His word. For he, who imitates the work of another, confesses that he has nothing better to suggest, and knows no plan more effectual to work by. But here a distinction should be noted: In the parable of the sower it is the commencement of a fresh work to which attention is directed, and God's word is the seed which acts on men, and alone can make them fruitful. It is the sowing that we there read of. In the parable of the tares, on the other hand, a parable of the kingdom of the heavens, which the former parable is not, we have presented the results evident to the outward eyes of the sower's labours. So persons are mentioned as being in the field. It is the growing crop to which attention is directed, and the efforts of the enemy to counteract God's work. For the explanation given us of the parable tells us, that the children of the kingdom are the fruit of the good seed, and the children of the wicked one are the fruit of the enemy's work. Till the Lord came, the Jews looked on themselves as the sons of the kingdom. (Matthew 8:12.) In this parable we are taught who such really are (Matthew 13:38); for publicans and harlots justified God by entering into the kingdom through really receiving the seed, the word of God, whilst Pharisees, scribes, the self-righteous, and the indifferent shut themselves out of it.

After the Lord rose, the full extent of the field, in which His people were to work by the instrumentality of the Word, was clearly defined. Repentance and remission of sins was to be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47), and unto the uttermost part of the earth were the disciples to be witnesses to Christ (Acts 1:8); but first they must be endued with power from on high by the coming on them of the Holy Ghost. But could the preaching of the word of God really deal in power with hearts? Peter's address on the day of Pentecost proved what it could do, as three thousand of his hearers were pricked to the heart by his words, and, implicitly obeying his directions, were numbered henceforth as disciples in truth of the despised and crucified Nazarene. In the very town, then, where the Lord had been so lately crucified, the work commenced of adding together such as should be saved (Acts 2:47); and this was effected by the instrumentality of the Word. The movement did not originate in some obscure village of Galilee, and, when it could boast of numbers, display itself to the world; but, just six weeks after the crucifixion of the Lord, and in the very centre of Judaism, in the metropolitan city Jerusalem, under the shadow, as it were, of the temple, the words of life were spoken, which bowed hearts to confess the crucified One as their Saviour and their Lord. The work thus commenced nothing could stop. Peter and John were arrested, and put in ward; but many who heard their word believed, and the number of the men now swelled to about five thousand souls. (Acts 4:4.) At a little later date, when the opposition of the sanhedrin became more marked, the sacred historian acquaints us with the onward march of the work. "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7) Like the waters of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 47:1-23), each time the stream is, as it were, measured, it is only to tell of its expansion in breadth, as well as of its ceaseless flow. And resembling that river in another character, the movement, as it spread over the land of Israel, and reached even to Gentiles, disseminated life to all who profited by it. In Samaria, by the preaching of Philip, souls were evangelized, and Simon Magus found himself eclipsed. (Acts 8:1-40) The preaching of Christ had more effect he saw than his sorceries and bewitchments. Amongst the Gentiles the effects were the same. The sorcerer Bar-jesus was unable to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith. (Acts 13:6-12.) Idolaters turned from idols to God (1 Thessalonians 1:9), and from such sounded out the word of the Lord; for the gospel had come to them "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Men saw, and acknowledged a force at work to which Gentiles had hitherto been strangers. God was working by His word in the power of the Holy Ghost. Ignorant heathen (Acts 14:20; Acts 16:34) and educated heathen alike were reached by the Word. In Corinth, the seat of licentiousness; in Ephesus, a great centre of idolatry; in Rome, the metropolis of the empire, the gospel made its way. Magical books were burnt by their owners at Ephesus, and in the very household of the emperor Nero the Lord Jesus had some of His sheep. (Php 4:22.) Thus, from high and low, rich and poor, masters and slaves, souls were numbered amongst the disciples of Christ. For the word of God had reached them, and they had received it as His word, which effectually works in those that believe. Nor was it that one like Paul by the force of his ardour drew men along with him, for where he had not laboured the work spread, and the Word ministered wrought with like power. Of this the Colossians are an example. (Colossians 1:6-8.) For as at Rome, so at Colosse, the assembly there existing was not formed by the labours of the apostle.

If such were some of the results of the ministry of the Word, what was the subject of it? It was Christ. Philip preached Christ. (Acts 8:5.) His death, His resurrection, His ascension, were freely

proclaimed (Acts 2:23-34; Acts 4:33; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8), and forgiveness and justification from all things formed part of the glad tidings. (Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38-39.) Truth too about His person was set forth, that He is the Son of God. (Acts 9:20; Romans 1:1-4.) As the message from God to men, it was called the gospel, or glad tidings of God. (Romans 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:2.) As the truth about the Lord Jesus was its subject, it was called the gospel of the Christ. (Romans 15:19; Php 1:27.) And as it set forth God's ways with men in grace, it was called the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24.) Of the power of this message Paul, who had often carried it about, bears testimony. He was 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" (Romans 1:16); and from Jerusalem, round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of the Christ. (Romans 15:19.) In doing this he had moved among men of different minds, and nations characterized by different habits. Orientals had heard from his lips the glad tidings of salvation. Europeans too had listened to it, and received it. Led about by God in triumph in Christ, he carried from place to place the testimony with which he had been entrusted. He did not alter the message to suit the temper of his hearers; for Christ crucified, whom he preached, was both the wisdom of God, and the power of God to those who were called, whether from Jews or Greeks. (1 Corinthians 1:24.) What confidence he manifested in the power and suitability of the divine Word to meet all classes and conditions of men! But besides the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God, the kingdom also was preached, and everywhere there was insisted on "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:20-25.) But not only did ministering brethren preach, they also taught. Of Philip the evangelist we only read that he preached. (Acts 8:5; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:35; Acts 8:40.) Of Barnabas we learn that he could exhort* (Acts 11:23); and when he brought Saul to Antioch, teaching went on in that assembly (Acts 11:26), gathered out by the preaching of those who went there upon the persecution that arose about Stephen. (Acts 11:19-21) Thus by the exercise of different gifts the work was carried on. Some, as Philip, it would seem, may have been only evangelists; others, as Judas and Silas, may have been well known for their abilities as prophets, to exhort (Acts 15:32); others again, as Barnabas, and pre-eminently Paul, were gifted to teach, and to preach, and to press home on the conscience the word of God. But each in their measure, and as gifted by the Spirit, and being themselves gifts from the ascended Christ, helped on God's work on earth. And the Word was the weapon relied on, and used. They wanted no other; they turned to no other to deal with the conscience, and bow the heart. Moreover, they knew the character of that weapon, and its temper too; for what they relied on to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ was "the sword of the Spirit" — God's own word. (Ephesians 6:17.)

*It was perhaps from his possession of this gift of exhorting (parakalon) that the apostles surnamed him Barnabas, interpreted in Greek was huios parakleseos, Son of exhortation, or consolation. (Acts 4:36.) The different gifts of ministry, and the distinct lines of ministry, are marked in the Word. There was preaching and teaching, as there were evangelists, pastors, and teachers. At Jerusalem they ceased not to teach and to preach that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts 5:42.) At Antioch Paul and Barnabas continued teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. (Acts 15:35.) At Ephesus (Acts 20:1-38), at Corinth (Acts 18:11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-31.), at Rome (Acts 28:31), and elsewhere (Colossians 1:23-28), Paul continued to do both; for whilst by evangelizing the assembly is increased, there are things which form the subject of teaching, and not of preaching. Hence, if the work of God is to progress healthily, both teaching and preaching are requisite. Where simple evangelizing is all that is sought after, the saints will not be fully instructed in the

truth; where that is depreciated or neglected, interest in the spread of God’s work is in danger of flagging.

Chapter 10 Prayer and Prayer Meetings. By the ministry of the Word souls receive life, light, and understanding. As recipients of life there are desires formed within them which need an outgate, either by prayer or by worship. By the former, dependence upon God is confessed and expressed; by the latter, relief is afforded to the heart, in the enjoyment of God’s love, through the pouring itself out before Him. If the sense of need is uppermost within us, whether for ourselves, for others, or for the work of God upon earth, prayer in one or more of its forms is the suited way in which to express it. If it be the exceeding riches of God’s grace upon which the soul is dwelling, worship will be found to give it proper and satisfying relief. Thus graciously does God afford His people an outlet for their hearts, His ear being open to hear whatever they have to say to Him. To a consideration of prayer let us now address ourselves.

Man’s proper place is one of dependence upon God, and this the Lord, though God as well as man, frequently manifested in His own life on earth. He prayed; He spent a whole night in prayer; He prayed earnestly; He prayed in secret; He prayed openly. In the wilderness, on the mount, on Jordan’s brink, and in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus Christ poured out His soul in prayer to God.

Prayer too, public and private, characterized the early Christians. Of the first converts we read: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42.) Their enjoyment of the grace of God did not lead to forgetfulness of their dependence upon God; nor in the hour of God’s interposition on their behalf did they fail to remember how all their resources were in Him. For when Peter and John, who had been taken before the council, were restored to their own company, the hostility of the ecclesiastical rulers to the spread of the truth having now become manifest, the whole company, to whom the two apostles reported all that the chief priests and rulers had said to them, lifted up their voice with one accord to God for the continued successful prosecution of the work. (Acts 4:24.) Again, when Peter was in prisons arrested by the political power which at that time had sway at Jerusalem, and his martyrdom was determined upon for the morrow, fervent prayer was made on his behalf, and a prayer meeting was held for that purpose in the house of Mary the mother of John, surnamed Mark. (Acts 12:1-25) And that meeting had not broken up, though it was past the hour of midnight, when Peter in person announced to them how their prayer had been heard, and his release had been effected. Nor was it only in Jerusalem that meetings for prayer were held; for when the Holy Ghost had marked out Barnabas and Paul at Antioch for the work to which He had called them, prophets and teachers there assembled laid their hands on them, after fasting and prayer, recommending them to the grace of God for the work they had been called on to undertake. (Acts 13:3; Acts 14:26.) On another occasion, at Tyre, when Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for his last visit there of which we have any record, the whole assembly, including the wives and children, knelt down in prayer outside the city, on the sea-shore, with those of Paul’s company. (Acts 21:5.) A refreshment, doubtless, this must have been to the apostle’s heart — a service, too, well-pleasing to God.

Besides these instances of common prayer, in which the whole company took part, we learn from Scripture how repeatedly saints were wont to resort to it. The twelve, when exercising their

apostolic powers in appointing the seven deacons, engaged in prayer before they laid their hands upon them. (Acts 6:6.) Similarly, Paul and Barnabas, when appointing elders in every city, prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. (Acts 14:23.) And Peter and John, in Samaria, prayed that the converts might receive the Holy Ghost previous to the laying on of their hands to bestow it. (Acts 8:15.) Peter, too, when raising up Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40), and Paul, when about to heal the father of Publius (Acts 28:8), alike confessed their entire dependence upon God for the exercise of such powers on man's behalf. Of Stephen we read that his latest utterance was one of intercession for his murderers. (Acts 7:60.) Of Paul we learn that, though the character of his future work was told him at his conversion, ere he rose from the ground (Acts 26:17-18),* yet it was when engaged in prayer in the temple at Jerusalem, that he received his directions to depart to the Gentiles. (Acts 22:17-18.) In the house which was left desolate to the Jews, for the presence of the Lord was not there, the divine command to depart to the Gentiles was communicated directly to the vessel fitted for the service. On another occasion, in a place and under circumstances very different from the last, Paul and Silas, in the prison at Philippi, with their feet made fast in the stocks, at midnight prayed, and sang praises to God. Their bodies were subjected to the power and malice of man. Their spirits were free, and unfettered. They prayed, and they sang praises to God (Acts 16:25), and an answer came. God acted in power and in grace. An earthquake shook the prison, opened its doors, and set the prisoners free; and the word of God, by Paul and Silas, converted the jailer and his household. Again, at Miletus, the apostle did not bring to a close his farewell interview with the Ephesian elders, until he had prayed with them. (Acts 20:1-38) How prayer characterized him his epistles demonstrate. (Romans 1:9-10; Ephesians 1:16; Ephesians 3:14; Php 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:3; Php 4:1-23.) How he valued the prayers of others, and counted on them, his epistles also teach us. (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:19; Php 1:7;** Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Php 1:22; Hebrews 13:18.) But he seems not to have asked the prayers of any who were walking in ways that he had to reprove. To the Galatians he made no request for their fellowship with him in prayer, though we cannot doubt from the tone of his letter that he prayed for them. (Galatians 4:19.) Nor did he solicit the prayers of the Corinthians till Titus had assured him of their godly sorrow. A silence of this kind on the part of the apostle has surely a voice for us. To ask for the prayers of others should never be a matter of form on our part.

*"Now" in verse 17 is omitted in all uncial MSS.

**"Because ye have me in your heart," not "because I have you in my heart," is what the apostle really expressed.

Prayer for one's self (James 5:13); prayer for others, for saints (Ephesians 6:18), and for all men (1 Timothy 2:1); prayer too for the work of God upon earth (Colossians 4:3-4) — with such requests are we permitted to approach God. Nor is this anything new; for saints in Old Testament times addressed Him, and in accordance with the revelation of their day drew nigh to God as the Almighty (Job 8:5), or as Jehovah God of Israel (1 Kings 8:23), who dwelleth between the cherubim. (2 Kings 19:15.) As seated on His earthly throne, Israel addressed to Him their supplications. Christians, however, are privileged to call on God as their Father who is in the heavens, and to pray likewise to the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 12:8); but nowhere are they authorized in Scripture to pray to the Holy Ghost. Praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 1:20; Ephesians

6:18) is what Christians are exhorted to do; but never are they told to pray to Him. Praying in the Holy Ghost we shall express the desires which the Spirit of God has formed in our hearts, and as the Spirit would lead us to present them; and, as having access to the heavenly sanctuary, we pray to Him who is in the heavens. Prayer then should ever be in accordance with the revelation vouchsafed to God's saints. What was suited to Solomon and Hezekiah would not be fitting for us. We should not address God as the God of Israel, nor speak to Him as dwelling between the cherubim. Similarly, since the Holy Ghost is with us, making intercession too for us according to God (Romans 8:27), and with the bride asks the Lord Jesus to come (Revelation 22:17), addresses to Him, whether invoking His presence on earth, or asking Him to help us, receive no countenance from the divine word, and indicate a lack of spiritual understanding in those who resort to them.

Prayer to God as the Father was first taught by the Son, who reveals Him. (Matthew 11:27.) Taught by Him about the Father, the disciples asked the Lord how they were to pray; for clearly the old forms of prayer did not meet the position into which they were brought by this revelation on the part of the Son. To their desire He responded, and gave them what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), but without the doxology, which did not really form part of it. Now this act on the Lord's part is full of instruction for us. John the Baptist, who had ministered truth for his day, taught his disciples how to pray. The Lord Jesus, who revealed the Father, taught also His disciples, some of whom certainly had been disciples of John, how they were to pray. The old Jewish forms of prayer clearly no longer suited the disciple's of Christ. The prayer, or prayers, John taught his disciples ceased to be the proper expression of their heart, when they had learnt from the Son about the Father. It is plain, then, that prayer should always be in harmony with, and based upon, the revelation of God which has been vouchsafed us. Souls in those days felt that. The Lord then endorsed the thought as correct, and afterwards abundantly confirmed it; for just before His departure, on the night previous to His crucifixion, unasked by the eleven, He discoursed in a marked way on this important subject. Of the power of prayer, when offered up in faith, He had taught them only a few days before. (Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24.) Now, in the immediate prospect of His departure, He teaches them a good deal more. He was about to leave them to go to the Father, henceforth to be hidden from their sight. They should, however, have a clear proof that He was, where He had told them that He was going; for they should do greater works than He had done, and whatsoever they should ask in His name, that He would do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son, adding, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:12-14.) The world, the Jews, might taunt them with trusting to a crucified man; but as answers came to prayers offered up in His name, they would have abundant proof, both that He was with the Father, accepted on high, though rejected on earth, and also that He was caring for His own.

Now here for the first time do we read of prayer to be offered up in His name. When He gave the disciples the prayer of Matthew 6:1-34 He did not tell them to present their petitions in His name; and in John 16:24 we distinctly learn from His own lips that this was something quite new. "Hitherto," He said, "have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." The prayer of Matthew 6:1-34 was prayer to the Father, the pouring out of the heart to God from one that knew himself to be His child; but, till the atonement by the blood of Christ was accomplished, prayer in His name was unknown. As soon as that was effected, and known by those who believed on Him, prayer was to be offered up in His name. His name would henceforth

have a meaning for them as well as for God; for it expresses all that He is in the eyes of God the Father. The answer would come from God; but the Son it would be who would fulfil the desires of their hearts. "I will do it" assured them of this, and of His unabated interest in all that concerned them. But further, since unlimited power was at His command to do whatsoever they asked, He proceeded to tell them on what conditions, all their requests would be granted. "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7.) Conforming to these conditions — for they are conditions — they could reckon on asking the right things, and could be sure of receiving an answer. For, if abiding in Christ, and His words abiding in them, they would be in the full current of God's thoughts, and hence their desires would be quite in conformity with His mind. Further, He added, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you." (John 15:16.) Here He again lays down conditions, and mentions the name of the One to whom they were to address themselves, which as yet in this discourse He had not stated. And now one more point had to be noticed, ere His instructions on the subject of prayer were completed; viz., the time from whence they might begin thus to pray. "At that day," 1:e. after His resurrection, "ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." (John 16:26-27.) Familiar personal intercourse with the Lord as man upon the earth would cease; for He would be no longer present with them in the manner that He had been. They would therefore in that day ask nothing of Him; but whatsoever they should ask the Father in His name, the Father would give them. (John 16:23.) So direct was to be their intercourse with the Father, and such a valid plea would they be able always to urge before Him.

Four distinct points then are taken up by the Lord in these three chapters of John's gospel. 1st, In whose name we are to pray (John 14:1-31); 2nd, Conditions on which, if fulfilled, we can be sure of answers to our requests; 3rd, The one to whom we can pray (John 15:1-27); and, 4th, The time when the Lord's instructions were first to be acted on. (John 16:1-33) Whilst then we can always present our requests to God the Father, who is never weary of hearkening to the cry of His children, and whilst we have a plea on which to base our petitions — a plea the full value of which is known, not to us, but to Him to whom we pray — there are, we must ever remember, conditions laid down, conforming to which we can reckon upon an answer to our prayers; viz., faith, as set forth in Matthew 21:1-46, and the conditions stated in the gospel by John. A remembrance of these will surely check rash and inconsiderate petitions. Can I link the name of Christ with the prayer I am presenting to the Father? Have I the mind of God as to that which I am solicitous to get? Can I prefer my requests in faith?

These remarks apply to prayer in general, both private and public. Liberty to resort to the former is freely given us in the epistles. (Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Php 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Peter 4:7.) Instructions about the latter are set forth in 1 Timothy 2:1-15. Of common prayer the Lord also has made mention in Matthew 18:19-20, assuring His disciples that if only two should agree touching anything they might ask, it should be done for them of His Father who is in the heavens; for where two or three are gathered together unto His name, there is He in the midst of them. On His presence then we can reckon, if the condition laid down is complied with — gathered unto His name; for of that His people need never be deprived, however small their

number, though they are upon earth and He is in heaven.

Now this supposes a meeting for prayer, directions for which Timothy received from Paul. For, what the order of such a meeting should be, it is not left to man to devise. How various in that case the arrangements would surely be! God, however, has given us by the apostle His regulations in connection with it. And such were needed; for since Christianity restores woman to her proper place in connection with man, which amongst the heathen was lost, and Judaism did not teach (Matthew 19:8), though she is still subject to God’s governmental dealings, the consequence of the fall; and since too the saints were taught that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28), there was a danger — and the state of matters shows it had already risen — lest they should confound the condition in Christ with the relative position of the sexes in the assembly. In Christ we are all one; in the assembly we are not. The grace shown to us in Christ does not override God’s order in creation. This the Corinthians had to be taught (1 Corinthians 11:1-9), and of this Timothy is reminded.

Looking at that chapter, we can form a very good idea of what a prayer meeting must have been in apostolic times, if all gathered together were in subjection to the teaching of the Word. Composed of persons of both sexes, the men only opened their mouths in prayer, any one of whom, however, was free, if guided by the Spirit, to lead the whole company in their devotions. "For I will," wrote the apostle, "that the men pray everywhere." Both the men and the women were indwelt by the Holy Ghost; for He then dwelt, and does now dwell, in every true believer. The fact then of having received the Holy Ghost did not make such an one fit to lead others in prayer. All were one in Christ; but God’s order in the assembly was to be observed, although, as it would seem, the separation of the sexes, carried out in the synagogue, was not maintained in the Christian assembly. Might then any man, because of his sex, make himself the mouthpiece of the company in their devotions? Assuming that he was otherwise able to do it, he would nevertheless, on any occasion, have been disqualified, if he could not lift up holy (or pious) hands without wrath and reasoning. What creatures then they were in themselves in the assembly at Ephesus, since such a caution was required! "Just like me," however, any one, and every one, who knows something of his evil nature, must surely acknowledge. What grace then to allow such to approach the throne of grace on behalf of themselves, and as the mouthpieces of the assembly of God!

If we had been present at such a meeting, we should have found the women, who were obedient to the apostolic injunctions, adorned in seemly guise, with modesty and discretion; and instead of setting off their persons by jewels or costly array, had we watched their general behaviour, followed them to their homes, and spent a day in their company, we should have seen them adorned with ornaments of great value indeed, such as become women professing godliness, even with good works. Further, whilst in the assembly they would all have been silent (1 Corinthians 14:34), elsewhere we should have found them surely learning in quietness (heuchia), not teaching nor usurping authority over the men; but being in quietness, remembering both woman’s place in creation, as evidenced by the fact that Adam was first formed, then Eve, and the fatal consequences of her intercourse in the garden with the serpent. The woman was deceived, the man was not. Adam hearkened to the voice of his wife. She proved her unfitness to take the lead. "Nevertheless," adds the apostle, "she shall be preserved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Thus, whilst the head of the woman is the man, her preservation in child-bearing is connected governmentally as much with the husband’s behaviour

as with her own.

Having glanced at the orderly arrangement of a prayer meeting, we may in conclusion enquire, what would have been the character of their prayers. Very comprehensive they might be, and very free. Bound by no written or pre-arranged form, they could freely make use of all the different kinds of prayer with which we are acquainted. Supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, they were free to present before the throne of grace, Addressing the High and the Holy One with all the reverence and solemnity that befits a creature addressing its God, they could nevertheless speak to Him in all the confidence of children, being free to express every desire, and to lay before Him all the wants and wishes of the assembly. The grace this speaks of is great. God would be entreated of them. He would hearken to their prayers. He would let them hold free, personal intercourse with Him; for such enteuxis,* translated intercession, seems to imply. And to thanksgivings too they were also free to give utterance on such occasions. For if mindful of the grace which gives free access to God, and the freedom permitted of speaking on behalf of all saints and all men, remembering too past answers to prayer, surely in the consciousness of all this thanksgivings might well mingle with supplications, prayers, and intercessions. How comprehensive then can prayers be, since we may pray for all saints and for all men! In Ephesians 6:18 we are exhorted to pray for all saints; in 1 Timothy 2:1 we are taught to pray for all men. Each of these statements is in character with the epistle in which it occurs. In Ephesians we are taught especially about the body of Christ; in Timothy we have God presented as the Saviour. Prayer for all saints is in keeping with the teaching of the one; prayer for all men is in full accord with the line of truth in the other.

*The noun elsewhere occurs only in 1 Timothy 4:5. The verb entugchano is used of the intercession of the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25); of the Holy Ghost (Romans 8:27); of Elijah with God (Romans 11:2); and of the Jews with Festus against Paul. (Acts 30:24.)

Living as the early Christians did under rulers who knew not God, prayer, they were taught, was to be offered for those in authority, as well as for the well-being and necessities of individuals. Thus grace, of which they were partakers, was to be manifested in them; and a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, they might lead, the result of God upholding and restraining the constituted authorities placed over them. Thank God, we in our land are little familiar with the troubles, and the insecurity to life and property, which are liable to attend the absence of a stable government. Still, prayer for the powers that be we should not on that account forget; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Of God’s willingness to save all we are here reminded, that we may pray for all; but of His counsels the apostle is not in this passage treating. How willing is God to save! He declares it, and He has given proofs of it: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men." Here national distinctions and dispensational position drop out of sight. And the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, gave Himself a ransom for all, and appointed Paul to be a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of nations, in faith and truth to testify of it. He gave Himself! What words for us to read! He has provided too the channel by which this should be made known. What desire on His part for men’s salvation does this manifest! What freedom must this have given to Christians when presenting petitions to God!

Chapter 11

Worship. To worship God is the duty of every intelligent creature. The angels worship Him. His saints too worship Him. By-and-by all on earth will worship Him. (Zephaniah 2:11; Isaiah 66:23.) As God, He is the proper object of adoration for all His intelligent creatures, and men will be expected, in the terms of the everlasting gospel, to worship Him. (Revelation 14:7.) But whilst angels render Him homage in truth for what He is, unrenewed men will by-and-by worship Him, though only from having learnt His power in judgment, or from a desire to enjoy life on earth under the sway of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such outward homage, however, is not all that God would receive from men, for He accepts the adoration of the heart; and hence worship of a different character, and springing from very different motives, God is willing to receive from His people on earth. Now about this He has instructed us, telling us in His word of the character, the power, and the true place of worship, as well as furnishing us therein with regulations for His saints when met in assembly for such a purpose. But first, what is worship? It is the homage of the creature rendered to God. Hence the terms commonly used, both in Hebrew and Greek, to express it, have reference primarily to the action of the body as that by which worship is outwardly indicated; so that, although it may at times be but an external act of homage without the heart being really engaged in it (Zephaniah 2:11), the idea conveyed by the terms in frequent use indicates the occupation for the time being of the worshipper with an object outside of himself. Where the homage of the heart is rendered to God, the worshipper is of course rightly occupied with Him. Worship, then, differs from prayer in this. In prayer we are occupied with the wants which we thereby present to God. In worship we are occupied with God. Hence true worship of God may take the form of praise, or thanksgiving, or both. If we praise Him, we tell out what He has discovered to us of Himself. If we thank Him, we speak of what He has done for us, or of what we have received from Him. In a certain sense His works praise Him, for they set forth something of what He is. But His saints bless Him, or speak well of Him; for they have received from Him. (Psalms 145:10.) For fallen creatures then to worship Him in truth they must be partakers of His grace. For one conscious of his sinfulness and sins, and what such deserve from God, cannot really worship Him till saved by faith in Christ. Till then such an one would be occupied with his condition and deserts, and not with God.

Now it was at the well side in Samaria that this subject was first opened up, and that by the Lord Himself, to a poor sinner, whose ways indicated that she had been far indeed in heart from God. And here we see how perfect in wisdom are God’s ways. To Nicodemus, a man of reputation amongst the Jews, the Lord insisted on the necessity of the new birth. To the woman who had lost all character among men, He spoke of worship. The woman needed to be born again, and Nicodemus was to become a worshipper; but the teacher of Israel was taught his need, and the instrumentality by which it could be met, by water and the Spirit; the woman was instructed in the pouring out of the heart in adoration to God, even the Father. This surely would not have been man’s way with these two; but it was God’s, and it was as perfect as it was fitting. For man to become a true worshipper he must be taught his need of grace, and his condition by nature. The convicted sinner is to understand, that the band of true worshippers is only recruited and enlarged from those who are indebted to the saving mercy of God. On this subject let us now enter, taking it up in the order indicated above.

First, then, as to the character of true worship. Having discovered from the Lord’s knowledge of her life that she was in the presence of a prophet, the woman thereupon brought up the question

which had been raised by the Samaritans with the Jews, whether at Jerusalem or at Gerizim men ought to worship. With her, as with many in this day, it was the opinion of men that she thought of. "Ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Not a word, be it observed, does she speak of God's will in the matter. Not a thought does she indicate of any choice Jehovah might have made, or any preference that He had shown for one place over another. Yet He had distinctly made choice of Jerusalem, He had clearly marked out mount Moriah as the mount of the Lord. David learnt that when God accepted the offering on Araunah's threshingfloor, by which the plague was effectually stopped in Israel. (1 Chronicles 22:1.) Solomon was aware of God's choice when he began to build the temple (2 Chronicles 3:1), and God assured him, after its dedication, of the selection He had made of the place, having sanctified the house, that His name should be there for ever. (2 Chronicles 7:16.) From this purpose God never receded. In the songs of degrees we read of it. (Psalms 132:14.) In Ezekiel 43:7 we meet with Jehovah's settled purpose about it. In God's word, then, there was no uncertainty about it, though very likely the woman was in entire ignorance of the Scriptures which speak of it. But whose fault was that? The position she was in, and that from her birth, and because of her birth, may have kept her from acquaintance with those portions of the divine revelation. This might and would explain how it was that she was ignoraut; but it was no real excuse for that ignorance. She claimed to have relation with the God of Jacob, yet knew not, nor sought to learn, whether on this question He had revealed His mind in His word. And this is clear from her way of introducing the subject; for, prophet though the Jewish stranger was in her eyes, she neither attempted to appeal to Scripture in support of the selection of Gerizim, nor did she ask Him what scriptural authority the Jews had for going up to Jerusalem. "Ye say," was her language. How many since her day have taken up similar language, when the question of worship has been brought before them! Yet at no time has that been in God's eyes an open question, since He was first pleased to instruct people about it.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." That was true. For centuries the rival temple at Gerizim had been the centre of Samaritan worship. But that fact could add nothing in support of its claims to be the house of God. Granted that she was following in the footsteps of her fathers, worshipping as they had done before her, still the question remained, Was that place selected by God in which to rear up His sanctuary, and acceptable worship to be offered therein? One word from Scripture would outweigh all the claims of Gerizim, even if they had been enveloped in the prescriptive right of hoar antiquity. A "thus saith the Lord" would demolish, for subject minds, all arguments and reasoning of men.

Again. Assuming that she was in ignorance of the revelation about Jerusalem, was the worship offered at Gerizim, if done in ignorance, to be accepted of God? Granted too that many a Samaritan conscientiously resorted to that mountain, would worshipping God according to their conscience make it thereby acceptable in His eyes? Was man's conscience to override the plain direction of the Word? By no means. So the Lord distinctly repudiated the claims of Gerizim, and the worship there carried on. "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." The Samaritans were self-condemned, for out of Zion the Deliverer was to come (Psalms 14:7); from the stem of Jesse the King would spring. (Isaiah 11:1.) Their position apart from the Jews practically denied this. But more, they worshipped what they knew not. The Jewish prophet, as she thought Him, had now spoken, and demolished in a moment all the supposed claims of Gerizim. Those words too had surely a deep meaning, "Ye worship ye know

not what." But was He authorised to speak in such a manner? She little thought that the stranger was the prophet indeed (Deuteronomy 18:18), and the only-begotten Son of God as well. How God then viewed the Samaritan position, politically and ecclesiastically, that woman learnt from Him whose house was the temple at Jerusalem. Now three things this interview distinctly settle for us. It is dangerous, as well as wrong, to make that a matter of man's opinion on which God has expressed His mind. Worshipping God as our fathers have done before us is no guarantee that we are worshipping aright. And granting that what we do, is done with a good conscience, that is no ground for God to accept it. What God has said about worship, is the one important question when that subject comes up. To conform to His mind in the matter is the simple duty of His people. On the positive teaching on this subject the Lord at once enters. On the divine choice of Jerusalem He does not dilate, for the question in connection with worship was assuming a new aspect. It would not be a question merely of locality, but of the person worshipped, and of the character of worship. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Jerusalem would indeed be overthrown; the house there erected, at the cost of great labour and wealth, would be thrown down. Yet the Samaritans would not be able to triumph over the Jews; for in neither place in the time coming were men to worship the Father. "The Father!" Surely this must have struck her as new language. Israel was God's son, His firstborn (Exodus 4:22), the children of the Lord their God. (Deuteronomy 14:1.) Jehovah was a Father to Israel, and Ephraim was His firstborn. (Jeremiah 31:9.) Yet they never had worshipped Him as the Father; for none can know the Father, except those to whom the Son will reveal Him. (Matthew 11:27.) Now this is one essential feature of Christian worship. God known, in His relation to His people as their Father, and they worshipping Him as such; but this revelation is a matter for individuals — "he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Each one, then, who knows the Father, is indebted for it to the Son of God; and only those who know Him, it is manifest, can worship Him. National worship, as such, then at once disappears; for if all in the nation could really worship God, it would be as His children, and not on the ground of nationality, since He stands in the relation of Father to all who on earth are now privileged to approach Him. How many a company of professing worshippers would be thinned at once, did all real Christians understand and maintain this simple truth. But the Lord stopped not there. He proceeded to tell the woman the character of worship that would be acceptable to the Father. It must be in spirit and in truth. The nature of God, and the relation in which He stands to each true worshipper, must be understood, if we would worship Him aright. He is a Spirit, so we must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for it is in the consciousness that He is our Father, and as the Father, that we are permitted to pour out the heart to Him. "In spirit." Then it must be spiritual in its character, and from that time no formal worship would God be willing to receive. The true worshippers must worship Him in spirit. What God is should teach us that. "In truth," too, must it be. Hence the revelation He has vouchsafed, whatever it be, the worshipper must be acquainted with, and conform to. No going back then to the revelation of a former time, and trying to worship Him on that ground, will be worship in truth. So now that the atoning work is accomplished, and that by one offering the Lord Jesus has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, we cannot worship God aright, if we seek to draw nigh without forgiveness enjoyed, and acceptance in Christ known. For entrance into the heavenly sanctuary is only enjoined after we have been taught that believers are sanctified by the will of God, are perfected by the one offering of Christ, and their sins and iniquities are remembered by God no more. (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14-22.) Such then are the ones the Father seeks to worship

Him. Who would have thought this? The Father is seeking worshippers, not men the Father. Men with hearts filled, free to empty themselves in His presence in the enjoyment of His grace, it is these the Father is seeking, and the Son assures us of it. It is joy to worship. What joy must it be to the Father to receive the worship of His children! What joy to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as well as to God's children, when from the fulness of the heart they worship the Father! What misery resulted from the fall! What abounding joy springs from the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ! With the mention of the Person to be worshipped, and the character of true worship (these both taught directly), and the class of people who can be worshippers (this taught indirectly from the Lord thus conversing with the woman), His instructions on this important question ended. Scripture, however, gives us more about it, and makes it very plain that true Christian worship is different from anything ever before known. Paul, once zealous for the law, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, knew well what Judaism was, and the evil of Judaizing teaching in the Church of God. So warning his beloved Philippians against such, he sets forth, in a simple way, the true Christian position in contrast with all such teaching. "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God" (so we should probably read the clause), "and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Php 3:3.) The Holy Ghost then is the power of true Christian worship. Now this was both new and distinctive. It characterised Christian worship then. It must characterise it still. We are to worship by the Spirit of God. Forms and ceremonies God gave to Israel, in conformity with which they worshipped Jehovah. Forms and ceremonies have not been given to us. We know not even the words in which the Lord gave thanks at the institution of the Supper. We have no description of an apostle breaking bread. We have not a single hymn, that we know of, which was in use in any Christian assembly in apostolic days. Nothing of this has been handed down to us in the Word. We have no book of Christian psalms; for we are to worship by the Spirit of God. Now if we go back to Old Testament forms, and mould Christian worship in conformity with them, we lose this distinctive feature of Christianity, worshipping by the Spirit of God. And herein lies a danger arising from ignorance of dispensational teaching. It may seem very plausible to say we use Scripture language, and can point to precedents in the Word for our ways in worship. But if Scripture is used unintelligently, and dispensational teaching is not known, the soul may be beguiled, by using words of Scripture, to surrender distinctive teaching of Christianity. This is a very serious matter, and one which concerns all Christians; for have not most of us had part in such confusion? But have all seen the evil of it? Do all understand what it is to worship by the Spirit of God, allowing Him, who is in the assembly, to guide in worship, when Christians meet together for that purpose?

Now the word of God takes such pains to point out the distinction between the two dispensations; whereas Christians, through ignorance of New Testament teaching, have practically sought to mingle them — attempting to put the wine of Christian truth into bottles of Jewish forms. The mistake of this, to say nothing more, is further apparent when we consider, thirdly, what the place is in which we now worship God. It is the sanctuary on high, into which the great Priest has entered by His own blood, a sanctuary into which Israel never had access, and never will. Now into the holiest are we permitted to enter "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 10:19-20.) But for us to be there, three things are requisite. The Lord Jesus must have died, else the veil could not have been rent; atonement by His blood must have been made, otherwise we should not have boldness to enter in, nor have known of a living way into the presence-chamber of God; and

thirdly, those only can enter in without judgment overtaking them, who acknowledge the death of Christ to be their ground and way of entry into the holiest. It is, then, both a new and a living way, and the only one that God has ever sanctioned for those who have sinned against Him. "Through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." None, then, are entitled to draw nigh, who do not own the atoning death of Christ to be their way of entrance there.

Now this is an important point; for thus carefully does God guard the way into His presence. The veil was rent, and through it, as rent, we pass into the holiest. Had God removed it because the Lord had died, anybody might get into His presence, whether owning the Lord's death or not; for what barred the way into the holiest would have barred it no longer. But we go through it, as it were, because rent by the Lord's death upon the cross. None, then, who refuse to acknowledge His death as their way of entry, can ever get in there. To all who do there is no barrier now; to those who do not, there is no way into the divine presence, by which they can enter, and be sheltered from judgment. But all this is in direct contrast with Judaism. Atonement by blood not really made, the way into the holiest not yet manifested, the veil intact; these were characteristic features of Jewish worship. Atonement made, the veil rent, through which, by the blood of Jesus, we approach God; these are features of true Christian worship. And the mention of them is enough to make any see at a glance, that acceptable worship now must be very different in its characteristics from acceptable worship of old. An earthly sanctuary, too, they had. Into the heavenly one we enter; hence the language of saints in heaven (Revelation 5:1-14) is the language we can take up now. And further, as there is no altar of burnt-offering in heaven, nor are sacrificial victims there offered up, so we approach not now to an altar, nor do we present any sacrificial victims to God. We worship in person on earth as we shall worship in heaven by-and-by, except that now in these bodies, with sin within us, and the world around us, we are often distracted in thought, when we should have the mind wholly concentrated on Him we are worshipping. But Israel will again approach the altar of burnt-offering, and bring their victims with them, because they will worship in the earthly sanctuary, with which such a service is inseparably connected. We do neither, because we worship in the holiest in heaven, and according to the tabernacle order have left the altar behind us.

Thus it was, that the Christian assembly met for worship was to conduct itself in a manner very different from that of the congregation of Israel. The latter had priests and Levites to do the service at the altar and in the tabernacle, or temple; but all believers now are priests. There are no true worshippers who are not priests; for though sacrificial service at the altar has for us ceased, sacrifices we do offer up, even praise and thanksgivings to God. Had we then visited the service in the temple, and looked in on an assembly gathered together for worship in accordance with the direction given us by Paul, how great would have been the difference! Both would have called themselves the people of the Lord; but the latter would have let us know that they were individually children of God. In the temple we should have seen a marked difference between the sexes. The men had a place to which no woman had access; and the notice warning a Gentile of death, if he obtruded himself into the court of the males, would have met us probably full in the face. In the Christian assembly there would have been seen no such separation of sexes, nor any distinction of races; those once Jews, with those once Gentiles, would have been seen together worshipping God. And whereas in the temple we might have witnessed sacrificial rites to deal with sins committed, in the assembly we should have heard sacrifices of praise and thanksgivings for their

sins forgiven, atonement accomplished, and redemption known and enjoyed. Had we asked a Jew for the house of God, he would have directed us to the temple on mount Moriah; but on visiting it we should not have found God there present, for He did not dwell in it after the Babylonish captivity. Had we asked a Christian for the house of God, he would have told us of the assembly of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15); and going to it, we might have learnt, through the instrumentality of any prophet exercising his gift at the moment, that God was among them. (1 Corinthians 14:25.) The temple, we should have found, was desolate; but God was present in the assembly.

Surveying the company gathered together no president would have been discernible; yet, if all were subject to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, no disorder would have been perceived. Order would have reigned, not because they had drawn up a set of human rules, or had instituted a hierarchy of human appointment — for neither the one nor the other had a place in the assembly at the beginning — but gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, His presence would have been owned, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost in every act of worship distinctly recognized. As the meeting went on, hearts, full of grace enjoyed, would have poured themselves out in worship, either by one voice expressing the common feelings of the assembly, or by a hymn raised and sung with heartiness by all. The notes of praise having died away, silence would perhaps have reigned till broken by the voice of a prophet speaking to edification, exhortation, or comfort. Not a word uttered for show, not a thing done but what the Spirit of God directed; no haste in taking part in the guidance of the assembly in worship, nor interruption of any speaker, would have been noticed, save when a revelation from God demanded the immediate attention of all. For the Spirit of God never acts out of season; and if He vouchsafed a revelation, it was because the saints had need of it at the moment. Nothing else, however, but a direct revelation from God would have been allowed to check a prophet in his service at that moment. And though all the males might prophesy, not too many would have done it, lest the profit of some or all might have been marred. Further, no prophet would have been observed to speak, as if impelled by a divine afflatus which he could not resist; for the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, and no one would have opened his mouth in a tongue unless there was some one to interpret. The women would have been silent, save when the strain of a hymn permitted them to join in concert, or the responsive Amen could fittingly come from the heart and lips. And, what would surely have struck one accustomed to the synagogue or temple, whilst the women had their heads covered, the men would have been seen with theirs uniformly uncovered. (1 Corinthians 11:1-34)

Now is this an ideal picture? — Let the reader study 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, and see if the mark has been overstepped; for in it we have the Spirit of God correcting by the apostle disorders which had appeared in the Corinthian assembly, and telling them likewise what was admissible, as well as what was forbidden, in the assemblies of God’s saints. Shall Scripture in this, as in other things, be our guide, or the rules and regulations devised by the wit of men? "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge [or recognize] that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 14:37.) Thus wrote the apostle Paul. Have these injunctions and directions been superseded by a more recent divine revelation? Can they lose their force by the lapse of time, or the change of locality? (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 14:33.) Are they not for our guidance, whenever and wherever Christians are gathered in assembly for worship, in this the nineteenth century, as much as they were in the first? "The hour now is," said the Lord, "when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23.)

Chapter 12 The Institution of the Supper.

"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42.) Such is the sacred historian's brief account of the ways of the first converts to Christianity after the day of Pentecost. The company in which they were found, and the teaching to which they were subject, these are classed together. Then, as a consequence, we learn of the religious exercises which characterized them; viz., the breaking of bread, and prayers; for by the omission of the conjunction and before "breaking of bread" in accordance with the reading of the best MSS., that and prayer are stated as characteristic actions of the Christian community. Here, then, for the first time after the institution of the supper, do we read of the Christians meeting to break bread together in remembrance of the Lord's death; and from henceforth this peculiar Christian service is called the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7; Acts 20:11) as well as the Lord's Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:20.) By the latter term we are reminded by whom it was instituted, by the former is expressed the action of those who partake of it.

Yet the action in itself was nothing new. With the simple meaning of the term the Jews were certainly familiar (Matthew 14:19; Matthew 15:36; Mark 8:6; Mark 8:19; Lamentations 4:4); nor were they strangers to the custom of breaking bread and drinking wine with mourners to comfort them. Of this Jeremiah writes (Jeremiah 16:7); but, it is the marginal reading of the authorised version that conveys, what the Hebrew original expresses. What, however, was new, and, peculiar too, was the interpretation the Lord gave to His act of breaking bread. To comfort mourners for the dead, their friends, we learn, would break bread for them, and give them the cup of consolation for their father or their mother. It was all that friendship could do when death had entered the family, and bereavement pressed heavily on the sorrowing ones. Sweet, doubtless, such sympathy had often proved itself to be, as the loving care of friends thus displayed itself in the house, and on the day of sorrow; but sweet as it might be, the heart's ache could not thereby be removed, nor the void which death had caused be thereby filled. But who could comfort the disciples for the death of their Master and Lord? No friends could be found to do it; and worse than that, the world's enmity they were about to experience in a way they had never felt it before. Yet a comfort, but far more than a comfort, would they find in breaking bread together in remembrance of the Lord's death; for whilst friends might give to bereaved ones the cup of consolation, the disciples received from the hands of Christ Himself the cup of blessing. And yet more; for His death was their gain, how great soever was their sorrow in losing Him. Now indeed the thought was new, that the death of one could be productive of real, everlasting gain to others; yet so it was in the case of the Lord's death, though in His only. This the disciples were to remember, and in the presence of the memorials of it to give thanks as they acknowledged it. Of the institution of the Lord's Supper we have four inspired accounts. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us about it; and Paul, addressing the Corinthians, acquaints them with that which he had received direct from the Lord in glory concerning it. (1 Corinthians 11:23.) When, and where the apostle of the Gentiles received it we are not told; but the fact that he did receive it direct from the Lord, years after He had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, testifies of the desire that all His people, whether gathered out from Jews or from Gentiles, should equally, and in the same manner, announce His death till He come. Of these four accounts, one only is from the pen of an eyewitness, and a recipient of the elements from the Lord in person. As, however, we examine the four accounts, we have to confess that we should have lost something had any one of them been missing. Had Matthew's account been lost, we

should not have known that the Lord, in giving the cup, said, "Drink ye all of it;" had that of Mark not survived to our day, we should not have known that they did all drink of it. (Mark 14:23.) Communion in one kind was not practised in the Lord's presence, nor sustained by anything that fell from His lips. Again, Matthew, the eye-witness, has also recorded other words not met with elsewhere. "For the remission of sins," is an addition only found in this connection in his gospel. Now, comparing Jeremiah 31:31-34 with the four accounts of the Supper, we trace an important connection. Of all the Old Testament writers, Jeremiah is the only one who mentions the new covenant, though other prophets describe blessings to be enjoyed under it: The Lord is the first person in the New Testament who speaks of it, and He supplies an important link with reference to it. Jeremiah predicted the new covenant, and the blessings to be enjoyed under it; viz., the knowledge of God, and the forgiveness of sins; but he did not state on what sacrifice this covenant would be based. This the Lord did when He uttered the words, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28.) Thus His words, when giving the cup to His disciples, naturally recall to our mind the passage in Jeremiah, and show us that He revealed what the prophet could not; and when we remember the dispensational character of Matthew's gospel, presenting as it does the Lord as Son of David, and Son of Abraham, is there not a propriety in the fullest reference to that covenant which concerns directly God's earthly people, being found in the gospel, which more than any of the others presents the Lord in His special relation to them? Forgiveness of sins we enjoy now, and they will by-and-by; but they will only know it as part of the blessings of the new covenant, and when that covenant shall have been made with them. We who believe know it now, because the blood on which it will rest has been shed; so the blessing, based on the atoning work of the Lord, can be shared in by us whilst the Lord is in heaven.

Turning to Luke's account, we learn what the other two evangelists do not make plain — how distinct was the Lord's Supper from the paschal feast, though both were partaken of by the disciples at the same table, and on the same night. His account of the paschal feast is given us in Luke 22:15-18; his account of the institution of the supper follows in Luke 22:19-20. At the paschal feast the Lord had His place as one with them; at the supper He was, as it were, the host, dispensing that which He had provided to those who were the guests. How much surely we should have lost had Luke's account not seen the light, or had it perished by the carelessness or hostility of man to the truth! for the beloved Physician it is, who has given us to understand that the Lord prized the opportunity of observing the passover — "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Matthew, who must have heard these words, has not repeated them. Luke, who certainly was not present, alone records them; and fitly does he do it, since the manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ comes out especially in his gospel. How the Lord Jesus then, as one of Israel, viewed the passover these words show us, and surely afford us instruction as to the light in which we should view the privilege, and the opportunity of now commemorating His death, which, when Israel shall enjoy the fruits of it, will cause them to relegate to a second place God's memorable intervention in the past. (Jeremiah 23:7-8.) God's intervention was in the Lord's eyes no light thing. How we who sit at His table view redemption by His blood may well be a question, when His words above quoted come before us.

Further, we learn from Luke's account of what passed in that upper room, that though the Lord partook of the passover, He did not drink of the paschal cup, which it would seem had been

handed to Him; for the historian wrote, "Having received a cup,"* not "having taken it," as our English translation would intimate. Now, in the original regulations about the passover there is no mention of a cup, and, as Deuteronomy 16:3-8 shows us, there was originally no room for it; for the character of the feast in the month of Abib, as that chapter teaches us, was not one of joy; and no joy is mentioned as characteristic of a Jewish festival till the time arrived for keeping the feast of weeks, when, in the possession of the fruits of resurrection in the land, they were to rejoice. (Deuteronomy 16:11.) What then God had instituted, to that the Lord conformed. Of that which man had added the Lord did not partake. He did not, however, condemn the introduction of the cup as wrong; but the time for joy in connection with full redemption not having come, He did not drink of it Himself, though, when He had given thanks, He handed it to His disciples to divide amongst themselves, saying, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Thus far we have Luke's account of the paschal feast. What follows is that of the supper.

* dexamenos, "having received," is the word used by Luke of the paschal cup; lambano is the verb used by all of the supper. This is an entirely new service, quite distinct from any of which Israel as such had been allowed to partake; but one in which all the children of God, of whatever nationality, are privileged to have part. What then is the character of this service? and what the meaning of it? Both these questions are answered by the Lord Himself. His action tells us of the one, His words teach us about the other. "He gave thanks." Then the service is eucharistic indeed; for that was all that we are told that He did before He brake the bread, and gave it to the disciples. And a second time He gave thanks before He handed to them the cup of which they were to drink. That He gave thanks before handing the cup Luke and Paul imply; but Matthew and Mark expressly state it. Agreeing in this, they agree also in stating that He blessed (eulogesas) before He broke the bread, whereas Luke and Paul affirm He gave thanks (eucharistesas). The difference is not great, and admits probably of this explanation, that whilst the two latter give the character of His utterance, the others express the form in which it came forth. A eucharistic service then is that of the breaking of bread. He gave thanks, but in what terms we know not. Matthew, who must have heard it, is silent upon it; neither Mark, nor Luke, nor Paul have supplied the omission. It must have been a wonderful thanksgiving when the Lord gave thanks to God for the results of His atoning death, so soon to be an accomplished fact. Who on earth could enter into them as He could? Who knew like Him what the judgment of God was? Who could then understand but Himself what are the joys of the Father's love, and the Father's house? Full and perfect then must that thanksgiving have been, yet not a syllable of it has been preserved in God's book. And rightly so; for since the Spirit of God is to direct us in our worship, the words of the Lord on that occasion have been carefully kept from us; and nowhere have we even the thanksgiving utterances of an apostle when breaking bread at the Lord's table. Had it been otherwise, would not such have been used as a form? and no service at the Lord's table would have been thought complete without them. But then dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance would have been really surrendered. Wisely, therefore, have the terms of the Lord's thanksgiving been omitted from the accouut of His institution of the supper. Are we on this account placed at a disadvantage? No; for we know what the character of the service is to be, and we know too, from the Lord's action, how perfect in His eyes is His atoning work; for as He gave thanks, and that only, at the institution of the supper, we are taught that nothing needed to be, nothing could be, added to the value of His sacrificial work, and that nothing more would be wanted, than what He was about to do, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. No word have we here of prayer. What room could there be to ask for anything in the contemplation of

accomplished atonement? Prayer may come in after the breaking of bread has taken place, as those gathered together think of saints unable to be present, or of souls still unsaved, or of anything else in connection with the Lord’s work or God’s purposes; but prayer in the place of thanksgiving, when met to break bread, is assuredly not in harmony with the Lord’s ways at His table; for the work is a perfect work, a finished work, as Scripture affirms (Hebrews 10:14-18), and the Lord’s own action of giving thanks abundantly confirms. The character of the service thus expressed, its meaning too was explained by Him, when He handed to His disciples first the bread, and then the wine — "This is my body, which is given for you;" "this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." What grace is expressed in these words, "My body given for you!" None could have lawfully demanded His death. "He made Himself," said the Jews when delivering Him to Pilate, "the Son of God, and by our law He ought to die." But He was, and is, the Son of God. None then could lawfully have demanded His death, though the Jews condemned Him as guilty of blasphemy, and accused Him of high treason to Pilate the governor. His statement about His person was true, and Pilate acquitted Him of any charge of which he could take cognizance. Yet He died. His body was given for us. He surrendered Himself. His blood was shed for us. Did God keep back anything that was for man’s good? The devil had persuaded Adam and Eve that He did. Now what an answer has God given to that! an answer such as no man could have expected, and one of which the devil then could have had no foreknowledge. For the death of His Son on the cross, not for man merely, but for sinners, was to be the overwhelming, the touching proof that God would withhold nothing of which we had need. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," writes Paul to believers at Rome. (Romans 8:32.) "He sent His Son," writes John, "to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.) Nor this only. The Son gave Himself, as Paul has taught us (Galatians 1:4; Galatians 2:20; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14); but the apostle was not the first who declared "that. The Son Himself announced it. (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 6:51.) The joy was His of declaring in plain words that He would surrender Himself to die, to glorify God and to save sinners. In Matthew and Mark we read of His blood shed "for many." In Luke it is "for you." This makes the announcement more personal and pointed; and he is the only one of the four who tells us that the Lord spake thus, both at the giving of the bread and at the giving of the cup. Were the eleven then distressed at the prospect of His death? How fully would He comfort them by the institution of the supper. They were never to forget His death, yet their remembrance of it would have no tinge of sadness in it. It would give joy to their hearts; for atonement and redemption were effected by it, and forgiveness and justification flowed from it, all of which they would learn after that the Holy Ghost should have come to set forth its blessed results, and to teach them, and us of what the Lord’s presence on high is the witness.

Learning then, as they must have done from the Lord’s lips, what He thought of atonement by His blood, they also were taught how He would have them remember Him. "This do in remembrance of me." Here again we are reminded that God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts. Men love to dwell on great and noble deeds of others done in their life. The Lord’s people were especially to remember Him in His death, and as dead; for the bread and the wine recall Him as actually dead, the former being the symbol of His body, and the latter of His blood, which in the supper is viewed as distinct from His body. Hence communion in one kind is a denial of the Lord’s death, for it regards the blood as not shed. It virtually presents Him to us as alive before death, in which case atonement has not been wrought: there is no forgiveness for our sins (Hebrews 9:22), and the

Lord abides alone. (John 12:24.) But not only were those who had been with Him on earth thus to remember Him. All His people, from that day till the Church shall be taken, are in the same manner to remember Him. His enemies in the world would rejoice that He was dead (John 16:20), hoping thereby to have got rid for ever of Him whom they contemptuously called "that deceiver," ho planos(Matthew 27:63), little knowing that they had, by their rejection of the Christ, paved the way for the appearance by-and-by of "the deceiver" indeed, the antichrist. (2 John 1:7.) All the Lord's people too would rejoice that He had died after He had risen again, reaping as they would the abiding fruits of His atoning death — sanctification, forgiveness, justification, and entrance into the holiest by His blood. But when, and how often they were thus to remember Him the Lord does not specify in His word. We gather however from it when they met for that purpose; viz., on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7.) At first it may have been that each day they broke bread together. Afterwards it certainly was done on the first day of the week, and for that special purpose did they at Troas assemble together. Prayer, preaching, teaching, are all useful and needful, but they do not supersede the necessity of meeting to break bread. When thus met there may be room for teaching. The Lord, after the breaking of bread, spoke what we have in John 14:1-31, if not also what is stated in John 15:1-27; John 16:1-33. And Paul at Troas discoursed for a long time when the company were assembled for the breaking of bread. Yet the purpose for which they came together was not to hear Paul, but to show the Lord's death. Bearing this in mind, we shall not go to the Lord's table to hear some gifted teacher, but to break bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gift or no gift will make no difference as to the motive which will take us to that meeting. We shall go to remember Him who once entered into death to save us. Edification by gift all should be thankful for, but the absence of it will keep none away from the table who know for what reason we are to assemble. And how often can we thus meet? No limit is placed to this; and a word of the Lord, only preserved by Paul, makes this clear: "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."* At what period of the day should we break bread? some may ask. This too is left an open question. The supper was instituted in the evening. They met on that occasion at Troas at night. Probably the Corinthians too came together when the day had declined (1 Corinthians 11:21); for the term deipnon, translated there supper, is not used in the New Testament of a morning meal. In Luke 14:12 it is clearly used of the meal which succeeded dinner. But no rule is laid down as to the hour when we are to break bread, though the first day of the week is marked out as the one specially suited for that, on grounds which all can readily understand. But, how often besides, Christians may break bread, is left to the Lord's people to decide as they may be guided.

*" eis ten emen anamnesin. The word translated remembrance has an active signification of 'recalling,' or 'calling to mind,' as a memorial. 'For the calling me to mind.'" — Note in New Translation of the New Testament. Published by G. Morrish. And now, ere concluding this article, a little verse, found only in Matthew (Matthew 26:30) and Mark (Mark 14:26), but word for word the same in both, must receive a moment's attention: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." If ever there was an occasion on which common sorrow might have outweighed common joy at the remembrance of the shelter from divine judgment by blood, it would have been on that evening when the Lord ate the last passover with His disciples. But instead of that, ere they left the upper-room they sung together to God; a hint for us, that no sorrow of whatever character is to override the heart's joy, which flows from the remembrance of redemption. Their sorrow on losing the Lord was great (John 16:6), and He knew it; but their joy,

as they recalled God’s interposition on behalf of Israel, was nevertheless to be expressed. So surely should it be with us. Troubles and sorrows, whether individual or otherwise, are not to be allowed to outweigh the common joy, when we meet to show the Lord’s death.

Thus far we have been considering Scriptures which tell us why we should break bread, and how we should do it. Other Scriptures give us practical teaching in connection with it. A consideration of these must be reserved for the following paper.

Chapter 13 Practical Teaching in Connection with the Breaking of Bread. Of the five apostles who wrote epistles three refer to the breaking of bread; viz., Peter, Jude, and Paul. Four of them were present at its institution. Paul was not; but he alone of the five gives us teaching in connection with it. Thus we learn that there is more instruction which flows from it than at first sight might appear, and that it is in part closely connected with the special revelation made known to Paul concerning the Church of God. As sitting at the Lord’s table the question of communion and association is necessarily raised: eating of the supper the spirit in which we should partake of it is not by the Lord overlooked. The first of these questions is taken up in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33; the other is dealt with in the chapter that follows.

Having just emerged from idolatry, as was the case with the Corinthian Christians, some had seen the inanity of the idol, but had not apprehended the character of their new associations. In this they were not singular. There is often an interval of time, from whatever cause we need not here enquire, between the discovery of the evil from which souls may have separated, and the clear apprehension of the position, and its attendant responsibilities, into which they have been brought. As long as such a state continues, it is clear that steadiness of walk need not be expected. Hence the mistake of simply occupying people with protesting against that which is evil. More is wanted than this, without however in the least undervaluing it; for there is the ceasing to do evil, and the learning to do well, with both of which a Christian, to be "throughly furnished unto all good works," must become acquainted.

Now some of the Corinthians knew that an idol was nothing in the world, and that there was none other God but one (1 Corinthians 8:4); yet they thought, if they discerned that, they might sit at meat in an idol’s temple. In this they were wrong; and the apostle corrects their mistake. Care for their weaker brethren should have made them keep aloof from all participation, even only externally, in idolatrous rites. (1 Corinthians 8:10; 1 Corinthians 8:12.) But more than this, they had no business to be there at all. The liberty for which some might plead, on the ground that they had discernment about the idol, should have been held in check by consideration for the weak brother’s conscience. The question of being there at all was, however, settled for ever by their having a place at the Lord’s table, and participating in the Lord’s Supper. Granted that the idol was nothing, yet behind it were demons, and by sitting at meat at the idol’s festival they would be having communion with demons. Was that a fitting thing for those who bore the name of Christ? "I would not," said the apostle, "that ye should have fellowship with demons." (1 Corinthians 10:20.) To drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons was impossible. To be partakers of the Lord’s table and the table of demons was equally impossible. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord," wrote Paul, "and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:21.) The question put in that way was obviously clear. The Lord and demons were antagonistic. A man could not have fellowship with both. Those in danger

of outward conformity to heathen rites had never viewed the question in this light. How much light a word may cast upon a point! The Lord and demons! Between these there was no communion. Between them no man could form a connecting-link; yet a Christian, if unwatchful, might have fellowship with demons. (1 Corinthians 10:10) Solemn thought! How has it been in Christendom sadly exemplified! But he sets other considerations before them. "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?" What could the cup of demons give them? Nothing good. Of what did the cup of the Lord witness? Blessing purchased by His blood for those who had sinned against God, but who now believed on His name. With what had they communion at the Lord's Supper but with the body and blood of Christ? Speaking as to wise men, this should have been enough to open their eyes to the incongruity and the sinfulness of sitting at meat in an idol's temple. Observe, he here mentions the blood before the body of Christ, an inversion of the natural and the historical order in which they were first mentioned. Now since those to whom he wrote had once been worshipping idols, and had been mixed up with all the vileness and the debasing habits that idolatry encouraged, from all which they had been set free, and all their sins had been blotted out by the blood of Christ, how could they, remembering whose blood had been shed for them, and at what a cost they had been redeemed — how could they turn back to that from which they had been delivered? We can see then in the circumstances of the case a reason for giving precedence on this occasion to the mention of the blood.

Besides this, he reminds them of that which the partaking of the one loaf really set forth; — viz., that all Christians are one body. We become members of this one body by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. We give practical expression to it by partaking of the one loaf. Independent action therefore must be judged. If they belonged to one body, as they declared they did, how could they be identified with that which certainly was alien to it?

Several important principles are set forth then in these few verses. First, that one who has a place at the table must keep aloof from participation in that which God abhors. It is not a question, "What am I free to do?" but "What are the associations in which I have part?" Communion of the blood and body of Christ; is this what we profess, and, if Christians in truth, can really enjoy? Then association with that which is opposed to God must not be an open question, nor a matter of indifference. From all idolatrous associations we must keep aloof; and keeping before. us the principle thus illustrated, we must surely abstain from having communion with such evils as the Lord's word declares disqualifies those having part in them from being in, the company of His people.

Secondly, breaking bread together we confess, however little we may be aware of the character of our action, that we are part of one body with all other Christians; "for we being many are one body and one bread (or loaf), for we are all partakers of that one bread (or loaf)." Not that a body is thereby formed, but its existence is acknowledged, and its oneness practically confessed; for there is but one Lord's table, how many soever may be the places in which saints are gathered unto Christ's name. The apostle at Ephesus and the saints at Corinth were members of one body. They owned it in doctrine, and confessed it week after week, as they broke bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. From this body we cannot get free, nor by any declaration of independence discharge ourselves from responsibility in connection with it. Denominational ground is thereby condemned, for there is but one body, and in breaking bread together we declare it. But there is

another side to this question. If we are all one body, we cannot be indifferent to the walk and the doctrine of those with whom we thus declare our oneness; for are we, as Christians having communion with His body and His blood, to be identified with acts and tenets which the Lord abhors? Care, and if need be discipline, becomes imperative when this truth of the one body is understood; for no choice is left us as to whether we will have this doctrine as an article of our creed or not. We cannot break bread together without confessing it.

Thirdly, as those at the Lord's table professedly participate in the result of the atoning work of Christ, none but Christians in truth have a place at it; for the Lord's supper does not give life, but it is for all who have everlasting life, unless for the time being under the exercise of church discipline. Eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood (John 6:53-54) gives life; eating of the supper does not. As the Bread from heaven, the Lord presents Himself to the world (John 6:33; John 6:51); but the supper was instituted only for disciples. If the supper could give life, those of whom Peter (2 Peter 2:13) and Jude (Jude 1:12) wrote would have had it. None however should eat of the supper, who have not first eaten of His flesh, and drunk of His blood; for who have part now in the blessed results of His death, but those who believe on Him? To the Lord's table then baptism by water can give no admittance, though none unbaptized ought to be seated thereat. For an unconverted person to sit there and partake of the bread and of the wine is a solemn thing, since he professes by his act that which is not true of his condition.

Further, as the table is the Lord's, all those at it are responsible to own and to serve Him. Hence too the assembly should be watchful that it admits not, through inadvertence or carelessness, those who, as far as discernment can be exercised, are not Christians in truth; for admission to the table is the act of the assembly, and not that of an individual or individuals. On the other hand, to put away is also the act of the assembly, and for that proof should be adduced about the person dealt with, that he ought not to sit down with the saints. Surmise or suspicion will not be sufficient. Judas was reckoned with the twelve, till his own act showed what he was.

Lastly, all class distinction for the administering of the elements is seen to be foreign to the word of God. "The cup of blessing which we bless," writes the apostle. "The bread which we break." The blessing and the breaking are acts in common, though done by one as the mouthpiece and agent of the rest. Clericalism has no place at this table. To the Lord it belongs, and He is present where two or three are gathered unto His name. Who of men would dream of presiding where the Lord Himself is present? At His table we are all guests.

Now nothing like this table had ever been known before. It is true that a Jew could speak of Jehovah's table (Ezekiel 41:22; Ezekiel 44:16; Malachi 1:7; Malachi 1:12), for both the golden altar, and the altar of burnt-offering are thus designated by the prophets, since on the altar Jehovah's portion was placed. But in the New Testament, the Lord's table is the place at which He dispenses to all believers the memorials of His death. At the table of the Lord, of which the prophets write, no man sat. At the Lord's table, of which Paul writes, Christians have their place. Hence examination, or proving oneself, dokimazein, becomes every Christian, not to stay away, but to judge himself, diakrinein, and so to eat of the bread and to drink of the cup. Now in this the Corinthians had failed. For meeting professedly to partake of the Lord's Supper, either at a meal or after it, the custom appears to have been for the richer ones to provide the food, of which all together were to eat. But, alas! self had come in, and the richer brethren consumed the provisions

themselves. Gluttony and drunkenness prevailed where solemnity should have characterised the meeting. The poorer brethren were hungry, and wanting; whilst the richer were full, and were drunken. The assembly of God was despised, and those who had no houses to eat in were put to shame. The disorder was grievous; it was scandalous (1 Corinthians 11:21-22), and the Lord had already strongly marked His disapproval of it. (1 Corinthians 11:30.) How did the apostle deal with it? He reminded them that "the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was delivered up took bread; and having given thanks, brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after having supped, saying, This cup is the new testament (or covenant) in my blood: this do, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26.) Simple, but surely heart-searching, must this statement have been; a quiet, but how great a rebuke to their ways at the table. The Lord, their Lord, on the night of His betrayal, fully conscious of all that was before Him, thought of His people, and instituted this supper for them. Should then disciples of that Lord be thiuking of themselves, and allowing flesh to work unchecked, when they met to show His death? How could they after that? The professed purpose of their meeting should have rebuked all the disorders they had permitted and indulged in. The Lord had died. But why? They well knew. We know. He was delivered for our offences. Then at His table, at His supper, was the last place where self should have been unrestrained, unjudged; and we should observe how the apostle endeavours to impress this on them, and to keep it before them. Recapitulating that which he had received of the Lord about the supper, Paul omits certain words with which we are made familiar by the evangelists. "Take, eat" are, according to the best authorities, to be left out. "Drink ye all of it," it will be seen, has no place in Paul’s account of what the Lord said about the cup. The word "broken," too, in 1 Corinthians 11:24 — not found in any evangelist in this connection — we may be pretty sure is an addition for which there is no Scripture warranty.

Now there is a significance in the omission of "Take, eat" in this recital of the institution of the supper; for the apostle evidently was divinely-directed, not to fix their thoughts so much on the privilege which was theirs, as to impress on them the solemnity of what they were engaged in. Hence he simply writes, "This is my body, which is for you," fixing their attention aud ours likewise on that of which the bread is the emblem; and the same with the cup. Surely as they read these words, and understood their import, a sense of shame must have come over them — remembering the scenes they had witnessed, and in which some perhaps had openly had part. And what must still further, one would think, have impressed them were the words peculiar to Paul — "For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord until He come." How little soever they had been conscious of it, that was professed by the breaking of bread. He who is the Lord, the highest in dignity in creation, had died; and yet in the presence of the memorials of His death they had been unimpressed, unsolemnised. What brought Him to die? Sin, and their sins. On no other occasion then could they have been better or more forcibly reminded of what sin is in God’s sight; yet what had been the scenes witnessed at such times? Of what a nature were they partakers! But were they worse than others? Alas I we have all the same evil nature; and though from circumstances drunkenness or gluttony could not be indulged in at the table in these days, self may be just as active in many other ways. What grace to provide atonement for such wretched creatures as we by nature are!

"The Lord’s death." Such words invite meditation; they take us back to the past. "Till He come." This carries us on in thought to the future. Partaking of the supper they announced the Lord’s death, and that in view of His return. The Lord had died, but the Lord will return; and He has lost none of His rights by death. In this He stands out alone from all that have entered into death. All that was His in this world before the cross is His now, and will be claimed by Him by-and-by. What was His by birth (Psalms 2:1-12.) is His still, and He will possess it, though He has died. But is this all that we have to think of as we announce the Lord’s death? Oh, no! for by it all our blessings for eternity have been purchased, and are put beyond the reach of uncertainty. The mercies of David are made sure, because He is risen. (Acts 13:34.) Atonement, too, has been made by His blood shed on the cross; and the whole question of sin will by-and-by be openly proved to have been dealt with by His death. (Hebrews 9:27; John 1:29.) He has tasted death for everything; He has annulled by His death him that had the power of death; delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage; and has made propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:1-18.) Earth is concerned in His death, and far more than earth. How much results from the Lord’s death which His people are privileged to announce! The supper, then, was no common meal. To partake of it unworthily was no light matter. He that did so was guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; 1:e. liable to judgment because of the slight thus put upon Him. Such an one ate and drank judgment to himself (krima, not damnation, katakrima) from not discerning the Lord’s body; 1:e. what the bread signified. The Lord’s body here has no reference to the Church; and Paul never called the Church by such a name. The Church is the body of Christ, not the body of the Lord. The Lord’s body in our chapter is that of which the bread was the emblem, as He Himself had said, "This is my body." Hence the man’s guilt consisted in treating the supper as an ordinary meal, not discerning in it that of which the elements were but figures. Now such conduct the Lord would not allow to go on unchecked. Self-judgment would indeed avert His judicial interference; but where that remained lacking, He Himself, the Lord, would, and had interposed. Weakness, sickness, and death had visited many of the Corinthian assembly for these grave scandals; but perhaps, till pointed out by the apostle, they were scarcely aware of the reason for these divine visitations upon them. Yet there was grace in them. Because they were really Christians the Lord dealt thus with them, that they should not be condemned with the world.*

*We may remark the terms employed in the passage. The saints are exhorted to examine or prove themselves (dokimazo) before they eat. If they judge or discern themselves (diakrino), they will not be judged (krino). When judged (krino), they are chastened or disciplined (paideuo), that they should not be condemned (katakrino) with the world.

They had eaten unworthily. How many souls have been troubled about this, and have kept away from the table from not understanding the language and meaning of the apostle. No question was intended about their worthiness to be at the supper. As Christians they were worthy, though of course viewing the matter in another light since their place there was of grace, they might be and as we must ever own they were, unworthy of it. But the sin dealt with was the partaking of the supper in an unworthy manner. Their ways at the table were what the apostle was writing of, and what the Lord had rebuked. They partook in an unworthy manner, not discerning the Lord’s body. Such are guilty as respects His body and blood.

How then shall we provide against this? The Lord has told us, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." What care does this evince that we should not render ourselves liable to judgment?

What desire does it manifest on the Lord’s part that all His people, unless disqualified by church discipline, should come and eat?

Chapter 14

Discipline. As children of God we have to do with the Father of spirits, who trains us in His wisdom and grace. This Hebrews 12:1-29 describes. As part of the Church of God we are subject to the chastening of the Lord if, having done what is wrong, we fail to judge ourselves about it. Of this 1 Corinthians 11:30-32 treats. In addition to this, the Word teaches us how we should behave towards those who, reckoned amongst God’s saints, are not walking as becomes such; and how, under certain conditions specified in the New Testament, the discipline of the house of God must be maintained, and exercised by the assembly. Indifference to the walk of saints we should seek to be watchful against. Indifference to the maintaining the purity of God’s house we should zealously avoid. And whilst Hebrews 12:1-29 and 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 show us how the Father, and the Lord, may deal with each of us as saints, other scriptures, to which we will presently turn, teach us how we should deal individually with, and how the assembly should act towards, those whose walk and conversation call for notice and discountenance.

Very solemn, then, is the subject on which we are entering. By it we are reminded of the holiness of the place — the house of God — of which all Christians form part. By it, too, we are constrained to remember what we all are by nature, who form part of God’s habitation in the Spirit; and if called to act towards any walking wrongly, to express disapproval of their ways, it surely becomes us, when doing it, to remember that the same evil nature is in us which has been manifesting itself in them. A spirit of self-judgment — considering ourselves (Galatians 6:1) — will befit us in such circumstances.

Now there are different ways of dealing with offending Christians. Under certain circumstances their brethren are to withdraw from them. Or the assembly may have to take the matter up and rebuke them. Or it may be called upon to resort to the severest measure, and put out the wicked person. Hence at the outset we can see, that excommunication is not the only means of discipline sanctioned by the Word. In truth, it is the last step that can be resorted to, and indicates that nothing else can be done with the offender. At Thessalonica an evil habit had already manifested itself of what the apostle called walking disorderly — brethren working not at all, yet seeking temporal support from others in the assembly. Against such a habit the apostle writes very strongly, charging the saints to discountenance it, charging those guilty of it to discontinue it: "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they* received of us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6.) Such were his words to the saints. "Now them that are such [1:e. disorderly] we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." (2 Thessalonians 3:12) Such were his words to the offenders. Both parties were to see that the question was a serious one; and as they owned Jesus as Lord, they were to obey the injunction given by His apostle. Eating the bread of others in idleness was no part of Christian teaching; nay, the contrary was enjoined. Exhortations to be liberal and brotherly to those really in need abound in the Word (Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; 1 John 3:17; 3 John 1:8); but eating the bread of others in idleness the Word distinctly forbids. To eat their own bread was to be the aim and desire of such as had been doing the contrary — learning of the apostle, who could labour

night and day at his trade, that he should not burden the saints. From all offenders after this sort Christians were to withdraw; and should there be one who did not obey the apostolic injunction communicated in writing, they were to note him, and not to keep company with him, that he might be ashamed. (2 Thessalonians 2:14) *Some, as Lachmann and Tregelles, read, "Ye received." No uncial MS. supports the authorized version.

Again, writing to the Romans (Romans 16:17), he tells them to mark those that caused divisions and offences, or stumbling-blocks, contrary to the doctrine they had learned; and to avoid them. Divisions (dichostasiai) might arise amongst the saints — they were of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20) — but such as caused them were to be marked and turned from, the doctrine the saints had learned being the measure or standard by which they were to judge of and discern such. To avoid them (ekklino) is the apostolic injunction; the same word used by Peter when exhorting us to eschew evil — ekklinato. (1 Peter 3:11.) Now in neither of these cases does the apostle Paul direct the saints to resort to the severe measure of excommunication. Withdrawing from them is not putting them out. Their place at the table they would still have, but the saints were to mark their disapproval of such ways by withdrawing in ordinary Christian intercourse from them, in the hope, as in the case of the disorderly walker, that such might be ashamed, and learning the evil of their course, forsake it.

Again, Titus is taught how to deal with an heretical man. First he must admonish him; then after a second admonition, if that failed, he was to reject or have done with him — paraitou, the same word as is used in 1 Timothy when enjoining him to turn from profane and old wives' fables (1 Timothy 4:7), and to decline the younger widows (5: 11); for an heretical man does not of necessity mean one who denies the faith, but it is literally one who chooses his creed. Thus Paul, speaking of the Pharisees, to which party he had once belonged, called it the most straitest sect — hairesis (lit. heresy) — of our religion. (Acts 26:5.) The sect of the Pharisees was regarded as orthodox in their creed; but Paul uses of them that word which has been engrafted into our tongue, and with which most Englishmen are familiar, heresy. An heretical man, then, need not be one who denies any article of the Christian faith. He is an heretic who allows his mind or will to work in connection with doctrine, thereby producing or countenancing a sect; as we see from 1 Corinthians 11:19, where the apostle, writing of sects, uses the word hairesis. Such a man was to be avoided, if admonition failed to have its due effect upon him. Patience in dealing with him there was to be; but if a second admonition failed to lead him to reject his error, he was to be avoided; for such an one "is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." (Titus 3:11.)

What care then there was to be on the part of all as to the walk and doctrine of each one! And how could it be otherwise, seeing that they were members of one body? Were they members of a denomination only, such questions might have been left to the leaders of the sect. Had the tie been simply a congregational one, the members might have cast all responsibility on the rulers amongst them; but since they were members of one body, the ways of each one concerned all, and none could afford to be indifferent to such questions, nor to overlook such disorders and sins. Brotherly love too would be shown, not in keeping company with such, but in withdrawing from them; for true love seeks the welfare of its object.

Graver matters, however, might occur, where the tacit though marked disapproval of the saints, manifested by withdrawing from a brother or sister, would not meet the case. For such the Word

also provides, and points out that, under certain conditions, the assembly itself must act, either in rebuking or excommunicating.

Rebuking, or convicting (elegcho) we read of in 1 Timothy 5:20. This is called for in the case of such as sin, but where excommunication is not enjoined as the only way of dealing with the person. For there are cases where nothing but putting away from amongst Christians will be a sufficient dealing with the offender. There are other cases in which that extreme step is not enjoined. "Them that sin," writes the apostle, "rebuke [or convict; 1:e. demonstrate their guilt before all, that the rest may fear." "Them that sin" (tous hamartanontas). It does not say, "Them that have sinned," nor each time they have sinned. We all have sinned. We all do sin. But we are not all, each time we have failed, to be dealt with according to the directions here given to Timothy. A man might be overtaken in a fault as Galatians 6:1 describes. Such an one was to be restored by the spiritual in a spirit of meekness, they considering themselves lest they also be tempted. Rebuking before all would, in such a case, be more than the Word warranted. Them that sin, we are told, are to be thus dealt with. Spiritual judgment may be needed to discern correctly about the case, and attention to the directions of Scripture will throw great light on the right treatment of cases as they come up. But where the assembly, judging the matter before God, sees that the individual who has failed comes under this category, being clearly not one who has been overtaken in a fault, rebuking before all is the injunction of God, that the rest may fear.

What a solemn duty this is which is cast upon the saints, that they who, if unwatchful, may be liable to rebuke themselves, are nevertheless to mark, as the Word directs, their distinct judgment and disapproval of a brother’s ways, and that before all! The shame of a public conviction may tell upon the person; but the special object set before us in 1 Timothy 5:20 is the profit of all, "that the rest also may fear." With this before us, whilst carrying out the scriptural directions, there will be no disposition to point the finger of scorn at the failing one, but to deepen in our hearts the sense of what we are by nature, and the need of true watchfulness, lest rebuke be righteously meted out to us, But more severe measures still are set before us; for sin must not be trifled with, and the assembly has not only to deal with offenders, but to clear itself. Hence, if the offence calls for it, excommunication must take place; not simply because a brother has sinned — for who would then be at the table at all? — but because the person has sinned in such a way, that nothing short of it will meet the gravity of the case. What holy ground we are on! We are in the house of God; so we can make no compromise with evil, nor treat it with indifference. When then must this severe step be taken? 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 gives clear indications: "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away* from among yourselves the wicked person" (ton poneron). "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our pass over is sacrificed: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (vv. 6-8.) A reference to Exodus 12:15-19 will help us to understand the allusion. On the first day of the feast they were to put out all leaven from their houses, and throughout the feast no leaven was to be found there. The old leaven was to be put out at the commencement of the feast, and no fresh leaven was to be allowed within their doors whilst it

lasted. Now this whole dispensation is to us the feast of unleavened bread; hence no leaven is to be allowed among us in God’s house. If it comes in it must be put out.

*"Therefore" it is generally agreed should be omitted; so also "therefore" and "for us" in verse 7. The omission of "therefore" in verses 7, 13, makes the language more energetic.

Certain kinds then of evil, if manifested, called for the excommunication of the offender. But should this course be restricted only to such as have sinned in the manner specified in 1 Corinthians 5:11? Surely not. The last verse will help us in this matter: "Put out from among yourselves the wicked person." Now a man might be a wicked person who had sinned in other ways than in the specific manner above described. For instance, if a teacher brought not the doctrine of Christ — not confessing Jesus Christ coming in flesh (not of course the mere fact, but the person who is so characterized), such an one was not to be received amongst Christians. Even a woman was to shut her door against him, and not to bid him God-speed; 1:e. hail or greet him with. the ordinary friendly salutations; for any who did that would be partaker of his evil deeds. (2 John 1:7-11.) Would such an one have a place at the Lord’s table? John calls such the deceiver. Who would give the right hand of fellowship at the table to one so termed in the word of God? The Lord’s table could be no place for one who brought not the doctrine of Christ.

Again, if one brother had committed a trespass against another, and manifested a hardened spirit, which neither brotherly dealing nor the assembly’s admonition could subdue, he was to be unto the one against whom he had sinned as a heathen man and a publican. (Matthew 18:17.) Now a heathen man no Jew would admit to any ecclesiastical privileges (Acts 21:28-29); with a publican, or tax-gatherer, no Pharisee or scribe would associate. Hence the offender’s position is clear, and what 1 Corinthians 5:13 sets forth would be the only course open for the assembly. From how small a beginning such grave results might flow. The wicked person then would also be such an one as 2 John describes, and such an one too as Matthew 18:17 treats of; and at times it might help an assembly in deciding on a case if they asked themselves the question, "Has the one whose case is before us shown that he is a wicked person?" A Christian may have done wrong, and yet not be a wicked person. So also, if it be a question of rebuking, "Does the person whose case is in question come under the category of one who sins?"

Excommunication then, as the word implies, affects the person’s rights, which as a Christian he has in common with others. By it he is put away from the company of the saints at the table till such time as he repents; and the assembly, judging that he has repented, restores him to his privileges in common with them. What then is to be the character of the carriage of the saints toward such an one? 1 Corinthians 5:11 is explicit, and 2 John 1:10 agrees with it. It is not only that the offender cannot be received at the table, but those who have had social intercourse with him on Christian grounds must abstain from it. Are there not instances where, from ignorance of Scripture rules, and perhaps a mistaken desire to manifest brotherly love towards the guilty one, the discipline of the assembly, so far as it relates to ordinary friendly intercourse, has been entirely set aside, to the detriment of the offender, and to the loss really of all? The action of the assembly becomes thereby enfeebled, and a party feeling is in danger of being encouraged. If saints looked at the question in this light, "Can I have ordinary Christian friendly intercourse with one whose presence at His table my Lord refuses to sanction?" would not the right way of conducting themselves towards such be seen at a glance? With what power then is the assembly invested?

"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18.) What care surely should be taken in the exercise of such discipline, lest we do on earth what heaven cannot ratify. How careful was Paul in the exercise of apostolic power, wielding it when necessary (1 Timothy 1:20), but only when necessary. (2 Corinthians 13:10.) As careful, yet as firm, should the assembly be in the exercise of Scriptural discipline if called to act against an offending person.

Chapter 15 Its Future. In Ephesians 5:27 we learn the purpose of Christ respecting the Church. He will present to Himself that pearl of great price (Matthew 13:46), the Church glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In that same epistle we are informed of the Church's everlasting continuance. (Ephesians 3:21.) From Hebrews 12:23 we have been taught how distinct will be its position in heaven from that of the Old Testament saints, there termed "the spirits of just men made perfect." In Revelation 19:8 we read of the marriage of the Lamb, and of His wife having made herself ready. Her bridal attire is there also stated to be fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousnesses (ta dikaiomata) of the saints. So far, then, we read of the bride as fully answering to the desires of Christ, with whom she will be for ever and ever. But in none of these Scriptures to which we have turned is she described as visible to the eyes of people on earth, yet she will be seen by them. And John, who in vision beheld her as the world will see her, has described her appearance and special characteristics (Revelation 21:9 — 22:5), when she was shown to him by an angel. It was one of the seven angels, who had the seven last plagues, who took him in the spirit into the wilderness to see the great whore. (Revelation 17:1-18) It was one of the same angelic company which carried him in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed him the holy* city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God in her millennial character and glory, when for the first time the whole assembly of God, and of Christ, composed only of those who are members of His body, will be displayed to a wondering universe. But that cannot take place till the Lamb appears in His millennial glory. The woman, the whore, Babylon, is content to reign without Him. The Bride is satisfied to wait for Him. Then the parody of Satan, revealed in the Apocalypse, and so known to God's saints, will be apparent to all. The true bride is a city, a metropolis, the metropolis of the universe. The great whore is a city, which in John's day was reigning over the kings of the earth, the metropolis of the then so-called habitable earth, (he oikoumene). (Luke 2:1.) With gold, and precious stones, and pearls is the woman of Revelation 17:1-18 described as decked out. Gold, and precious stones, and pearls will be seen to form part of the splendour of the heavenly city. To Babylon flowed the commerce and wealth of the world. (18.) Unto the heavenly city (not into it) will the glory and honour of the nations flow, and to it will the kings of the earth bring their glory. So far is the parallel; now for the contrast.

*The four uncial MSS., A, B, P, Aleph, which have preserved this part of the book, agree in omitting the word "great." "Great" is an epithet applied to the whore (Revelation 17:1; Revelation 19:2); "holy" is the characteristic term used of the bride. (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 21:10.) The whore is decked in all her meretricious splendour to captivate the kings of the earth. The bride, when prepared to meet the Lamb, is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. For Him we read not that she puts on any ornaments; but when she is to be publicly displayed as the Lamb's wife, gold, precious stones, and pearls, are marked features in her appearance. (21:18-21.) It was in the wilderness, and seated on the dragon, that John saw the whore. It is as descending from heaven, and having the glory of God, that he beheld the bride. And further there was seen in the holy

Jerusalem that which Satan could not imitate the presence of God, and the throne of God. No temple (naos) was there; for the Lord God Almighty was the temple (naos) thereof, and the Lamb. No need had the city of the light of the sun, nor of the moon; for the glory of God enlightened it, and the Lamb was the lamp (luchnos) thereof. There also was the throne of God and of the Lamb; and in undimmed and unceasing brightness shall the Lord God shine upon His servants, who shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 21:22-23; Revelation 22:3-5.) The bride then, as John here sees her, has been already presented to the Bridegroom. The holy temple, so long in building, has now been completed; and God, who by the Holy Ghost now inhabits His dwelling-place on earth (katoiketerion), is here seen at length enshrined in His temple. The desires of Christ about His Church have been fulfilled; the plans of God about His temple have been completed; and those on earth can see what the Church is to Christ and to God. It is a holy city indeed, into which nothing that defileth can enter. It is a select place, too, into which none have the right of entry but such as are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:27.)

Here then those two lines of truth, which run throughout the New Testament (kingdom truth and church truth), at last converge. The Lamb's wife is the metropolis of the universe. Both characters are hers. The one is not merged into the other. She does not cease to be the Lamb's wife, because she is displayed as the holy city Jerusalem. Presented then in this double character, the nations on earth, during millennial times, will have to own her. As the bride now, the wife then, of course she stands in a peculiar and special relation to the Lamb. As the seat of God's throne, and enlightened by His glory, the glory and honour of the nations will be brought unto her. Light too, and healing, will proceed from her — light in which the nations* will walk; healing from the leaves of the tree of life in her midst, of which they will stand in need. The world may not care for the saints of God now; men will find that they cannot do without the Church of God then.

We should omit, with all uncial MSS., "of them which are saved." On earth will be seen the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel, unto which the world's wealth will flow, and which the kingdoms and nations upon earth must likewise serve. Within her walls will be found God's earthly house, the house of prayer for all people (Isaiah 56:7); and year by year must those left of the nations which came against Jerusalem repair thither to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16.) Features too corresponding to those of the heavenly city will be seen, Ezekiel (47) tells us, in the earthly one. Waters imparting life will proceed from her midst, corresponding to the river of the water of life in the city on high. And all trees for meat will grow on the banks of that stream, their fruit for meat, their leaves for medicine. But the tree of life will be on high, and the light of the earthly city will be derived from that which shines down through the holy Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:19-20); and God's tabernacle will in the fullest way be over His people Israel then (Ezekiel 37:27); for the heavenly city will be above and over the earthly one. The holy Jerusalem is the Lamb's wife. To the earthly one Jehovah will show Himself as her husband. (Isaiah 54:5.) *Over them, not with them, seems the thought in Ezekiel.

Such is the divine arrangement for millennial times. The kingdom of God will be established in power; but that cannot take place apart from the display of the Lamb's wife as the holy city Jerusalem on high. Then all will see how fully indeed is the revelation of the Church the filling up of the word of God; for without it, apart from it, God's purposes in connection with the kingdom cannot be completed. With the description of the earthly city's glory, and the last attempt to subvert God's order upon earth by the hosts of Gog encompassing the camp of the saints and the beloved

city (Revelation 20:9), the history of Zion ends. Not so that of the holy Jerusalem. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Church will abide. And when out of the melted elements and burnt earth God will make new heavens and a new earth, in both which (en hois) will dwell righteousness, the holy city, new Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven from God a second time. Time will have made no change in her appearance; for John saw her, in the eternal state, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And then in a new character will she have to do with earth and with men; for a voice out of heaven (or, as the two oldest uncial MSS. read,"the throne") was heard, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle (skene) of God is with men, and He will tabernacle (skenosei) with them." (Revelation 21:3.) During the millennium He who sits upon the throne will tabernacle over His saints. (Revelation 7:15.) In the eternal state He will tabernacle with men, and grief, and sin, and death will exist no more upon earth. The whore will long have passed away from earth. (Revelation 17:16.) The earthly Jerusalem, as far as we know, will also be found no longer; but the new Jerusalem will abide for ever and ever.

Here ends the revelation about the Church, or assembly of God, telling us that she will never cease to exist in her distinctive character and relation both to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God. She comes forth in the eternal state prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. She is seen in the eternal state as the tabernacle of God. The object of Christ’s love in the past, in the present, and in the future; a subject of divine revelation, and forming an integral part of the counsels of God, precious to Christ and to Him; such is the Church, the body and the bride of Christ; the house, the habitation, the holy temple, and the tabernacle of God.

S. Some Lessons Taught at Sychar.

Some Lessons Taught at Sychar.

Outside the boundary of Judea, the Lord found Himself at home by the well of Sychar, in company with a woman, whose name is to us unknown, but whose life at that time He described in a very few words. We know about her from what He told her, and we learn about Him from what He taught her. That her name should be veiled in obscurity was only fitting, but that the previous conduct of the one with whom He deigned to converse should be recorded, is in perfect harmony with His ways in grace. To have known her by the name she bore amongst men, would have been only to connect that name with a life of infamy and disgrace. To know her as the woman with whom the Lord talked at the well of Sychar, imperishably connects her memory with His dealings in faithfulness and love. The mention of her name might have recalled her sin and shame, her history now reminds us of His grace. The name of the woman who anointed the Lord in the house of Simon the leper is embalmed in the word, as well as that of the earliest and the latest visitor at the empty tomb on the morning of His resurrection day. With Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene, we are all familiar from reading the Gospel by John. To Martha who served, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, who ministered to the Lord of their substance, are we introduced by the sacred historian Luke. But the name of the woman who had outlived five husbands, and seemed willing to end her chequered life in sin, John the evangelist passes over in silence, as his brother historian had done, when recounting the service done to Christ by the woman in Simon the Pharisee's house, and relating the testimony borne to the Lord by the penitent thief on the cross. Who cares to know their names, but who, that either wants or understands God's grace, would be without those histories, which tell of the attractive power of the Son of God? The character of those drawn to Christ is what we want to know, of the class of persons He would receive we need to be informed. Their names, if set forth in the word, would add nothing to our knowledge of the Saviour; nor could they make us better acquainted with that heart, which found delight in gathering convicted sinners and confiding souls around itself. Whose those are that He will receive, the brokenhearted penitent wants to learn, with whom He would sit, and to whom the Lord could open out truth, the soul, that has been taught what it is by nature, delights to recall. To dilate on a sinful creature's transgressions is not the purpose for which their wicked ways are mentioned; and, though their evil deeds are noted without any attempt to palliate their guilt, the object for which they are recorded is, not to satisfy the morbid curiosity of creatures as sinful by nature as themselves, but to set forth in the brightest, fullest way the grace of God, and the graciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, besides that saving grace in which all share who believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's grace to those who have sinned is further manifested in making them vessels for His service, and thus multiplying the channels through which the testimony of His grace and love may flow out to other hearts, and water other souls. And the sequel to that conversation at the well of Sychar illustrates for our instruction, the ground on which such service should be based, the spirit in which it should be carried on, and the end which should be sought after; and all taught us, not in

a dry didactic way, in the language of schools, or in theological formulas, but in a fresh and vivid way, by examples drawn from real life, even those who there figured in the scene. And first as to the ground on which such service should be based. Of this the woman is the example. Brought consciously into the presence of One who knew her well, though they had never before met in person, she learnt from His lips, that He was the very One whom she had been led to expect — the Messiah, or Christ. "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, be will tell us all things," was the woman's remark to the Lord in answer to the instruction vouchsafed her about worship. "I that speak unto thee am he," was the Lord's immediate rejoinder. The Teacher had come, and she had talked with Him. With her own ears she heard His words, of whose coming God's servants of old had kept alive the expectation in the hearts of both Jews and Samaritans. "He will tell us all things" was the estimate she had formed of the Messiah. The One, who there sat by the well, had told her of her present and past life. He had told her likewise of the falsity of the Samaritan worship. He had told her of what He could give. He had told her also about God, and of the worshippers for whom the Father was seeking, and bad crowned it all by telling her that He was the Christ. To each question He had returned an answer. To her expression of surprise at a Jew requesting the ministrations of a Samaritan, He replied by speaking of His willingness to net towards her in grace, and give her living water. To her query, whether He was greater than their father Jacob, He had answered by an announcement of the satisfying nature of the water He could give, a well of water within the recipient springing up into everlasting life. Jacob tapped a spring, He could give the believer a fountain within himself, for the water, which He would give, would become that in the heart of each one into whom it should flow. Asking to have that water, she received in answer a command, which paved the way for dealing with her conscience, by means of which her request would be granted. "Go call thy husband," the Lord said:" "I have no husband," was her immediate response. True were the words she spoke, but no attesting witness was needed to confirm them, for the One who bade her to summon her husband, whilst acknowledging the accuracy of her statement, let her see that He was fully acquainted with her ways. His answer made her think that He was a prophet, a messenger from God to deal with the heart when failure had come in. As such she now addressed Him, and interrogated Him on the question of worship, as debated by the Samaritan in opposition to the Jew. To this too He replied in language which she could not misunderstand, and communicated to her that day, that of which the scribes and the chief priests at Jerusalem were in ignorance, the character of true worshippers from henceforth, and their relationship to God whom they would worship. And now, with one more remark from her, and an answer from Him, the work was done in her soul. But what prompted the remark, "I know that Messias cometh which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things?" Was it unwillingness in her mind to give up the prejudices of a lifetime on the mere dictum of one whom she deemed to be a prophet? Or was it the lurking expectation, afraid to express itself openly, that her teacher might be the Christ? Whatever it was that prompted her remark, the Lord's quick rejoinder set her mind at rest, and the approach of His disciples terminated her interview with the One who sat by the well.

She left Him, but to serve. She came to the well with an empty pitcher, she left it with a full heart. She had gone in her solitude to the spring with her waterpot, she would return with empty vessels not a few, human hearts, which needed, what she had known, personal intercourse with Messias, the Christ. But what made her a worker in the cause? Was it from the pleasure simply of hearing something new? Was it the fascination of listening to a teacher of commanding ability? Was it the

gratification of self, which likes the importance of being the bearer of startling tidings to its fellow creatures? Her tidings were indeed startling. Her communication was news, good news indeed. She bad talked with the promised Teacher, the prophet like unto Moses. All this was true. But what made her a worker in the cause was this, her conscience had first been dealt with by the Lord. Heart work in her preceded lip service. And so in real service for Him it must ever be. And just because there was heart work in her, she could not rest contented without saying to the men of that city, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?" AV hat she had done, what she was, Christ had told her. A work had been affected in her through intercourse with a living Person. He had spoken to her conscience. He had reached her heart. But if the first worker for Christ in the town of Sychar was, judging after men's thoughts the last person to have been chosen, when we understand God's mind we must own she was the fittest instrument that He could find — a recipient, because needing it, of saving grace.

How simply she worked! She told what she knew, she testified of what she had found, but in connection with a person, "He told me," thus pointing others to the One who had met with her at the well. But how effectually she did her work! The fields white to harvest, the crowds which went out to Christ were the fruit of His dealing with her conscience, and of her simple tale about it. To stand up and preach was not that woman's work! The twelve and the seventy were commissioned for that service, yet she worked rightly and well, and that without intruding into another's sphere, so that it may be said of her, as of another of her sex, "She hath done what she could." But her desire and efforts to bring others to Christ, were based, it must be remembered, on the result of the Lord's personal dealing with her soul.

Let us next turn to see, as also exemplified in this history, the sprit in which true service should be performed. The woman had left the well, the disciples having already rejoined the Lord with the food which they had purchased in the city. The draught of water from Jacob's well, which He had asked of the woman, we read not that Christ ever received. Now, to the food, which the disciples had bought in the city, He seemed indifferent. Yet refreshment and meat He had, as He talked with the woman at the well. "Master eat," was the request of His disciples, who were now to be taught by Him, whom John tells us they addressed by the Jewish name of Rabbi. The woman had learnt her lesson, namely, that Christ had come, and that He had talked with her; the disciples were now to learn theirs, namely, the spirit in which true service should be performed, as illustrated by the example of the Master Himself. For His answer, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," told of something which they had not brought, that ministered sustainment to Him. Unable to comprehend His meaning, their thoughts, like those of the woman, being confined to temporal things, He graciously explained it, as He added, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Thus He, the sent One of the Father, shows us what true service is, the simple but faithful performance of the work marked out for the servant by God. How apt arc men to be influenced by the manifestation or otherwise of results! The Lord's meat as a Servant was to do the work appointed, whatever the results might be. Was He insensible to results? Far otherwise. What true servant should be? For, as we here find Jehovah's Servant doing the work allotted to Him; so elsewhere we learn His feelings with reference to the results of His labours in that comparatively sterile field — the returned remnant of God's ancient people. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." (Isaiah 49:4.) Comparing these words of the Lord in Isaiah

with those in John, one sees that, though not indifferent to the results of His ministry in Israel, it was not the success of His labours which provided meat for His soul.

Perfect Servant, as perfect in everything else, His meat was to do His will who sent Him and to finish His work. True, in doing it, He must have had joy, a joy we cannot conceive, as He saw one poor sinner's heart opened up by His teaching, like a flower expanding under the warming influence of the sun, and knew that the blessing, communicated to her, would be fruitful in blessing to many a soul in that city. But His meat was found elsewhere. What simplicity, and what faithfulness do these words bring before us, the Master's teaching for His disciples, and that Master Jehovah's Servant, and Jehovah Himself.

Whilst sitting by the well the Lord had ministered to that one poor woman's soul. But now it would seem, lifting up His eyes He saw, and drew the attention of His disciples to the sight, the people trooping out of the city to meet Him. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." God's blessing on the soil to produce an abundant harvest could not be enjoyed for four months yet, nevertheless there was a harvest to be reaped at once, the result of seed sown long before, which had germinated, and now was rapidly ripening under the presence of Him, who will by-and-by appear to Israel in their land, as the "Sun of righteousness."

It was harvest time then at Sychar, a harvest time unknown even in the annals of that fertile district. A joyous time is that of harvest even in the natural world: of this the word bears witness (Isaiah 9:3); but a joyous thing it also is, when there is a harvest of souls to be reaped. Of this the disciples were now to have experience, but in a way and place quite unexpected. That Judea, so recently stirred by the preaching of John, should have yielded such results, would not have seemed surprising. Or that Galilee, in which a welcome reception awaited the Lord (John 4:45), should be the field in which such an operation should first commence, would not have seemed unnatural. But that Sychar, where we read not that John preached, nor the Lord had laboured, was to be the field in which the disciples should first have the joy of reaping, must have been most unexpected indeed. What others have since known they were now to learn, how cheering it is to the heart of a faithful servant of God, when the reaping time arrives, and the labourer or labourers have only to enter on a work made ready to their hands. It is a blessed thing to see souls bowed down under the power of the word, and prepared to take their stand henceforth in God's strength as the servants and true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The power at such times of those who wield aright the sword of the Spirit seems immense, but they are but men liable to be taken advantage of by the enemy, and so need, like the disciples, the Lord's gentle reminder that to reap is not everything, happy and inspiriting as that service is. Others, as in this case at Sychar, may have sown the seed, which at length produces such a bountiful crop. "Herein," said the Lord, "is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." The disciples were but reapers, one set of the servants made use of in that portion of the field. Those who had laboured in earlier times, who had there sown the seed, had passed away; but the Lord does not overlook them, nor allow their labour of sowing to be forgotten in the bright genial days of harvesting. The names of some who sowed the seed (in this case the hope of Messiah's appearance), the Old Testament may furnish. But who kept alive that expectation in the hearts of the Samaritans by teaching them what was written in the word, we cannot now tell, and probably the disciples in their day were almost as ignorant about it as we are; but, whoever they were to whom the Lord referred,

He would have us to understand that, neither their names, nor their labours are overlooked by Him. How gracious is this of Him! How encouraging to those who toil during the sowing season, and depart this life without witnessing the joy of harvest, to remember the gracious announcement of the Lord of the harvest, that "he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

How apt are men to judge of the labourer's usefulness by the apparent results of his work! How apt too are they, in the time of harvest, to regard the reapers as the one and only class of labourers who have tilled the soil! Not so the Lord. He knows who have ploughed up the ground, and sowed the seed during the sunless days of Autumn and Winter, or the blustering days of Spring; and when the harvest is reaped, and the grain gathered into the barn, He will remember them, and own what share they have had in the work carried on upon earth for Him. It is well, it is right, to rejoice when harvest time arrives in any locality; but the time for full joy about it cannot come till a perfect estimate can be made of the crop, and then the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together. Are we called to sow? Let us work on undaunted, though we see not the fruit of our labours. Are we allowed to reap? Let us work diligently, remembering the responsibility which rests on us, but ever mindful, that others may have a share in a future day in the joy over that harvest we are permitted in the Lord's goodness to reap. What joy, doubtless, would it have been to those of earlier days, who had kept alive the expectation of the Christ, if they had lived here long enough to see Him.

Many prophets and righteous men had desired to see what the disciples saw, but never lived to their day. Will they be deprived of their joy? No. They shall see the day of Christ's glory, and the crop which has resulted from the seed sown by them in patience and under difficulties, known perhaps only to themselves and to God.

All who labour for God upon earth shall see the result of their work. "The sower and the reaper shall rejoice together." The Lord will not dissociate them, and, though spoken of in a different matter and in a different connection, may we not say, what God hath joined together let not man put asunder? The Lord's word about the labourers are worth remembering, cheering to the sower, sobering to the reaper. To sow, is to disseminate faithfully the testimony of the day, whatever it may be, which has been committed to God's servants. To reap, is to gather in souls by ministry as the fruit of the seed sown. But who are to reap, and when? This the Lord decides, and here allots to the disciples their portion of work in the field. "I sent you," etc. Their commission was from Him, and He, who never makes a mistake, did not send them into the field before the crop was ready for their work.

Just come from Judea where they had had no reaping, they find at Sychar the crop ready for the sickle; for, taught to expect the Messiah, the Samaritans were willing, when they knew of Him, to receive Him. To have attempted to reap in Judea would have been to labour to little profit. To have commenced sowing at Sychar would have indicated want of discernment about the condition of souls in that city. To have concluded from their success at Sychar that all Samaria was ready to receive the Lord, would have been manifestly erroneous, as the reception He met with from one of the cities of Samaria at a later period of His life clearly demonstrates. All this surely has a voice for us, where sowing and reaping go on side by side. The work in one place is no criterion of what the work in another should be, nor does it follow that the labourer highly blessed in one locality, has

only to move to another to find that field also quite ready for his reaping hook. And now with the Lord’s example as teaching for us, and His words to His disciples having a voice for our days, let us look at the action of the woman, and the recorded statement of some of the Samaritans at Sychar, as showing us what should be the end of true service in dealing with souls.

Having learnt for herself the value of personal intercourse with Christ, she desired the same for her fellow townsmen, so besought them to come and see the man, who had told her all things that ever she did. She could not rest satisfied with simply telling them of what she had heard, nor whom she had seen. She wanted others to meet Him for themselves. They did so, though first believing on Him for the saying of the woman. Short of that she could not have them rest; short of that they did not stop. True spiritual instinct thus prompted her to bring them to Christ, as that which would settle their souls in the truth about Him. And she received, from the words of those who believed on Him because of His own word, the fullest justification of the correctness of her desire for all her fellow-citizens. "Now we believe," they’ said, "not because of thy word, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." For here, the words "the Christ" should be omitted. Her testimony was that He was the Christ, theirs that He was the Saviour of the world. She had learnt from Him who He was. They had learnt from His two days’ sojourn with them what He was, as meeting their need on the broad ground of grace. All questions of the superiority of Gerizim, over Moriah, were here set aside. All that they had contended for with reference to the Mosaic ritual must have appeared in a new light, for the Saviour of the world had come, had sat with them, had taught them, and had convinced them of what He was. Thus their souls were settled on a firm basis, and they could testify of what they had found, as this title of the stranger was firmly fixed on their hearts — "the Saviour of the world." They felt the strength, the comfort, and the security of their position. The woman’s witness to Him they knew of. It was correct, but what they had found from intercourse with him, they could tell of, for they thus had learnt what she had not declared. She had done her work in calling attention to Christ. They were established in truth about His person from hearing Him themselves. The two days’ sojourn in that city ended, a bright episode in the Lord’s life, without one cloud to overshadow it in Sychar; but it brings into fuller and most painful relief the unbelief of the Jews, which hindered them from sharing in joy as deep, and as real, as that of these Samaritans. The Christ had been at Jerusalem, but they had not discerned Him. The Saviour of the world had moved in and out among them at the passover, but they had not discovered it. Just what is witnessed every day still, is it not? That when souls in different places are getting blessing, and learning for themselves what it is to have intercourse with Christ, others very near them, it may be, are strangers to their joy, the eye still shut, and the heart still ignorant about Him. To open their eyes, and to lead such to Christ may be work graciously given them to do.

Let the woman, and the Lord, and the Samaritans be illustrations how to labour aright, and in dependence on divine strength and wisdom, successfully for Christ with souls. C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 85

S. Substitution

Substitution.

Propitiation by blood having been made on the day of atonement inside the veil; the special work of the high priest was not, however, completed till substitution had been delineated in the fullest manner that the type could set it forth. By the Lord's command Aaron had entered the holiest with blood, and had dealt with it in the manner prescribed by the Mosaic ritual. By the Lord's command likewise, the scapegoat was kept in reserve till the moment arrived for the high priest to concern himself with it, as the ordinance of the day of atonement set forth. Inside the sanctuary Aaron had sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering. Where, and when no eye could see him but God's, he did that work, by which Jehovah was enabled in righteousness to accept before Him a people that had sinned. Now once more back in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, ere he changed his garments and resumed the ordinary pontifical attire, he brought forward the live goat for a substitution to be typically effected. For he alone, who had made propitiation, could deal, aright with the scapegoat, azazel, 1:e. the goat of departure. This the high priest now proceeded to do. He laid his hands on its head, and confessed over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on its head, and then sending it away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. For uncleannesses, transgressions, and sins, propitiation by blood had been made. Now the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the people were confessed over the head of the people's substitute, who bore them away into a land uninhabited. A holy God could not even pass over uncleannesses, not to say sins, unless propitiation had been made for them. How fully did He maintain His own holiness in all its untarnishable perfection, whilst announcing by the means provided to maintain it, the impossibility of any one in Israel keeping himself fit for entrance into the divine presence. For had any one kept himself from transgression and sin, and no one did that, as Solomon attested (1 Kings 8:46), he could not have ensured himself against defilement by uncleanness, as Leviticus (Leviticus 11:1-47; Leviticus 12:1-8; Leviticus 13:1-59; Leviticus 14:1-57; Leviticus 15:1-33) shows us. Propitiation then was needed for uncleannesses as well as for positive sins; for they were the fruit of sin, though they might not arise from acts of sin; but substitution as well as propitiation was called for where sins themselves were in question.

Iniquities, transgressions, and sins were confessed by the high priest, and all of each. The confession was a comprehensive one. By iniquities we understand the fruits of perverseness or crookedness; by transgressions, the overstepping of a line, beyond which a man should not have gone; by sins, the missing or falling short of a mark. Hence these several terms would comprehend all acts of deflection, from the right road, every overstepping of the line, and all comings short, or missing of the mark to which they ought to have attained. All this was confessed on Israel's behalf by Aaron, and put on the living goat reserved for that purpose, which was then sent away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

Now this was the first time throughout the service of that day that Aaron was called to open his mouth, after that he had killed the sin-offering. Inside the veil, as we have remarked in a previous paper, he had no need to speak, and no opportunity presented itself which called forth any prayer from his heart and from his lips. Here in the court where he did speak, prayer would not have been in season. He spoke, whether at length or with brevity we know not; but it was not to ask for anything at the hands of Jehovah. He was not there as the suppliant for the people, but as their representative to confess all their iniquities, and all their transgressions in all their sins. Confession, not prayer, was then in season. All duly confessed over the head of the scapegoat, on which both his hands had rested, the iniquities and sins of the people were no longer on them. The burden of their sins rested on that goat. The people had not shifted their burden to the live goat. They had no active part in the doing of it. It was done, but done perfectly, and for that year finally, by the high priest, the son of Amram, of the tribe of Levi.

Charged with all that weight of sin - all, let the reader again remark, all the iniquities of the children of Israel, with all their transgressions in all their sins, the substitute for the people was led away by the person appointed for the purpose. All their iniquities had been laid upon it, not some, not the great ones, the gross ones, not those that weighed heaviest on their consciences, but all - all were placed on that goat, who bore them all away. Propitiation and substitution were now accomplished facts. The two goats, really but one sin-offering (Leviticus 16:5), typifying two important parts of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus, were both needed, the former to meet the claims of God’s holiness, the latter to free the guilty ones from the burden, the weight of their sins.

Charged with the people’s sins, that goat went away into a land not inhabited, or separated, never to return. And as it took its departure, all might see it going away, might watch its gradual disappearing from sight till lost to view. With what interest doubtless some regarded it, Jehovah’s provision for a guilty people. Sent away by the high priest under the charge of the man selected for the purpose, that goat wended its way into the wilderness. That man could ensure its going thither; but who could keep it from coming back? It went with all the sins of the people on its head, and it was of the utmost importance that it should never come back. Full provision was made for its departure, but nothing was said of its return. The man took it away. The Lord provided that it never should come back.

Suppose a foreigner in the camp, who had no part in the privileges and blessings of Israel. Imagine him there on the day of atonement. What a sight must have met his eye! The whole camp at rest; every member of the privileged nation keeping a perfect sabbath; the din of daily toil all hushed; cessation from work of any kind absolute throughout that vast encampment. The cloud rested on the tabernacle; no trumpet sound heard either to summon the heads of the people, or to prepare the camp for a march; all as still, as orderly, as quiet as could be conceived. Yet it was not the weekly sabbath, the sign between the Lord and His people, that they might know that He was Jehovah who sanctified them. (Ezekiel 20:12.) But the people were resting from all work with as much strictness as if it were the seventh day of the week. What, he might have asked, was it all about? On the previous sabbath they had rested from all work. Now ere another sabbath came round they were doing the same, but with this difference. On the sabbath-day they rested, and afforded thereby rest to their servants and cattle. On this day they were afflicting their souls, whilst the high priest was making atonement for their sins. This resting was most expressive. It spoke of their helplessness in the matter which so closely concerned them, whilst the afflicting of their souls

indicated how deeply they were interested in all that was being done. As the day went on, and the scapegoat was led away, the foreigner might have inquired what that was, and would have learnt that it was azazel, or "the goat of departure," going away with all their sins on its head into the wilderness. Inquiring further, he would have learnt how privileged was Israel above all other people upon earth, since for them, and them only, had Jehovah their God provided a substitute to bear their sins, and to carry them all away. If he asked further, whether they were sure that all of them were gone, would they not have answered that they had seen the goat led away, after all their sins had been solemnly laid on it by the high priest? But were they really gone? he might have again inquired. "Yes," would have been the reply; "that goat just sent away will never come back, for all our sins being laid on it, they are really and truly and for ever gone with it. The man appointed will lead it into the wilderness, and there let it go, and Jehovah will take care that it shall never return." The goat's departure, and its never returning, would be for them decisive of the whole matter. In all this it was true they had taken no active part; yet, knowing that all had been done in accordance with Jehovah's word, they would be satisfied. Aaron's re-appearance from the holy place told that all had been rightly done within; and the goat's departure, after all their sins had been confessed over it, assured them that they no longer rested on the guilty ones. Formerly on them, they were now on the goat, and going away into a land of forgetfulness.

Thus both propitiation and substitution were prefigured in that day's ceremonial; but substitution was only fully effected in type after Aaron's re-appearance in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, when, before the eyes of all, he confessed the sins of the people over the goat, and in the presence of the whole congregation that goat was led away into the wilderness. What had gone on in the sanctuary no human eye had witnessed; the departure, however, of the goat was patent to all. Further, this goat was provided for the children of Israel, and not for Aaron and for his house. The reason for this, then probably unexplained, is made clear to us who live after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have God's word opened up to us by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Had the scapegoat been provided for Aaron and his sons, as well as for the people, it might have been said that no one could know their sins were put away till the high priest had re-appeared from within the sanctuary. In other words, since the Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest of whom Aaron, throughout that day's service, was only the type, it might have been taught, and with apparent ground for the truth of it, that unless the Lord re-appears to the view of people on earth, no one can know that their sins have been borne by Him who is the true scapegoat, as well as the sacrifice, and the Priest: So for Aaron and for his house the scapegoat was not provided, though from the teaching which flows from it they could, and we can, profit. And the reason for the dismissal of the goat before all, and after that Aaron had finished his work in the holy place, is made plain. Israel will only know, when they see the Lord, on His re-appearance from the heavenly sanctuary into, which He has entered, that atonement has been made for them. Of this the prophets wrote; Isaiah before the captivity, and Zechariah subsequent to it. Both treat of it; the former telling us what thoughts will be uppermost in the hearts of the godly remnant when they see Him; and the latter describing the sorrow that will take possession of them when they learn who is the true sin-offering. Isaiah, in Isaiah 52:13-15, describes the effect on kings, and on others, of the Lord Jesus appearing in His glory. Astonishment will seize them as they behold the One once crucified coming in power and glory. "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." The coming in irresistible power of the once despised Nazarene will overwhelm them with surprise and

amazement. How different will His re-appearance be to the godly remnant. This is treated of in Isaiah 53:1-12. His rejection by their fathers they will remember and speak of; their own wrong thoughts about Him they will confess, and will acknowledge that they are corrected by His personal presence among them. But not this only. They will then understand, and gladly own, in the language of the prophet, what His death has done for them. "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." Their Substitute, the true scapegoat, they will then behold, and own. "The Lord hath laid on Him," they will say, "the iniquity of us all." With that they will be satisfied. "Jehovah has done it," they will say, "the One against whom we have sinned;" and in that they will rest. Confessing how wrong had been their thoughts about Jesus of Nazareth, thereby owning their own unbelief, and taking the place of convicted sinners, they will rest contented (how could they do otherwise?) with the perfect Substitute God has provided. Unbelief, and dread of divine vengeance, will both vanish, and perfect peace will take possession of their hearts; for they will learn, when they see Him, that He, the victorious, powerful, glorious One, was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. Iniquities and transgressions Aaron confessed over the scapegoat. Their iniquities and transgressions, they will learn, have been borne by the true sin-offering, God’s Lamb, David’s Son, and David’s Lord. But relief from all dread of wrath is one thing, godly sorrow for sin is another. This last they will likewise fully experience when they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. (Zechariah 12:10.) The spirit of grace and of supplications having been poured on them, they will be granted the desire of their heart. The Messiah they will behold, but, beholding Him, will mourn. Their fathers’ guilt, the nation’s sin, with which they are closely connected, will be to them apparent; and looking on Him, whom they as part of Israel pierced, they will mourn. What an awaking up there will be! Centuries of national unbelief judged in a moment. And the reason, the deep necessity for Messiah’s death, will flash on them with vividness, and with all the brightness of a summer’s noonday sun. Then, too, the double purpose for which the Lord’s side was pierced when on the cross will receive its accomplishment. (John 19:34-37.) By that piercing with the spear, blood and water flowed out. What that is, and how it concerns us, the evangelist who witnessed it has placed on record. (1 John 4:9-10; 1 John 5:6-11.) By that piercing, likewise, He has been marked in His person as the One who really hung on the cross, and when Israel shall see Him, the once pierced One, mourning will characterise them in truth. Mourning, not the bitterness of despair from learning that there is no hope; but the sorrow of contrite hearts at the discovery of the love which He had manifested for them, and their rejection of it till then. Dread of judgment will vanish when they see Him appearing in power on their behalf. No thought of their sins to be imputed to them will cross their mind. For they will see Him who has borne them, the pierced One, alive, and victorious without them. Having been laid by Jehovah on Him, they will never be put back again on them. And Him on whom they were put they will see without them, all gone, and gone for ever; and He without them will be present among them, the witness of this, for the joy and comfort of their souls. But not only did He die for that nation, He died for sinners; so we who believe on Him can now say, what the remnant will then own, that our sins were borne by Him in His own body on the tree. (1 Peter 2:24.), Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. (Hebrews 9:28.) That question He has settled, and settled for ever. For "unto them that look for Him shall He appear . . . without sin unto salvation." The remnant will know Him as their substitute

when they see Him. We know that now on the testimony of the divine word. The proof of it to them will be the beholding Him in power and glory. The proof to us is His presence in heaven without them, attested by the presence on earth, and the teaching of God the Holy Ghost. Our sins cannot be in heaven; but He is there who bore them in His own body on the tree. He rose without them, so all those whose sins He bore are free. The remnant of Israel will only know this when they see Him, hence we can understand why they should deprecate God's wrath. (Psalms 25:7, etc.) Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ in apostolic times knew that question was settled (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 John 2:12); for propitiation had been made (Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10); substitution had been effected (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24), and forgiveness of sin was preached (Luke 24:47; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38) to all who would receive it, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same still. C. E. Stuart.

People think they want strength to do something; but the first thing is not to do, but to receive. The mission of the Christian is not to do, but to be - to be like Christ.

Chapter 86

S. The Bible and Its Critics:

The Bible and Its Critics: A Letter to the Editor of the "Bible Treasury."

Dear Mr. Editor, With the question now stirring the Free Church of Scotland, respecting the teaching of one of its professors, the readers of the Bible Treasury have no direct concern. Yet when the scriptures are assailed by criticisms to prove that large parts of the Pentateuch were not written by Moses, but by others after his time, all Christians are deeply concerned in the accuracy of such startling statements. The Lord quoted from the Pentateuch as the writings of Moses. "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?" (John 7:19.) The Spirit of God teaches us, that "the law was given by Moses." (John 1:17.) Professor Smith, in his recently published statement in vindication of himself,* would, by criticisms on Old Testament scripture, invalidate such teaching. Now what are such criticisms worth? To a consideration of them let us now turn, first quoting his own words (page 36): "Apparently, says criticism, the only way to make the new law an integral part of the old legislation was to throw it into such a form as if it had been spoken by Moses, and so incorporate it with the other laws. Of course, if this plan was adopted, the statute-book ceased to be pure literal history. The ascription of a law to Moses could no longer be taken literally, but could only indicate that the law was as much to be observed as if it came from Moses, and that it was a legitimate addition to his legislation. Such a method of publishing laws would not he free from inconvenience; but the actual unquestioned inconveniences of the Pentateuch, when measured by our ideas of a law-book, are so great, that this cannot prove the thing impossible. On the other hand, there is no deceit implied in the use of an artificial literary form proceeding on a principle well understood, and so it is a pure question of literary and historical evidence whether the Hebrews did at one time recognise and use such a principle. There is one piece of direct historical evidence which seems to show that they did, for in Ezra 9:11 a law is quoted from Deuteronomy 7:1-26 :, expressed in words that throw it back into the wilderness period, and yet the origin of this law is ascribed, not to Moses, but to the prophets."

[*"An Answer to the Form of Libel now before the Free Church Presbytery of Aberdeen." Edinburgh: Douglas.]

Leaving it to the simplest Christian to determine whether there is no deceit in stating that Moses wrote what he did not write, and remembering that God in His word, and the Lord Jesus, speak only of Moses as the one by whom the law was given, let us examine the scriptures to which the professor turns in support of his statements and position. A law, he tells us, is quoted by Ezra 9:11 from Deuteronomy 7:1-26 :, and yet the origin of this law is ascribed, not to Moses, but to the prophets. Now it would scarcely be credited that any one contending for, and engaged in, critical studies, could have made such a statement. A quotation the professor calls it! Why, the fact is this: there is not a word in the one passage quoted the same as those in the other. Of the three verbs in the law in question in Deuteronomy, only one of them is made use of in the passage in Ezra. The negative particles used by Ezra are not the same as those in Deuteronomy; and the nouns in the one passage are in the singular, and in the other are in the plural. With these important differences

in a law of only eleven words, it is surely trusting too much to the credulity or inability of his readers to verify his statements, to assert that a law is quoted in Ezra 9:11 from Deuteronomy 7:3. That the ready scribe in the law of Moses referred to this passage of Deuteronomy we may well believe; but, that he meant it to be a quotation of it, his words would surely negative. He speaks of what God commanded by His servants the prophets. It was the tenor of prophetic teaching that he spoke of. Now Deuteronomy 7:1-26 : is not the only passage in the Pentateuch which refers to such a subject. In Exodus 34:16 we have a reference to it; and elsewhere, in Joshua 23:12, likewise. Ezra does quote from in Deuteronomy that passage, but it is from Deuteronomy 23:6. A quotation, then, from the law of Deuteronomy 7:1-26 : the passage in Ezra clearly is not. But we are further told that "the origin of the law is ascribed, not to Moses, but to the prophets," because Ezra speaks of God's servants the prophets. Was not, however, Moses a prophet? Is he not termed one in Deuteronomy 18:15; Deuteronomy 34:10? But Ezra makes mention of prophets, and surely correctly; for in the book of Joshua (classed by the Jews among those called the former prophets), as well as in the books of Moses, the people were warned against the sin of intermarrying with the nations in the land. Ezra's words, then, seem well chosen; and the professor's attempt to make him a witness of the use in scripture of "artificial literary form" surely falls to the ground.

Again, writes Professor Smith (page 37), "If, for example, Numbers 18:1-32 : assigns the firstlings to the priests, and Deuteronomy 12:1-32 : bids the people eat them themselves, and if both laws are perfectly clear and unambiguous in the tenor of their words, it is vain to ask us to believe that both laws were given by Moses to be observed together."

Let us examine this. In Exodus 13:1-22 : we meet with the first command about the firstlings. The Lord claimed them as His for evermore. He had the right to dispose of them as He would. In Exodus 22:30; Exodus 34:19; Leviticus 27:26, He reminded the people of His claim. In Numbers 18:17-18 He gave them to the priests to eat. In Deuteronomy 12:6; Deuteronomy 12:17-18; Deuteronomy 14:23; Deuteronomy 15:19-20, He told the people who brought them, to partake of them with their families and the Levites who were within their gates, at the place where He would choose to put His name. Now it is clear that there is an alteration made in the law. The principle however, that God claimed the firstlings as His, to dispose of as He would, remains the same throughout. In the wilderness God gave them to the priests. (Numbers 18:1-32 :) In the land the people were to eat of them likewise. God, of course, had the right to modify His law, and doubtless there was an adequate reason for it. How well the priests were provided for when in the land, we have evidence in the reign of Hezekiah. (2 Chronicles 31:4-14.) God's provision was ample when the people conformed to the law about it. Some useful remarks on this point, too long to he here quoted, will be found in "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," vol. 1:, pp. 267, 268. They will well repay perusal.

"But," adds the professor, "it is vain to ask us to believe that both laws were given by Moses to be observed together." Who, we may ask, said they were to be observed together? Read Numbers 18:1-32 :, as the provision for the wilderness, and Deuteronomy 12:1-32; Deuteronomy 14:1-29; Deuteronomy 15:1-23 as the arrangement for the land, and all is simple and easy. For it is not a solitary instance of a change made consequent on the people's entrance into the land. Compare Deuteronomy 12:15-16 with Leviticus 17:3-4, and Deuteronomy 22:1-2 with Exodus 23:4, for other changes necessitated by their leaving the wilderness, and entering on the land of their possession.

Again, it is objected that the law of Deuteronomy 12:11 could not have been given by Moses, for Samuel, it is assumed, and Elijah knew nothing of it, as they did not conform to it. Now Samuel must have remembered the days of his youth at Shiloh, when men abhorred the offering of the Lord. For certainly then the law of Deuteronomy 12:11 was observed, though the people had had the greatest provocation to break it, from the sins of the two sons of Eli. But what says the law of Deuteronomy 12:11? The people are told to bring to the altar of burnt-offering all that God had commanded them. The words are, "All that I have commanded you." Now did the offerings of Samuel at Mizpeh, and those of Elijah at Carmel, fall under this category? They were such as God permitted, but were not of those which He had commanded. Now a law of Exodus 20:24 clearly provided for the building of other altars than that in the tabernacle or temple. In Judges 6:25-26; Judges 13:16-20; 1 Chronicles 21:18-28, as well as 1 Samuel 7:9, and 1 Kings 18:1-46 :, God commanded on some occasions, and sanctioned on others, altars for exceptional offerings. For such the law of Exodus 20:1-26 : provided, whilst that of Deuteronomy 12:1-32 : clearly did not. Deuteronomy 12:1-32 : was to guard the people from all admixture of idolatrous rites with the worship of God, Exodus 20:1-26 : provided for the exceptional instances of which we have the proofs of the divine approval. There is, then, really nothing contradictory in all this.

Again, in page 55, attempting to support his theory about Deuteronomy, the professor seeks to make the opening words of the book itself to be a witness in his favour. His words are these: "But does not Deuteronomy 1:1 show that the whole book claims to have been written on the east side of Jordan, before the people entered Canaan? On the English translation, yes; but the translation is wrong, and the verse really says, These are the words which Moses spake on the other side of Jordan.'"

Now here the professor is incorrect in saying that the English translation is wrong. Grammatically it is quite admissible, for the Hebrew, b'ngehver, may correctly be translated, "on this side," or, "on that side," for it does not of necessity by itself determine anything as to the locality, east or west, of Jordan. For proof of this I would refer to the book of Joshua. In Joshua 1:14-15 the word is used of the east side of Jordan, where Joshua was at the time he addressed the children of Reuben, of Gad, and of the half tribe of Manasseh. In chapter 5: 1 it is used of the west side of the river. Again, in chapter 9: 1 it is used of the west side, and in verse 10 of the east. In chapter 12: 1 it is used of the east side, in verse 7 of the west; and there, as at times elsewhere, defining words are introduced to make plain to which side reference is made, "towards the sun-rising," verse 1; "on the west," verse 7. Anything, then, built on the meaning of b'ngehver, to discredit Deuteronomy being really written by Moses, must fall to the ground.

Three other scripture proofs of the position the professor has taken up, may be more briefly noticed. In page 38 he suggests the chronicler (2 Chronicles 20:36) has misunderstood the phrase in 1 Kings 22:48, "the ships of Tarshish." May not the chronicler be right, and the critic wrong? Further on (page 40) he calls attention to the introduction of the word Samaria (1 Kings 13:32) in a speech of the old prophet, years before Omri built the city, which he called Samaria, after Shemer, the owner of the hill (1 Kings 16:24), adding, "we shall misread the history, if we assume that the speeches were given word for word as they were written." Now this remark is not to the point, the question being, not whether we have a summary merely of the old prophet's speech to his sons, but whether he is made by the historian to use a word which was not in existence till years afterwards. This is a very different matter. On what ground is such a statement based? In 1 Kings

13:32 Samaria is used, it would seem, as the name of a district — "cities of Samaria" — like Heshbon and her cities (Joshua 13:17), or "cities of Hebron." (2 Samuel 1:3.) But in Kings 16: it appears for the first time as the name of the city built by Omri on the hill he bought of Shemer, its former owner. Such are the facts of the case.

What explanation can be offered? Critics, we learn, cut the knot in a very summary manner. "The history," we are assured, "is consistent, and the critic is only anxious to reach a standpoint, from which the consistency shall become manifest." (Page 40.) And the standpoint to which we are conducted is, that the Spirit of God sanctioned "artificial literary form," making a person say what be did not say, and which it was well known he never uttered. Without dogmatising on the example from 1 Kings, may it not be that, after all, 1 Kings 16:1-34 : gives us the clue to the difficulty? The hill was called Samaria, and the city on it was called Samaria, after Shemer. May not the hill have been so called from its position suited to be a watch-tower, whilst the city received its name from Shemer? The hill, then, may have been known as Samaria before Omri built it. The historian only tells us why the city was so named. Is there anything opposed to this in the sacred record? 1 Kings 13:1-34 : appears to speak of a district of Samaria; 1 Kings 16:1-34 : clearly tells us the origin of the name of the city, but mentions the hill Samaria as well.

One remark more. On page 47 we read, "In the Old Testament the prophetic word, as a whole, and not merely prophetic vision in the narrow sense, is called a seeing, or intuition. (Chazon Isaiah 1:1; Nahum 1:1.)" Such a statement surely needs explanation. Intuition, in the common acceptation of the term, is not the same in sense as "vision" in the prophets. Did Nahum by intuition pour forth the burden of Nineveh? And did Isaiah by intuition give forth his predictions about God’s people and the nations?

Having passed in review the different scripture witnesses adduced by Professor Smith in support of his teaching, a simple-minded Christian will perhaps say: What are such criticisms worth? But a more solemn question remains: Is this the way to deal with God’s word written? C. E. Stuart.

S. The Burnt-Offering

The Burnt-Offering. From patriarchal times, and from that memorable night in Egypt, the last that all Israel ever spent in it, as their home, we pass on to the laws about the offerings and sacrifices given by God to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. As yet we have only met with burnt-offerings, with sacrifices which had the character of peace-offerings, and with drink-offerings; now we are made acquainted, through the Mosaic ritual, with these and others as well; viz., meat-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings. To these may be added heave-offerings and wave-offerings. But the burnt-offering, meat offering, peace-offering, sin-offering, and trespass-offering have this in common, that they all typify what is true only of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas the heave-offering and wave-offering were not confined to that which is peculiar to Him, and the drink-offering did not typify Him at all, but testified of the joy of God, and of the offerer in Him.

Hitherto, in the history of sacrifice, we have met with no directions respecting the manner of sacrificing. Now we come to regulations minute and explicit, revealed to Moses. And the first to be described, though not always the first to be offered, where more than one kind of sacrifice was prescribed, is that called the burnt-offering, and so called, we are expressly informed, because it burned all night upon the altar (Leviticus 6:9) unto the morning. It was the only offering which was burning all night, and it formed the basis on which all other offerings were burned by day on the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle, or of the temple. No wonder then it has priority over all the other offerings in the Mosaic ritual. It was the only one they could never do without. It was the only one that was never to be absent from God’s eyes till the true sacrifice, its antitype, should be offered up, and animal sacrifices thenceforth cease, until preparations should be made for the Lord’s return in power.

Further, this was the only sacrifice of which the whole went up to God, so, in whatever way one might classify the offerings, this one would always come first. For it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in a character especially important, and ever to be remembered, as it tells of His whole surrender to death to do God’s will, without which, as we well know, no sacrifice on our behalf could ever have availed before God. Sinful man could not have offered himself to God on his own behalf, or on behalf of others, and earth could never have provided that sacrifice with which the Holy One could in righteousness have been satisfied. There was needed for the sacrifice not only an offering free from sin, but one who was holy in all his ways; his life, his energies all devoted to God, and who could also die. One only can answer to all these requirements; viz., the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God. But though earth could not provide the sacrifice, certain animals on the earth could be accepted as types of it. Israel could bring to the Lord Jehovah, and offer on His altar, that which in His eye was typical of the death of His Son. Of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl Noah offered his burnt-offerings to God. (Genesis 8:20.) Of clean beasts, and of clean fowls, Israel could offer burnt-offerings to Jehovah; but the occasions on which they were to be offered, the manner of offering them, and what animals were to be brought, they had to learn from the Mosaic ritual. On private and on public occasions burnt-offerings could be presented. For instructions about private occasions we turn to Leviticus 1:1-17; for directions for public or special

occasions we must turn elsewhere. On private occasions God allowed the offerer a choice. On public, and at times on special occasions also He prescribed what should be brought.

If anyone in Israel was moved in his heart to present a burnt-offering to God, it might be either of the herd, of the flock, or of fowls. In the case of no other offering was there such a choice. The wealthiest and the poorest could meet on common ground at the altar of burnt-offering; and whilst the rich man could bring his bullock, which required the services of more than one priest to sprinkle the blood and to place the parts of the animal on the altar, the poor man, who for his bird needed only the ministry of one priest, could return from the altar with the assurance of his God, that his turtle-dove or young pigeon was equally with the bullock "an offering made by fire of a sweet savour. unto the Lord." (Leviticus 1:17.) How gracious was this! The Lord accepted the offering, not according to its intrinsic value, as man would have appraised it, but according to His. own estimate of that of which each was a type - the self-surrender to death of His well-beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Where the sacrifice was of the herd or of the flock, the offerer's identification with it was openly declared by placing his hand on its head. In the case of the bird this significant action is not mentioned. When a bullock, or sheep, or goat was brought, the offerer killed it, and the priests sprinkled the blood round about the brazen altar; then the offerer skinned the animal, washed the inward parts with water, and, having dismembered it, presented the parts to the priests or the priest to be placed in order upon the altar. When the sacrifice was a bird, the priest nipped off its head and burnt it on the altar, and squeezed out its blood at the side of the altar; then the offerer plucked away its crop with its filth (not its feathers), which was cast on the east part by the place of the ashes. Then, cleaving it with the wings thereof, he presented it a whole carcase to be burnt upon the altar. In every case the head was treated separately from the body; but in the case of the bird the body was burnt as a whole. Further, in every case the sacrifice was to be clean, and to be a male without blemish if, it came from the herd or from the flock.

Thus far we have detailed to us the part the offerer had in the service. He had to provide the offering, and to bring it, and to prepare its body for the sacrifice; whilst the priest's part was to deal with the blood, and to burn the carcase upon the altar. Hence, in the case of a quadruped the priest had no place at all in the matter, till the blood had to be sprinkled on the altar round about. In other words, death took place before the priestly service at the altar was called into requisition. The priest's place was at the altar; he ministered there, but, till death had taken place, in the ordinary way he had nothing to do. The death of the sacrifice must be an accomplished fact, and acknowledged to be such ere the priest's work could begin. The exception to this in the case of the bird arose probably from the physical difference between it and the beast. From the latter the blood readily poured forth; from the former it had to be squeezed out. (Leviticus 1:15.) This principle is an important one. It puts the offerer in his place, and the priest in his. The priest did nothing till the offerer killed his offering, after identifying himself with it. So the Lord offered Himself, and only after His death entered on his priesthood, as Hebrews 8:4 clearly states. The priest was required for all that went on at the altar, but only after the death of the victim has taken place beside it, or in front of it, as the case might be. Accurate as the type was in this respect, it came short, as each must do of the full delineation of that of which it was but a type. Here we read of the offerer, of the offering, and of the priest, all three distinct; but the offerer, on whose behalf the sacrifice was brought, here killed the beast; whereas the antitype, the true sacrifice, offered up himself. (Hebrews 7:27.) In reality the offerer, the offering, and the priest are one and the same

person seen in three different characters. Christ offered Himself, being the Lamb of God, and the high priest, who has entered into heaven by his own blood. Everything, then, that had to be done in connection with sacrifice He has done, and done once for all (Hebrews 10:14), leaving to man the only part he can take in it; viz., identification with the sacrifice, so as to share in the rich results which flow from it, by owning it to be the offering on his behalf, according to the value of which he stands accepted before God.

Under the law the offerer presented the sacrifice for his acceptance (not "of his own voluntary will," as our version has translated the Hebrew word lirzono), owning thereby the ground on which he stood before God. But we do not present the sacrifice, since that has been already done. Christ offered Himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9:14), and offered up Himself as well. For though men crucified Him, He nevertheless laid down His life of Himself. (John 10:18.) None could have taken it from Him. Thus both actions, the presenting the sacrifice and the offering it up, indicated by the Greek words prosphero and anathero, were carried out by Him in His grace. But more. The burnt-offering offered up for the man's acceptance, he learnt that it made atonement for him. Now this mention of atonement is instructive, since it shows that, apart from the aspect of sacrifice typified by the burnt-offering, atonement could not have been accomplished. There was needed for that, not only a substitute for the sinner - One who could bear the sins of the guilty one in His own body on the tree - but One who would surrender Himself wholly to do God's will by dying, on whom death could in no way have a claim. One essential element then in atonement was the sacrifice of One who could surrender Himself to die, apart from, though of course closely connected with, His position as the sinner's substitute. And the offerer in Israel, when he brought his burnt-offering, moved probably by the sense of Jehovah's goodness to him, but without reference to any sin that he had committed in the past, learnt his need of atonement through the provision Jehovah thus made to effect it.

Precious was this sacrifice to God. All of it went up to Him, the skin only excepted, which was to be the priest's who offered it. For the priest at the altar being always typical of Christ Himself, the skin, symbolical of the circumstances through which the Lord passed, would rightly belong to him; for who but the Lord can know what those circumstances were? And here the reader should be reminded that only one priest officiated at the altar to burn the sacrifice. When the animal was of the herd several priests were required to sprinkle the blood, and to lay the pieces on the altar on the wood, but one priest (5: 9) it was who burnt all on the altar. Precious indeed was all that was consumed thereon; for whatever the sacrifice might be in itself, all that was burnt on the altar was a sweet savour to God, and went up to Him, as it were, as incense; for all thereon burnt spoke of what the Lord Jesus Christ was in Himself to God, and not of what He was made for us. All that typified Him as a sacrifice was holy. What typified that which He was in Himself was, when burnt, as sweet incense to God. Precious was the burnt-offering to God, so it never was to be out of His sight, and all night long it burnt on the altar - ever in God's remembrance, ever under His eye. What a thought that gives us of its preciousness to Him. He could always, as it were, be looking on it, the witness to Him of that self-surrender to death of His Son, then future, but now past; then a secret known only to Him, but now shared in through grace by us who believe on Him whilst still the world is asleep, and the night has not passed away.

Precious was this offering. So at all their feasts, and on stated occasions provided by the law, as well as on special occasions as they arose in after years, this offering was always in season. Each

morning and each evening it was offered up on the altar - the first sacrifice in the morning, the last in the evening. This was a standing ordinance in Israel, ever to be remembered and observed. At the close of each week, on the Sabbath, a special burnt-sacrifice was appointed in addition. At the commencement of each month a burnt-offering of the flock and of the herd was enjoined. At each of the feasts, and on each day of the feasts, special burnt-offerings were commanded; and so on the day of atonement. At Aaron's consecration, too, this sacrifice had its place, and again at the setting apart of the Levites. No mother in Israel would rejoice over the birth of her child, whether male or female, without bringing for her purification the appointed sacrifice for a burnt-offering. Each leper, too, that was cleansed was reminded of his need of it ere he could re-enter his tent in the camp, and be at home there again; and every one, whether man or woman, made unclean by an issue was taught the importance, in his or her case, of bringing a burnt-offering to God. So on special occasions Samuel at Mizpeh (1 Samuel 7:1-17), David on mount Moriah (2 Samuel 24:1-25), Elijah at Carmel (1 Kings 19:1-21), offered burnt-offerings to the Lord. And on that day when the Lord, under the symbol of the ark, first took up His Abode in Jerusalem, David sacrificed burnt offerings after they had carried it into the tent prepared for it on mount Zion. (2 Samuel 6:1-23)

Very prominent then was this class of sacrifice in Israel's worship, whether national or individual. The brightest day could not pass without it; the darkest was a fitting season for it; and we understand the reason of it, whatever those of old could have told about it. It spoke to God, and, we can add, it speaks to us too, of that self-surrender of His Son, even to death, the death of the cross, to whom in a marked way the Father's love flows out (John 10:1-42), and whom in consequence God hath highly exalted, and has "given Him a name which is above every name." (Php 2:1-30) C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 88

S. The Counsel of Man and the Purpose of God

The Counsel of Man and the Purpose of God WHEN the devil entered the garden of Eden he professed himself to be man’s friend. When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was called in derision the sinner’s friend. The devil told Eve as her friend what she ought to have, and how to get it. The Lord Jesus told sinners what they wanted, and how they could enjoy it. Was the devil’s profession of friendship true? Is not the character of the Lord Jesus as the sinner’s friend, fully manifested? This chapter- shows it out, and is enough to settle the doubt, if any could exist, in the mind of a single individual.

Lazarus had died, and the Lord raised him up from the dead. Thereupon the rulers of Israel were stirred up to put Jesus to death. But why did death exist at all? Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Lazarus who deserved death had been recovered from the grave, the Lord who was holy was to enter into it. At the grave the Lord showed Himself as the sinner’s friend, who could reverse the righteous doom that man deserved. He had the power to kill as well as make alive. The devil had the power of death, but he could not recover a single individual from it. He could kill, and he desired to do it, even to kill Him who had raised up Lazarus; but resurrection was beyond his power, foreign to his designs. Who then was man’s friend?

He who had received the power of death, and delighted to exercise it, or He who could kill, but could also recover man from the just consequence of his guilt? The death of Lazarus was an event which awakened the sympathies of many; the resurrection of Lazarus was an event which aroused the fears, and stirred up the enmity, of the rulers in Israel. Told by those who witnessed it what had taken place, they summoned a council to consider what should be done. "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Satan, who had counseled Eve to her ruin, led on these misguided men to carry out, as, far as possible, not their wishes, but his. They wished to save their national existence, he wished its extinction, and led them to take steps to that encl. They owned that Jesus did miracles. This fact should have made them ponder their actions. They had forgotten God’s provision to keep Israel from being led astray by false prophets. His miracles should have called attention to this, which would have kept them from the evils of the devil. " If thou shalt say in thine heart how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken! When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thins, follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously." (Deuteronomy 18:21-22.) Such were God’s _ -directions to which, had they given heed, they would have been saved from the sin of compassing the death of His Son. The Lord had declared beforehand that Lazarus would be raised up. He told His disciples of it before they re-entered Judge. He told Martha of it when she met Him, though she misconstrued the meaning of His words. He announced it publicly, when, to her remonstrance at the grave’s side, He answered: " Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." He thus intimated beforehand what He would do, and He did it. The glory of God was seen when Lazarus walked out of the tomb. The resurrection of Lazarus accomplished, the death of the Lord Jesus

was decided on-If now left alone all will believe on Him. That could not be -suffered by Satan, for his power over the people would be annulled. It could not be suffered by the Jews, for the Romans would be alarmed, and their national existence be jeopardized. Such was their reasoning; plausible to them, fallacious and worse. Little did they think whither they had drifted. Little knew they how entangled they had become in the meshes of the enemy. For who were they who had thus spoke, and what was it they said? They were the descendants of those whom God had redeemed and brought out of Egypt. They formed part of God's earthly people. What language for them to use, what reasoning for them to adopt! They had forgotten that God was their Redeemer, and they had abandoned the ground of being part of His redeemed people. Truly against the Romans they had no strength: but what strength had their Father against the hosts of Egypt or the iron chariots of the Canaanites? What a victory Satan had gained, when such reasoning could pass current among the descendants of the conquerors of Canaan. Had any asked them who they were, would they not have maintained they were the people of God? Yet they had practically surrendered that ground, when they met in council, shut out God from their thoughts, and devised for themselves a plan of conciliating the Romans to preserve their nationality and land. Where was Satan's friendship for man? He was leading on the Jews to their destruction under the specious guise of preserving their place and city; and as he acted then, so we may trace his acts now, as the distinctive truths of Christianity are surrendered or ignored by those who profess to be members of the Church of God. Redemption accomplished, salvation known, the Lord Jesus abiding in glory, the Holy Ghost abiding on earth, are truths distinctive of Christianity. Are not these ignored or practically denied by many? And what is the characteristic of the movement around us but the onward sweep of that wave of error, which is really antagonistic to these cardinal articles of our faith. • To return, the chief priests felt something must be done, but the High Priest it was who told them what they should do. "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Neither he nor they understood the real meaning of his words. As High Priest he prophesied. The words he uttered were not his own, though he affixed his own meaning to them. Could they have crucified the Lord if they had known the object of His death? They thought only of offering him up as a holocaust to appease the Romans; the words of the High Priest really shadowed out the offering up of Himself to God. From the counsels of man we are turned to the counsels of God, for, being High Priest that year, Caiaphas was the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. Observe the language of Caiaphas, " one man;" and the language of the Evangelist, "Jesus." Caiaphas spoke of the need of a death, whilst pointing to the Lord as the one to be sacrificed; the Evangelist interprets his words, and tells us that the death of Jesus alone could suffice. The High Priest thought of preservation from a Roman war, John points out that it was deliverance from God's just wrath. There was the need for his death that God should deal in mercy with the people; there-was no need for any sacrificial death that their enemies should be overcome. They looked only to man. God had respect to their sins before Him. But what an admission this was, that Jesus should die for that nation, an admission which should sink into the heart of every self-righteous soul, for it proclaims in language clear and forcible the impossibility of man obtaining an unchallengeable standing before his God by anything that he can do. Had any been able to make good their standing before God it would have been the nation of Israel. For fifteen hundred years they had been in possession of God's law, and for centuries had the daily burnt offering ascended up from the brazen altar-yet a man to die for them, even Jesus, was needed; for all their sacrifices, however perseveringly offered up, could never put away sin. What

their sacrifices could not accomplish they really needed. Jesus must die for the people. They required a sacrifice, they required a substitute. They required one who was without sin, and in Him alone could the requisites be found. Of their real need, however, they were ignorant, so thought only of the Romans. God knew it, and in His goodness provided for it. To preserve their national existence they decided Jesus must die. To continue in possession of the land they compassed His death. He died. They carried out their will, and found themselves exiles, wanderers, homeless, country-less; the objects of the world's scorn; the subjects of Gentile oppression. It was needful that Jesus should die to preserve the nation for a future day. God's holiness they left out of account, but He could not. God's protection they renounced, but He did not cast off the people. He would save Israel, not from the Romans, but from His just wrath to preserve them as His people on earth, and a future day will disclose to that nation the absolute necessity of that death, and how impossible it was for their forefathers by that to be shielded from the power of Rome. Their plans will be proved to have failed, God's counsels will yet take full effect. But further, He died not for that nation only. There was a positive need of His death for Israel, as made apart from the general character of His atonement. The efficacy, however, of His death extended beyond them. " Not for that nation only," says John, "but that also He should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad." Seeing the multitude attracted to the Lord, they decided on removing the head, in order that the ever increasing crowd of followers might disperse. Dispersion they aimed at; gathering together God proposed. Never did man more miscalculate the effect by his actions. His counsel came to naught, his devices proved to be of no effect. Nothing that he hoped for was effected by the death of Christ. Nothing that God intended by it could be frustrated. Gathering, not scattering, resulted from it, such a gathering as never before had been witnessed. Satan hoped to destroy the nation, and to stop the spreading. The Jews hoped to conciliate the favor of their rulers. Both were signally confounded. God's purpose for Israel, however, will be surely made good. But here the thought comes in, Do souls practically own God's designs for his saints now? "to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." In glory this will be displayed, on earth now this should be owned, for by the death of Christ it was brought about. Shall we wait for the glory ere we own it? At Pentecost and after, believers manifested it; at the Lord's table believers declare it (1 Corinthians 10:17). No failure on man's part can hinder the reality of it. Christ died for this end; but failure on his part to own it hinders the manifestation of it. God has declared His purpose of gathering together into one the children of God scattered abroad. Shall we own this, and help forward the manifestation of it, or, like the Jews, shut God out of our thoughts, and devise desires for ourselves, and form unities of our own, on ground of our own choosing? As nothing that the Jews hoped to effect by their act did really come to pass, so nothing that man can devise against the Church of God can really remain steadfast. But God has counseled and executed His counsel. Shall we enter into His mind-wish to carry it out? How cheering to witness the unchanging of God about His people about His saints. Nothing diverted Him from His purpose, nothing could mar or annul His counsels.-C. E. S.

S. The Epistle to Philemon.

The Epistle to Philemon. The epistle to Philemon is the shortest of all the canonical letters of Paul. Conjoining Timothy with him in the salutation, as he had done to that addressed to all the Colossian saints, he here addresses, in company with Philemon and Apphia his wife, Archippus, a labourer in the Word, and the Church in Philemon’s house, sending the letter, not by Tychicus, but most likely by the one who was most deeply and personally interested in its contents.

Onesimus, who was Philemon’s fugitive slave, had been brought in the providence of God across the path of the apostle of the Gentiles during the latter’s imprisonment at Rome. (Philemon 1:10) Converted through his instrumentality he would learn that his earthly master at Colosse was known to Paul, and owed his salvation under God to the same gospel, and to the same human agency. Paul was the father in the faith of both Philemon and Onesimus (Philemon 1:19), though how and when the apostle had met with Philemon we know not; for Colosse, in which the latter lived, was a town in which the former had never worked.

Onesimus, once a child of wrath, and walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, was such no longer. He was a child of God, set free from the slavery of sin and the devil, enjoying redemption by blood; but he was Philemon’s slave still. Conversion does not necessarily change the social condition. Of this fact some at Colosse must have been continually, and perhaps painfully, reminded. (Colossians 3:22-25.) Manumission because of his conversion no slave could demand, even of a Christian master. On this point the apostle is most clear, both in writing to Timothy and in this short letter to Philemon. To the former he writes, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort." (1 Timothy 6:1-2.) Addressing the latter, he says, "Whom I have sent again to thee. But do thou receive him, that is, mine own bowels: whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit [or good] should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou mightest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (Philemon 1:12-16)

Thus the rights of the master to the service of his slave are most carefully preserved. Righteousness is a distinctive feature of Christianity as well as grace; and on the question of slavery it was only by the strict maintenance of the rights of the master that the opportunity could be given for the display on his part of grace in giving freedom to his slave.

Onesimus, when converted, awoke to the comprehension of this. Set free by grace from all fear of divine judgment, conscious of forgiveness of sins, both plenary and administrative, so that none committed before his conversion could be brought up against him for judgment before God, or

before the assembly, he was made to own by returning to Philemon that his status as a slave had not been changed, because a birth-tie, and the consequent link of Christian brotherhood, now existed between his master and himself. So the one who had run away, and perhaps had directly defrauded Philemon, had to return, and to submit himself to his pleasure.

Slavery formed no part of man's social organisation at the beginning, though in early times after the flood it evidently had taken deep root among men on earth. The Israelites could. by the law possess slaves from the Gentiles, and for such there was no institution of a jubilee that could set them free. Still, though slavery was allowed by God, it was never instituted by Him any more than polygamy, which was also permitted by the law.. Hence when Christianity appeared it was confronted by social institutions which were not originally from God. We may discern, then, the practical value of this epistle, and the wisdom of its finding a place in canonical Scripture; for whilst other parts of the volume tell us of the immense change effected for us by the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, this short letter teaches us that human rights are not abrogated, nor is social status necessarily changed, by the introduction of Christianity, which affords an opportunity for the Christian to act in grace towards one who has injured him. In truth it was never meant to set the world to rights; it is to teach its followers how to walk in a scene which is not ordered in accordance with the mind of God. In harmony with this Onesimus was sent back to Philemon, but with this letter in his hand, at once a commendation from Paul on his behalf to the saints at Colosse, and a communication to ensure him a favourable reception from his master, who may have been injured by him, or irritated against him.

We cannot doubt it obtained the object for which it was written, considering the description it gives of his master, and the appeal made to his heart, both direct and indirect, by the aged apostle. "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer, and to our sister Apphia" (for thus we should read), "and to Archippus, our fellow-soldier, and to the Church in thy house, grace unto you, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Philemon was a man of means at Colosse, who with his wife Apphia was an heir of the grace of life. He was a worker for the Master as well; so to Paul and Timothy he was dearly beloved, and a recognised fellow-labourer. In his house a company of the saints met, and by him the bowels of the saints were refreshed. (Philemon 1:7) He had received, and he gave. Grace had opened his heart, and he found a circle to which it could go out - the saints of God. (Philemon 1:5) A partaker of the divine nature, that nature was active in him, as Paul had heard, so to its dictates the apostle appeals on behalf of Onesimus (Philemon 1:8-17) that Philemon's fellowship in the faith should become operative in the acknowledgment of every good thing that is "in us" in Christ Jesus. What justice could not have claimed, that Paul counted on Philemon to manifest, the recognition in Onesimus of the work of grace, which through Paul's instrumentality had been effected.

Of. two things it would seem Onesimus was guilty. He had run away from his master, and he had defrauded him likewise. With what delicacy, as it has been observed, does the apostle treat of all this? If he refers to the running away, he calls it departing. (Philemon 1:15) Writing of his fraudulent conduct Paul offers to repay what is owing; but not a word does he drop that could minister to any feeling of resentment in the heart of Philemon. At the same time he fully maintains the rights of the master, by which opportunity would be afforded the latter to show the grace that was in his heart. Paul might have been bold in Christ to command what was fitting. He would

rather for love’s sake take the place of intercession with his child in the faith for another child in the faith, in whom they each must have had a marked interest. Christ’s servant Onesimus now was, though still Philemon’s slave. On his behalf Paul pleaded, and in such a way that Philemon could not surely have remained obdurate. It was Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, who addressed him. Could Philemon have turned a deaf ear to such an appeal? He doubtless did not add to the apostle’s sorrows by refusing to receive and forgive the one formerly unprofitable, but now profitable to Paul and to himself. "Receive him," writes the apostle, "that is, mine own bowels." "If thou count me a partner, receive him as myself." (Philemon 1:12, Philemon 1:17) But probably he had defrauded his master. Paul does not overlook this. He does not tell Philemon to make up his mind to the loss, whatever it was. On the contrary, he voluntarily becomes a surety for the payment of it, if it should be demanded. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth ought, put that to my account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand; I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." Philemon knew well to what the apostle referred, and Paul evidently counted on a full response. "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in Christ. Having confidence in thy obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I • say." (Philemon 1:20-21) Paul had said, "Receive him as myself." Then Onesimus, as it were, dropping out of sight, it became a matter between Paul and Philemon. (Philemon 1:18-21) Paul had fully taken on himself to answer for any fraud on the part of Onesimus.

Now, after making one more request, he closes this letter, written probably with his own hand. (Philemon 1:19) "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." He had included others with Philemon in the salutation at the beginning, so he counted on the prayers of them all whilst requesting Philemon to find him a lodging. We may well believe that, if he carried out his intention, and paid a visit to Colosse for the first time in his missionary career, he did not meet with a cold reception, nor was his heart grieved by finding Onesimus ill-treated. Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul, with Apphia, would surely have had happy fellowship together under the roof of him in whose house a company of the saints met. The salutations follow, addressed to Philemon. "Epaphras saluteth thee, my fellow-prisoner in Christ; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers?" In the letter to the Colossians Aristarchus was his fellow-prisoner. Here it is Epaphras. Did the saints take it in turn to share the apostle’s imprisonment? The salutations, we have said, were to Philemon. Paul’s closing wish was for the whole company in his house. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." The divine wisdom is manifest in placing this letter among the collection of writings which form the Scriptures of truth. For the doctrines of grace we must turn elsewhere. But certain questions in connection with social life and Christianity here receive their solution. C. E. Stuart.

We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and we shall be in Him when the heavens and earth have passed away. What can touch this eternal union? "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." G. V. Wigram.

Whilst the eye is gazing with delight on Christ in glory, the Holy Spirit is engraving the Christ we delight in on our hearts.

Chapter 90

S. The Epistle to Titus.

The Epistle to Titus. The second in order of the pastoral epistles was written to Titus, Paul's own child, according to the common faith, a Greek by birth (Galatians 2:3), who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem on the occasion of the conference, at which the freedom for all who had been Gentiles from subjection to circumcision and the law of Moses was definitely determined. The presence of Titus with Paul at that time was an illustration of the truth so firmly held by the great apostle of the Gentiles. A genuine (gnesios) child of Paul in the faith as Timothy also was, he did not, however, apparently hold the same place in the apostle's heart as his faithful and almost constant companion, the son of Eunice, whom he called his beloved child in the last canonical epistle which came from his hand. (2 Timothy 1:2.) Titus is described as Paul's companion and fellow-labourer (2 Corinthians 8:23), and the only special service with which his name is connected, previous to the date of the letter addressed to him, is that carried out at Corinth, first in ascertaining for Paul the state of the Corinthian assembly, and how they had responded to his epistle (2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 2:7 : G); and second, by his return thither to collect their alms on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem. His heart refreshed and encouraged by the manifest tokens of repentance among the saints at Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:7), he was ready, at the apostle's wish, to return there to get ready their contributions, ere Paul himself should revisit them, being full of zeal for the Christians at Corinth. On another occasion, at the close of the apostle's life, we learn that Titus had gone to Dalmatia, doubtless on some service which concerned the saints and the interests of Christ. (2 Timothy 4:10.) But at the time when this letter was penned he was in Crete, left there by Paul after a visit made between his first and second imprisonment at Rome. Crete must have been indelibly fixed in the remembrance of our apostle. Sailing under its lee, abreast of Salmone, on his voyage to Rome, and coasting along it with difficulty, they reached the Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea, in which harbour Paul counselled the centurion and those in charge of the vessel to winter. Had his advice been followed, the owner would not have lost either the vessel or its cargo. As it was he lost both; for, attempting to reach Phenice, a better harbour, they were driven along till they were shipwrecked at Melita. (Acts 27:1-44)

What opportunities Paul had of preaching whilst the vessel remained at the Fair Havens, and what results, if any, there were from his presence at that time on the island, we have no means of ascertaining. Nor do we know by whom the gospel was first preached, or any assembly there founded. To Crete, however, Paul repaired when once more free, and an assembly had been established in every city before Paul penned this letter, which, though short, is most useful, the walk and behaviour of saints in different conditions and relations of life forming the subject of this communication.

Evidently Titus was one whose special sphere was the Church of God, and lie is the only apostolic delegate that we read of commissioned to establish elders. To him Paul writes this letter, which in this resembled the first addressed to Timothy, in that it furnished him with credentials in support of his mission; so that all might know the authority on which be acted in the island of Crete. "Paul, a servant" (doulos), "of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect,

and the acknowledging" (or full knowledge) "of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, mine own child after the common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour."*

* Mercy is probably to be omitted, and Lord also, the epistle being the only one written by Paul in which that title of our Saviour does not occur. John is the only other writer in whose epistles (unless 2 John 1:3 is an exception) He is never called Lord.

Important statements are these. There is a faith which God's word owns. It is the faith of God's elect. Creeds there might be, religions too, diverse in character one from another. But there is something definite here spoken of - the faith of God's elect, that which they profess, and the fruits of which are displayed in godliness or piety. There is a hope too of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised from eternity; and all this has now been manifested by the proclamation with which Paul was entrusted according to the commandment of our Saviour God. In connection with this he writes to Titus, desiring for the saints the full knowledge of the truth which is according to piety, and unfolding the communication he had for him from God in connection with things ecclesiastical (1), social (2), and civil (3).

Commencing with things ecclesiastical, he reminds him that he had left him in Crete to set in order things that remained unordered, and to establish elders in every city. Hereupon the apostle states the qualifications needful for one who should fill such an office; for the office of elder and bishop we here see is the same. (Compare Titus 2:5 with Titus 2:7) The term elder was the title of respect; the term bishop or overseer was that characteristic of the work. The qualifications here enumerated are much the same as those set forth in the instructions to Timothy. But since on that occasion a prominent matter was the taking care of the assembly of God, the bishop, Timothy is reminded, should be apt to teach, ruling his house well, and having his children in subjection with all gravity. Here, where the dealing with gainsayers is the prominent thought, Titus is reminded that the children of such an one should be believers (Titus 2:6), and the bishop himself should hold fast the faithful word according to the teaching, so as to be able both to encourage with sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. Most needful was that in Crete; for there were many unruly,* vain talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths should be stopped; for such perverted whole houses, teaching things which ought not to be taught for the sake of base gain. Now this was not surprising. It was in harmony with the Cretan character, as described by Epimenides, one of themselves whom Paul here quotes. "They were liars, evil beasts, slow bellies;" 1:e., lazy gluttons. No wonder that such trafficked in truth, without regard to the soundness of their teaching. Temporal ends governed them, not the desire to be subject to the Spirit's teaching nor to gain the Master's approval. Such were to be stopped, and the bishops in the different assemblies would be doing their duty in watching, that such teaching found no place in their midst. As for the dupes of such teaching, which fell in with the natural bent of the Cretan character, Titus was to "rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, which turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure; but to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Amongst a people like this God had worked,

calling out from them His own, who were to break morally with their past evil ways, and to refuse all such teaching and practice as is here condemned.

*By the omission of and after unruly the words which follow, vain talkers and deceivers, explain the character of their unruliness. The Jews seem to have been plentiful in Crete (Acts 2:11), hence Judaising Christians may have been numerous in the island. Nor was it only in the assembly that no such teaching was to be allowed. The fruits of sound doctrine were to be manifested in the social circle and in the everyday walk of life. (2) So Titus was to speak the things that become sound doctrine, watching over and exhorting the elder men, the elder women, the younger women, and the young men. Discreetness was to characterize each one in any of those classes. The elder men, the young women, and the young men, were to manifest discreetness by their deportment. The elder women would show it likewise in their admonishing the young women as to their duties in life. The special sphere of the woman - home - and the important results which would follow indirectly to the whole assembly, and, it might be, beyond it, from their quiet godly walk, are here simply set forth. As for Titus himself, he was to be a pattern of good works - in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, a sound word that could not be condemned, that those opposed should be ashamed, having nothing evil to say, not of you, but of us; 1:e. the Christian community at large. After this servants, literally slaves, come in for a word. (Titus 2:9-10) Such were to be subject to their own masters, pleasing them well in all things - not gainsaying nor robbing them - that they might adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. In a word, it is Christianity in common life on which the apostle insists, a practice in conformity with the doctrine; for it is doctrine according to godliness that we are called to hold fast. In connection with this the most ordinary duties of life are perfectly compatible; whilst to neglect them would be to afford an opportunity to the adversary to speak injuriously of the word of God (Titus 2:5) and to speak evil of Christians, and certainly would not be adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. (Titus 2:10) To what a service is the humblest Christian called, the lowest in social rank! But though such would result from the manifestation of Christian life and principles, they are not the motives by which we are to be actuated. Grace is to be the motive, the saving grace for all men, which has now appeared. This furnishes the subjects of it with a motive, teaching, and an expectation. The favour of God in salvation has met us in the depth of our need and guilt. If God has saved us, it is because we were lost and undone, and deserving of His wrath to rest on us for ever. Hence that grace teaches us that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly;" 1:e. watchful over self, upright in our ways, and manifesting true piety, of which the Lord Jesus is the mystery, expecting the "blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." These things Titus was to speak, and to exhort and rebuke with all authority. And to enforce all this, Paul adds, "Let no one despise thee." But the saints were dwelling on earth. Hence there were responsibilities connected with civil government, and a behaviour which it became them to manifest before and to men. Subjection to powers and authorities, obedience to rule, readiness for every good work, the speaking evil of no one, absence of a contentious spirit, with gentleness and the manifestation of meekness toward all; these things became the Christian, and should characterise him, as he remembered what he had been (Titus 2:3), and how the kindness and love towards man (lit., philanthropy) of our Saviour God has appeared, who according to His mercy has saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour,

that, being justified by God’s grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of everlasting life. Saved, redeemed, justified, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and heirs according to the hope of everlasting life, these blessings, the fruits of the Lord’s atoning death, Christians had part in. Moreover, they had part in the washing of regeneration - a washing connected morally with the new order of things, to be established by power in the kingdom when the Lord should reign. Hence, in accordance with the faithful saying here recorded by the apostle, they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. (Titus 2:8) This Titus was to affirm constantly, avoiding foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strifes about law; for they were unprofitable and vain; and shunning, or ceasing to have to do with, an heretical man after a first and second admonition, his very position condemning him.

One observes the practical character of the apostle’s teaching in this epistle. If he speaks of the grace of God, and of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, he reminds us of the practical bearing which redemption by blood should have on our walk. If he speaks of the kindness and love towards man of God our Saviour, he reminds us that we are saved through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, telling us of the character of the washing, and of the power to walk for God in this scene.

Paul looked to winter at Nicopolis, where Titus was to join him, and now telling him of an opportunity for illustrating practical teaching contained in this epistle (Titus 2:13), and with an exhortation to the Cretan Christians to apply themselves to good works for necessary wants, that they should not be unfruitful, just the opposite to their national character, he ends with the salutation, "All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all."

C. E. Stuart.

All difficulty in connection with the reception of the truth, as well as every departure from the truth, arises from the working of the mind. Faith receives what God says, and rests in implicit confidence upon His word.

S. The Epistle to the Colossians.

The Epistle to the Colossians. The epistle to the Colossians, as that to the Ephesians, was sent on its way by the hand of Tychicus, who was accompanied on his journey to Colosse by Onesimus. (Colossians 4:7-9.) We may suppose, then, these epistles to have been written at the same time. In both the apostle desires the prayers of the saints on his own behalf, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, as he writes in that to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:19), and the mystery of the Christ, as he tells the Colossians. (Colossians 4:3-4) It may be, as has been very generally believed, that the epistle to the Philippians was written at a subsequent time, when his imprisonment was drawing to a close; though when the apostle wrote to Philemon (Philemon 1:22) he was evidently expecting his liberty at no distant date. The exact date of these letters it may be difficult to fix; but all may see that the letter to the Colossians is in some respects a counterpart of that to the Ephesians, and therefore may fitly be studied in connection with it. In the latter the Body of Christ is treated of at some length; in that to the Colossians, the fulness in Christ, who is the Head of the body, for all who are His is prominently set forth. Thus they go well together. And though for the most part in the ancient arrangement of the epistles of Paul that to the Philippians comes between them, in one uncial MS., the Codex Claromontanus, the epistle to the Colossians precedes that to the Philippians. In common with that to the Romans, this letter was addressed to saints in a place in which Paul had not worked. (Romans 2:1) The Church at Colosse - or Colasse, as some MSS. exhibit the name - was not founded by the apostle, but the instrument, it would seem, chosen of God to evangelize them was Epaphras, one of them, a servant of Christ (Romans 4:12), Paul’s beloved fellow-servant, and their* faithful minister of Christ. (Romans 1:7) To us this is not only interesting, but especially instructive; for these saints, as Paul writes of them, are illustrations of the results that were to follow from the apostle’s ministry, as detailed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of his conversion. Paul was to open eyes to turn people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that such might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ. (Acts 26:18.) The condition in which he would find God’s elect, and especially those of them among the Gentiles, with the blessings in which they were to share; viz., forgiveness of sins and the inheritance, this is the order of thought in which his ministry in the gospel is sketched out for him.

*Several MSS. followed by Lachmann, Tregelles, and Alford, read "a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf." This is perhaps the more correct reading, Paul thus accrediting Epaphras’ work at Colosse.

Addressing the Colossians, who had learnt of Epaphras, Paul acknowledged that they fully answered to this, as he invited then to give thanks in common with himself and Timothy "to the Father, who has made us meet," he writes, "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 the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:12-14.) What results, then, should flow from the truth taught by Paul, and ministered to souls by

others, are here displayed to us. We have not Paul in person amongst us. It is profitable therefore, and encouraging, to see how in apostolic days the truth, heard from him, servants of Christ could communicate to others, in whom in their turn it produced its right fruit. The reader may remark the change of order in the thoughts here expressed by the apostle from that in which the Lord Jesus Christ had communicated to him His purpose. The Lord spoke to Paul of souls as He then saw them. Paul writes as he could afterwards describe them.

Turning to this epistle we find it treats of the Christ who is also the Lord, and keeps these truths prominently before the saints (Colossians 1:10; Colossians 2:6; Colossians 3:17-18, Colossians 3:20, Colossians 3:23-24); and dwelling on the fulness in Christ, the Head, for every member of His Body, it is chiefly hortatory in character, whilst bringing out teaching for the saints, as the apostle impresses on them that which was needful to be put and kept before them. From Colossians 2:6-23, Colossians 3:1-25, Colossians 4:1-6 inclusive, we have exhortation after exhortation. For, as he tells them, God willed to make known to His saints what is the wealth of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in them the hope of glory, whom Paul preached, admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect; 1:e. full-grown in Christ. (Colossians 1:27-29) A ministry with such an object must necessarily deal in exhortations, though only as founded on the doctrine of the Christ, which must therefore be set before souls.

Commencing as an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, just as he had done when writing his letter to the Ephesians, Paul here joins Timothy with him as a brother in his salutation to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ in Colosse. In no two epistles does he begin in quite the same way. Evidently with him there was no conventional form nor set phraseology. He wrote as guided of God, the penman of the Holy Ghost. An evidence of this we have in the form of his apostolic greeting, which in this one only of all his epistles is from God the Father without the addition, though scribes have appended it, of the "Lord Jesus Christ."*

*The uncials A C F G P, with the Codex Sinaiticus, have these words, which Lachmann puts in brackets; B D E K L, and the chief textual critics, omit them. At the outset he gives thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom he prayed always for them, for the hope laid up for them in the heavens, of which they had before heard in the word of the truth of the gospel, which had come to them as in all the world, and was bringing forth fruit and increasing, as also in them, since the day they heard and knew the grace of God in truth. The gospel had produced fruit in them, evidenced by their faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all the saints. For the Spirit, who dwells in all true Christians, does draw out the affections of the new man to all those who are God’s. Here it was seen, and Paul discerned in their faith and love undoubted evidences of their real conversion, of which he had learnt from Epaphras, who had also manifested to him their love in the Spirit. Informed thus about them, his heart was drawn out in prayer on their behalf; for nothing short of their being filled with the full knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding could satisfy his desires for them. What these were he tells them. Praying thus for them in his prison at Rome, he wished them to know what he felt they needed, and what he asked of God on their behalf. By this means they might come to discern dangers to which they were exposed, and the wants which an apostle’s eye could see were then requisite to be supplied. In what a gracious way does he instruct them? Who would be repulsed by it? Who would be chilled by it? Who would be offended at it? Paul in Rome, owning the common tie between them and him,

thus prayed for those to whom he had not directly ministered the gospel of God. He was not content with telling them what he thought they lacked. He prayed for them first about it; and long ere his letter had reached them, his prayer had gone up to the throne of grace, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will to walk worthy of the Lord unto all-pleasing. The disciples of Christ they were. Paul would have them walk worthy of Him who is in glory. Now this would be shown in increased fruitfulness and in endurance. In increased fruitfulness, if in every good work they were bringing forth fruit, and increasing by the full knowledge of God. In endurance, as they should be strengthened with all might according to the power of God's glory unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. Full certainly were his desires for them. A Christian who answered to them would be a saint indeed. What attainment does he put before them! But what were the antecedents of these people? An answer to that question is furnished in Colossians 1:12-14, to which we have already referred. Formerly under the power of darkness, these saints were now set in the kingdom of the Son of God's love, in whom they had redemption, the forgiveness of sins. The One who died for us has then a kingdom, and believers are translated into it by the Father. Beneficial results of the Lord's death thus introduced, truth about His Person is next dwelt on, and that at some length. First, as to what He is in relation to all intelligent creatures, and to creation likewise; next, what He is in relation to the Church. Then what dwells in Him who walked on earth as a man; and what all fulness has effected and will effect by Him! (Colossians 1:15-22)

He by whom we have redemption, the Son of God's love, is the image of the invisible One representing Him to His creatures, and He is the firstborn of all creation, a position and dignity thus independent of priority in time. And the reason assigned for His place in the universe as man is, that by Him all things were created in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether 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. Such is His place in relation to creation; such, too, is His history in relation to it in the past, the present, and the future. By Him all things were created. By Him all things consist. He upholds all things by the word of His power. For Him too they were all created. So one can understand that the Creator and upholder of all things, and He who is before all things, should not enter the ranks of His creatures and become a man without having the position in creation and the title of the Firstborn. Next we learn of another Headship with which He is invested. 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. His place as Firstborn in the ranks of creatures tells us of His incarnation. His title as Firstborn from the dead reminds us necessarily of His cross and resurrection. As risen He is in the relationship of Head of the Body the Church, the beginning too of a new order of things, of which those redeemed by His blood form part, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence, and this pre-eminence He must have, because in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell. The Firstborn then, in a double sense, Firstborn of all creation and Firstborn from the dead, before all, upholding all, and in all things to have the pre-eminence, such is the One into whose kingdom we are translated, and who has redeemed us by dying on the cross. He to whom this pre-eminence belongs has entered the ranks of creatures. But in what condition was creation found? In what condition were men proved to be when He became incarnate? Things in heaven and things on earth needed to be brought into order. Men needed to have the enmity of the heart removed. Both these are effected by His cross. All the fulness is pleased to reconcile all things to itself, things in heaven and things on earth, having made peace by the blood of His cross. This we wait to see effected by the exercise of

sovereign power. Men, however, have been reconciled to God in the body of Christ's flesh through death. Of this the Colossian saints were an illustration, and such will be presented holy, unblameable, and unreproveable in God's sight, if they continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which those saints had heard, and which was preached in the whole creation under heaven, of which Paul was made a minister. The necessity for the Lord's incarnation and death is thus clearly brought out. Creation as well as man is concerned in it, though as yet the former has reaped no beneficial results from it. But saints in Christ Jesus are already reconciled to God, and have forgiveness of their sins, with the sure prospect of sharing in the kingdom when it shall be established in power. A ministry therefore was needed to proclaim the gospel, and to teach saints full Christian truth; for continuance in the faith, grounded and settled, is what is pressed on all. Now such a ministry God provided, and Paul was an example of it. He was a minister of the gospel, and a minister of the Church to complete the word of God, by bringing out the mystery hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest to God's saints, to whom He would make known what is the wealth of the glory of it among the Gentiles, even Christ in them the hope of glory, whom Paul preached, admonishing every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect; 1:e. full-grown in Christ. Hence he addresses the Colossian saints, and ministers of Christ to them, desiring that they in common with all believers should have their hearts encouraged, they being knit together in love, and unto all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God,* in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Nothing then can surpass in knowledge what this mystery unfolds. It tells us of Christ, of God's counsels about Him as Head over all things, the whole inheritance put under Him, and a Body provided for Him, which is the Church of the living God.

*MSS. vary in the text they here present, and the judgment of critics likewise. The right reading is probably either "the mystery of God," as Gb. Sch. Alf. adopt, or "the mystery of God, even Christ," as La. Tis. Tre. adopt on the authority of the Codex Vaticanus. The doctrine is the same whichever Christ of these two readings is preferred.

Now lest any should beguile them with enticing words, he earnestly exhorts them, that as they had received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, so they would walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith as they had been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7) Various devices of the enemy to corrupt the faith the apostle was acquainted with. Some of them he will specify; but before doing that he makes very plain that he knew no theory of development which, commencing with Christ, would perfect saints by something else above and beyond Him. The Colossians were to be both rooted and built up in Him, and firmly settled in the faith as they had been taught; for all the faith was now revealed, since the word of God was completed. Now this does not mean that revelation was exhausted, but that the outline of God's revealed mind for His people was now completed since the mystery of God was now disclosed. And further, taught about Christ, thanksgivings should characterize them. In each chapter is this insisted on. (Colossians 1:12; Colossians 3:15-16; Colossians 4:2) The apostle now specifies certain snares to which the saints were exposed, opposed to full Christian teaching, and ruinous to souls; viz., philosophy (Colossians 2:8), Judaizing teaching (Colossians 2:16), and Gnostic reveries (Colossians 2:18), the touchstone for the detection of each of them being teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. That applied, the evil would be discerned. Philosophy was

according to the traditions of men, according to the elements or rudiments of the world; 1:e. principles on which the world was sought to be ordered. This was not after Christ. A short but forcible statement which would readily put godly souls on their guard. Would philosophy hold out the hope of its votaries attaining to a fulness of understanding to which ordinary men were strangers? Would it allure them by the hope of soaring to heights, otherwise incapable of being reached, and which left the crowd far below them.? All such delusive prospects only manifested most clearly that it was not after Christ; "for in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and Christians "are filled full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:10) Simple truth as to His person, and as to His position, would effectually guard obedient hearts from being ensnared by such delusions. Would the airy, dreamy speculations of men, the workings of the human mind, unenlightened by or certainly not in subjection to divine revelation, hold out promises of deliverance from sin and from the world? Christians had in, and with Christ, but a Christ who had died and had risen, what met their condition, and provided a position before God and the world, and a standing too before God. All that they wanted they had already. As to their condition, they were in Christ circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. (Colossians 2:11) As to their position, they were buried with Him in baptism, wherein also they were raised with Him through faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12) As regards their standing, formerly dead in offences and the uncircumcision of their flesh, they were quickened together with Christ, and all their offences forgiven. Further, by His cross the full need of the Jew was met as much as that of the Gentile. Principalities and powers too, stripped of their prey, were led in triumph, proofs of His complete and abiding victory. What could philosophy, even if allied with Judaism, offer in comparison with all this? It might promise a great deal, but only on condition of its adherents sedulously pursuing the study of it. Christianity left it far in the background. The student of philosophy might hope to acquire much by effort and protracted labour. The Christian, as in Christ, and as associated with Him, had all that has passed before us. What fulness could philosophy open up compared with the truth about Him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily? On what heights could it plant its votaries, as compared with Christians being in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power? To state this should be enough for a subject mind. Would Judaism prove a snare, bringing into bondage to its observances those who were never put by God under law? A religion of ordinances is often attractive. Now it was true that the injunctions about new moons and sabbaths, and regulations about meats and drinks, were from God, and were really shadows of things to come. The body however, of which they were true shadows, is of Christ. Correct then as they were as shadows, delineating truth about Him who has come,. they could not even foreshadow all that He is. Judaism could never present to those who were nurtured in it the full truth about Christ. "The body is of Christ." How souls would lose if they turned to that! There is in Christ what is positive, substantial, and full; and since Judaism could present but the shadow of things to come, why turn to the shadow after the substance has appeared? A third danger arose from a professed but not real humility, and an assumption of knowledge about that which was hidden from men; viz., the worshipping angels, and an intruding into those things which, vainly puffed by the mind of his flesh, the man professed to have seen.* This evil arose from not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment, ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Impossible then was it to substitute anything for real Christian teaching, or to provide anything to equal that which

there is in Christ for those who believe on Him. The truth as to His person, of our being in Christ, and of our union with Him as members of His body, refuted the errors and laid bare the snares to which these Colossian saints were evidently exposed. "In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." (Proverbs 1:17.) "Not after Christ," "The body is of Christ," "Not holding the head." These tell us that nothing elaborated from man's mind, and no former revelation from God, can supersede, equal, or be a substitute for true Christian teaching. The full truth has come out since Christ has appeared, died, risen, and is ascended, and has sent the Holy Ghost. It is truth which meets man in the depth of his need, meets it to the full, and more than meets it, teaching us of all that conduces to the healthy growth and right increase of the whole body.

*Or as some read "which he has not seen." Omitting the negative, the apostle expresses what the person puffed up asserted he had seen. Retaining it, his judgment is recorded that the assertion was untrue.

Further, any turning to ordinances, with injunctions to which they were familiar, as "Handle not," "Taste not," "Touch not" - all this was really a denial of Christian truth. So the apostle thus reasons: "If they had died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, were they subject to ordinances respecting things which perish in their using? Such may have the appearance of lowliness, but it was asceticism really practised for the satisfaction of the flesh. Now if Christians had died with Christ from all this, they were also risen with Him; hence the things where He sits at the right hand of God they were to seek, minding too things above, not things on earth, because they are dead, and their life hid with Christ in God, and they looking forward to appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 2:20; Colossians 3:4) The fulness in Christ having been set forth, and the Christian's true position in relation to Him having been plainly declared, exhortations next follow as to practice in conformity with the truth. The desires of the flesh and of the mind are to be watched against (Colossians 2:5-8), and lying one to another is forbidden, Christians having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new, which is renewed into full knowledge after the image of Him that created him, where all distinctions of race, condition, and position disappear, and Christ is everything and in all. Hence as the elect of God, born of God, characteristics of the divine nature and the ways and spirit of Christ are to be displayed in us (Colossians 2:12-14), the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts, and the word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to God, and doing whatsoever we do in word or deed in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him.

After this we have exhortations touching relative duties. (Colossians 3:18, Colossians 4:1) For though in the new man there are no distinctions, as we have just learnt, yet as men and women upon earth we find ourselves in different relationships of God's appointment. For the fitting behaviour in such God's word here instructs wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters, addressing first, as in Ephesians, the subject class in each relationship; for failure in the others must be no excuse for failure on their part. The wives are to be in subjection, as it is fit in the Lord. Children are to be obedient; for that is well pleasing in the Lord.* Servants being among the heathen really slaves, God here especially encourages them, reminding them of an inheritance in the future which they would receive of the Lord, the recompense for following Him whilst they were on earth. They served the Lord Christ. What encouragement for a poor slave if trampled on here, and denied his rights as a man, to know that God looked on him, and thought of

him, and would in the day of the glory of Christ give him openly his position and his inheritance, owning him as one of His sons! How it would help him in many a difficulty and trial to remember that in serving his earthly master aright he was serving the Lord Christ. Was injustice meted out to him who had no earthly protector? The apostle reminds him that the wrong-doer would surely reap the reward of his deeds. Thus patience and contentment were inculcated for one whose lot might be the hardest man could know; and if those in subjection are spoken to, the husband, the father, the master, each receive also their appropriate word. Husbands were to love their wives, and not to be bitter against them. Fathers were not to vex their children, lest they should be discouraged. Masters were to remember they had a Master in heaven. In all this the new man was to be displayed - Christ in them.

*According to the generally received readings, in Colossians 3:15 it is the peace of Christ; in Colossians 3:16, we sing to God; in Colossians 3:22, the slave is to act fearing the Lord; in Colossians 3:20, the child is to obey, as that is well pleasing in the Lord.

Then exhorting them about perseverance in prayer, and the watching to it with thanksgiving, and desiring their prayers for himself in connection with the advancement of God’s work, a door of the word to be opened for him to speak the mystery of Christ, for which he was in bonds, he goes on to exhort them as to their behaviour towards those without. Let them walk in wisdom toward such, making use of their opportunities, and careful that their speech should be always, with grace, seasoned with salt, so as to know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:2-6)

Now he closes with salutations from those of the circumcision who had been a comfort to him, and from others who had been Gentiles (Colossians 4:10-14); and asking them to salute the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly in his house) for as yet the Laodicean saints seem to have walked well), and giving a word of exhortation to Archippus, who was at Colosse, Paul appends his own salutation: "Remember my bonds. Grace be with you." That done, the letter was ready for Tychicus to convey it, accompanied by Onesimus. C. E. Stuart.

S. The Epistle to the Ephesians.

The Epistle to the Ephesians. In looking into the epistle to the Ephesians, we come to the first of those canonical and inspired letters, which were written by Paul during, or about the time of, his imprisonment at Rome. During the time of his detention at Caesarea he was apparently quiet. When at Rome he resumed his apostolic service, not by visiting churches, but by writing to certain assemblies. The letters written at that time are five in number, and called respectively an epistle to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Hebrews. A special feature in four of these is the ministry of Christ in a way not previously set forth in writing. He had treated of the gospel of God when addressing the Romans, his latest letter ere he went to Rome. He treats of the counsels of God, which concern Christ and the saints, in that to the Ephesians, which very possibly was his first letter from his prison in the metropolis of the habitable world. Addressing the Philippians, he tells them what Christ was to him, and what He should be to every saint of God. Writing to the Colossians, he expatiates on the fulness in Christ the Head for every member of His Body; and in that to the Hebrews he sets forth how the Lord Jesus Christ surpasses both Moses and Aaron, and how by His death blessings everlasting in duration are enjoyed, which never could be procured by the keeping of the law and the observance of the Mosaic ritual. The epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to those who were of the race of Israel. This to the Ephesians was written to those who had been Gentiles, so it develops God’s counsels which concern those once far off, as much as those once nigh. But whether, as some have thought, and the supposition is no modern one, it was really intended as a circular letter for assemblies chiefly composed of converts from among the Gentiles, as that to the Hebrews was designedly for those who had been Jews, is a question which, though raised, is perhaps incapable of definite solution. Those who advocate this view have supposed that, sent to different assemblies, the name of the assembly to which a copy was forwarded was inserted at the commencement; hence, though circular in character, it became in that way local in application. The omission of the words "in Ephesus" by the two oldest uncial MSS., the Vatican and the Sinaitic, favours this view; and internal evidence, derived from the pointed way in which St. Paul addresses those who had been Gentiles (Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 2:11, Ephesians 2:17; Ephesians 3:1) as well as writes of them (Ephesians 1:15; Ephesians 3:2), and the absence of any local reference to the church in Ephesus, with which Paul was well acquainted, in no way, to say the least, militates against this view. Without, however, pronouncing an opinion definitely on this point, all will agree that, whether addressed really only to the saints in Ephesus, or to all those who had been formerly Gentiles, this epistle contains something like a charter of the privileges, in which they shared equally with their brethren called out from among the Jews; and this is connected with the unfolding to us of God’s counsels about His Son. Now these counsels have reference to the inheritance which He will possess; the Body, which is His fulness, or complement; and the Bride, for which He died, and which He will present to Himself; viz., the Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

These counsels being dwelt on, the mystery first made known to Paul by revelation, and now, as he writes (Ephesians 3:1-21), made known to God's apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, is necessarily treated of. The suitability of the vessel selected for this purpose we can readily perceive. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and at the time of his inditing this letter he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus on their behalf. It was fitting, then, that by the apostle of the Gentiles these counsels, which related to the mystery, should be set forth. It was equally fitting that when a prisoner for the Gentiles he should place on record by divine guidance the unchanging counsels of God, in which they were so deeply concerned. By Daniel, a courtier at Babylon, and one of the seed royal of Judah, God made known the order, progress, and destruction by the Lord Jesus Christ of the four monarchies, which were to precede the establishment of God's kingdom in power over the earth. By John in Patmos, when experiencing in his own person the hostility of the fourth empire to the interests of God and of Christ, there was foretold the rise and complete destruction of that empire, in its last and apostate condition, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ out of heaven. Paul and Peter had both fallen victims to its persecuting spirit. John, the last of the apostles, was then suffering from it. To outward eyes its power seemed irresistible. But to John was made known in a vision its crushing destruction at the hands of Him whose disciples and apostles it dealt with just as it chose. God selects fitting instruments by which to make known His will. But before touching on the divine counsels about the Lord Jesus Christ, the saints are taught God's counsels in grace towards them; and Paul's heart, evidently filled with a sense of the grace thus displayed, overflows in praise at the outset of his letter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3) Now who are the us here spoken of? He tells us, as he unfolds God's counsels in grace which concern them. They were chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before him in love, and predestinated as well to sonship according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which* He fully bestowed on them in the Beloved One, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace." In such a manner those are described who share in that fulness of blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. And that grace has abounded toward its recipients in all wisdom and prudence, God having made known to them the mystery of His will, which He has purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times (1:e. the coming age), to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him, in whom believers from the Jews, like Paul and others, here called we (Ephesians 1:12), and believers from the Gentiles, here called ye (Ephesians 1:13), have their inheritance, to the praise of His glory. Further, all these have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to which Christians as yet look forward.

*This is the better attested reading, hes, instead of en he.

Into what a range of truth does Paul here conduct us! divine counsels about the saints, divine counsels about Christ. Nothing for us apart from Christ. All here for us in Him, and more than what angels have, has God purposed on our behalf. (Ephesians 4:1-32, Ephesians 5:1-33) Further, He has communicated to us counsels concerning His Son, which concern us most closely, since we are to share in that which God has thought of for Him. Pre-eminence and supremacy are appointed for Him as man. In that, of course, He must stand alone. All things in heaven and earth

are to be headed up in Him. In that inheritance we have part with Him, and have received the Holy Spirit, being sealed by it, which is also the earnest of the inheritance. And all this redounds to the praise of God's glory. Do we ask what motive moved Him to act in grace toward us? The answer furnished us is simply the good pleasure of His. will. Do we ask what is the measure of this grace? We read of the riches of it (Ephesians 1:7), of the exceeding riches of it (Ephesians 2:7); and how it has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, through His making known to us the mystery of His will. Would any inquire what moved Him to head up all in heaven and on earth in Christ? We learn that He purposed this in Himself, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. It is to God, acting in the sovereignty of His will, that we are here turned. Sinners by nature, deserving only His wrath, we read of the exercise of His sovereign will, the carrying out of which none can effectually resist; and we learn how that will is active towards us in the fulness, the riches of His grace. The divine counsels stated, the apostle next tells the saints for what he makes supplication on their behalf, of whose faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he had heard, and of whose love to all saints there was manifest proof, evidences these of their conversion, and of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost within them. With Paul the knowledge of God's truth was to have a formative power over the soul. The Greeks sought after wisdom, and might engage their intellectual powers in discussions of theories and of dogmas. Christians however, instructed divinely in truths of which the learned Greeks were ignorant, were to remember that these revelations of the divine mind should have practical power over their hearts. So Paul prays that the eyes of their heart (not understanding) should be enlightened, their affections engaged in the truth revealed, that they might know: (a) The hope of God's calling. Of this calling he had written in Ephesians 1:3-5. (b) The riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. On the subject of the inheritance he had already touched in Ephesians 1:8-14. He calls it God's, because, as with the land of Canaan (Joshua 22:19; 2 Chronicles 20:11), so with the things in the heavens and the things upon earth, God will take possession of them in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. (c) He desires that they should know the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, that power as displayed in raising up Christ from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principalities and powers, putting all under His feet, whom He has given to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness, or complement of Him that filleth all in all. The Lord Jesus, here viewed as a man, is seen as raised, exalted, and in accordance with Psalms 8:1-9 is to have everything put under Him. Further, and this the Old Testament does not mention, He has a Body, the Church, and that Body is His complement as the Christ who fills all in all.

This, the third subject of his prayer, is connected with that which follows. To this he now turns. The exceeding greatness of God's power, of which he has made mention - exemplified in the raising and exaltation of Christ above all created intelligences and powers - has been put forth on behalf of the saints, who have been quickened with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. This power he wants them to know; and the mention of it necessarily gives the opportunity for dwelling on God's ways in grace, especially with those who had been Gentiles. This forms the subject of the second chapter of the epistle, and divides itself into two parts - connected first with their moral condition, and next with their former dispensational position.

Dwelling on the former of these subjects, Paul reminds them of what they had been morally; viz., dead in offences and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience. That was the condition of the Gentile; and the Jew was really no better, though he had the knowledge of God. Dead in offences he too was, and had his conversation among the sons of disobedience in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and was by nature a child of wrath even as the rest. All these found on one common platform, as dead in offences and active in evil, God, rich in mercy, had quickened with Christ, had raised them up together (believers from Jews and from Gentiles), and made them both to sit in the heavenlies in Christ. How closely are believers here connected with Christ! If the Holy Ghost dwells on the exaltation of Christ, it is to tell us how God has put us in Him in the heavenlies, bringing out the motive which thus actuated Him - His great love wherewith He loved us - and the purpose of it, to show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Saved then by grace through faith, and all this of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them. Thus we learn of the depth of ruin which we were, and of the height to which we have been raised in grace. Dead in sins, needing too a nature in which we could serve God, we are saved, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and are in Him now in the heavenlies, waiting for that hour to arrive when we shall be in person with Him there for ever. But divine grace has worked for those once Gentiles in another way. Dispensational distance characterised them; for God had made a difference between His earthly people and all others. What a Gentile’s position was dispensationally we read in Ephesians 2:11-12. How that has been changed the apostle goes on to point out: "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In His death, as making atonement for sins, those once Jews have a common interest with those once Gentiles. In His death, by which the middle wall of partition has been broken down, which separated dispensationally, by God’s appointment, the Jews from the Gentiles, we have a special interest. Once far off, we are made nigh by His blood, and through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Hence all special privileges of the one class over the other are annulled, not by reducing the Jew to the level dispensationally of the Gentile; nor by raising the Gentile to the privileged platform on which the Jew had been put; but by forming in Christ of twain one new man, and by reconciling both unto God in one body through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. Wherefore, as citizens of God’s kingdom, as forming part of God’s household, and as built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone, those once Gentiles are brought nigh in Christ to God, to be stones in that temple, at present building, in which He will dwell for ever, and are now builded together for God’s habitation on earth in the Spirit. Such are God’s displays of grace, in which we share who believe on His Son. The necessary consequence of the unfolding of all this grace has to be pressed on the recipients of it. But before doing that, the apostle, in a parenthetic way, as it has been pointed out, dwells more at length on the mystery, or secret, kept close from every intelligent creature until revealed to him. "For this cause," he writes, "I Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles" - a most touching appeal to them and to us. For the Lord Jesus Christ, as he elsewhere writes (Php 3:7-8), he suffered the loss of all things. For the Gentiles, as he here reminds them, he was a prisoner at that time. Evidently Paul thought the special grace in which they shared was of great value, and to maintain the truth in connection with it he was willing to endure imprisonment and bonds. Could

any one who had been a Gentile have visited Paul in his prison at Rome, and have come away satisfied for himself simply to know Christ as his Saviour, without valuing the privileges and the grace which God bestowed on those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? One could scarcely fancy that there had been such a man; one could not envy such an one if he had existed. Onesiphorus surely, as he wended his way from Paul's prison, did not think lightly of the grace and privileges in which, formerly a Gentile, he now shared, and for the maintenance of which Paul was suffering. To have the courage to stand by him was one thing; to have seen him in prison, and to have thought lightly of the privileges, to maintain which for them he was suffering, was another. Remembering that he did thus suffer, should any Christian in our day be contented to have no interest in that especial revelation of God's mind, because of which the apostle endured so much? This appeal might well challenge each one who reads it even now.

"I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God given me for you-ward." This calls us to hearken to that which, in the goodness and wisdom of God, was made known to Paul for us; viz., the revelation of the mystery. What that is he briefly tells us; viz., that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. Nothing that God had given to His saints from among the Jews were those formerly Gentiles now to be without. Of the heirship, and of the promise in Christ through the gospel, we have already heard in Ephesians 1:3-14. The truth of the Body, too, was just touched on (Ephesians 1:23), practical teaching in connection with which we shall meet with lower down.

Charged then with the communication to others of this revelation, the ministry of the apostle Paul had a double character. He announced the good news among the Gentiles of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and enlightened all (not Gentiles only) as to the dispensation of that mystery, hidden from the ages in God, who created all things,* and which is now revealed not only for the joy of saints, but also for the manifestation of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies by the Church. What is revealed on this earth, so small a part of creation, as concerning the saints, is a, subject of interest, as redounding to God's glory, to all the angelic host; and this was planned by God according to His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.

"By Jesus Christ" should be omitted. The mystery stated, and the double character of Paul's ministry defined, he now prays for the saints to the Father, of whom every family in the heaven and on earth is named, that He would give the saints according to the wealth of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ, the centre of all God's ways, might dwell in their hearts by faith; that they, rooted and grounded in love, might be thoroughly able to apprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that they might be filled unto all the fulness of God. His desires thus expressed, he closes the subject with a doxology: "To Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of ages; 1:e. for ever and ever. Amen."

*"Of our Lord Jesus Christ" should be omitted.

Exhortations now follow: first, with reference to ecclesiastical relationships (Ephesians 4:1-16); secondly, as to that which became them as saints (Ephesians 4:17-32, Ephesians 5:1-20); and

thirdly, as to their relations to one another in the family and in the household. (Ephesians 5:21-33, Ephesians 6:1-9)

Called, as they were, with a calling which gave special privileges to the subjects of it, Paul exhorts them to walk worthy of it. And brought, as the saints were, into such closeness with each other, being God's habitation by the Spirit, and members together of the body of Christ, Christian graces would be needed to walk worthy of their calling. So Paul characterises the spirit in which they were to walk, and the end they were steadily to keep in view. On the spirit he dwells in verse 2. It was to be with all lowliness and meekness; these are characteristic of Christ, who is our life. Next the apostle mentions long-suffering, for the full exhibition of which we must turn to God's ways with man. As God's children the saints were to comport themselves in their ecclesiastical relations one with another. Then he impresses on them mutual forbearance in love; for this we need the Holy Ghost really working in us. Thus the manifestation of Christ as our life, the proof that we are partakers of the divine nature, and that the Holy Ghost is really working in us - all this would be required for saints to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Then the end to be kept in view is stated; (3) viz., to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, maintaining practically and in peace if possible, the unity formed by the baptism of the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 12:13.) Now unity is seen to be in harmony with the divine mind, whether we look at the Church, the Body of Christ, or whether we contemplate the whole range of profession on earth, or lift up our eyes to survey the universe. "There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6) But in this unity, which comprises all real Christians, there is seen diversity in the gifts or graces given to each one in the Body of Christ, and in the service looked for from those who compose it. On this Paul next dwells. To every one is given grace or gift according to the measure of the gift of Christ; 1:e. as He gives it. And from Him, the ascended One, gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, have been given, for (pros) the perfecting of the saints unto (eis) a work of ministry, unto (eis) the edifying of the Body of Christ. The perfecting of the saints is the special end in view, and is effected through the gifts by the work of the ministry and the edifying of the Body of Christ. Thus, whilst saintship and church calling are quite distinct lines of truth, no saint could be now perfected without being part of the Body of Christ, nor fully instructed if he stopped short of teaching about the Church of God. So this ministry by the gifts will go on "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In order that we should be no more babes, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in unprincipled cunning, with a view to systematised error; but holding the truth in love, may grow up. unto Him in all things who is the Head; the Christ, from whom the whole Body, fitted together and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in the measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the Body to itself, building up in love." (Ephesians 4:8-16) Such is God's desire and provision for the saints in Christ Jesus. Their perfecting is the end in view, to be effected by the gifts mentioned, the need for which is detailed in Ephesians 4:13-15; whilst Ephesians 4:16 has reference to the corporate condition, the Body increasing by the right acting of every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each part. From this he passes on to exhortations with reference to their daily walk as saints; and here nothing is too small to be noticed. The most ordinary morality the Spirit insists on, and that in an epistle which dwells on the highest truths. The moral condition

of Gentiles has been described, as well as their former dispensational distance when compared with the privileged place of those once Jews. (2) Now the apostle reminds his readers of the practices of Gentiles in daily life, which these converts were henceforth to avoid. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye walk not as the Gentiles walk."* Such walked in the vanity of their mind, in darkness and in ignorance. On these points he dwells in Ephesians 4:22-32, Ephesians 5:1-2; Ephesians 5:3-14, Ephesians 5:15-21, writing to those who had learned the Christ, having heard Him, and being instructed by Him as the truth is in Jesus. What that is Paul explains in Ephesians 5:22-24.

*The best authorities leave out 'other.' For those written to were Gentiles no longer; they formed part of the Church of God. (See 1 Corinthians 10:32.)

Coming to details, the first thing insisted on is to put away lying, and to speak every man truth with his neighbour. The reason assigned for this is in perfect character with the doctrine dwelt on in the previous chapters, "For we are members one of another." Thus church truth is to be brought into practice in daily life. Further the apostle warns us against the desires of the mind, and comes down to the mention of stealing, and of watchfulness as to speech. Against both of these the saints are warned in connection with the special teaching of the epistle. The thief is to steal no more, but to labour, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Nothing should proceed from the lips, but that which may minister grace to the hearers. The activity of grace is to characterise him who once plundered others. The profit of his hearers is to be kept in view by him who had previously given licence to his tongue. And who were these people to whom he thus writes? They were sealed by the Spirit to the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30) They were God's children, so were to imitate Him. (Ephesians 4:32, Ephesians 5:1) They had Christ as their life, and He was to be their example. (Ephesians 5:2)

Warnings against the workings of the flesh now follow. (Ephesians 5:3-14) None practising such filthiness have any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God (Ephesians 5:5), and because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. With such they were not to be partakers; for they were formerly "darkness, but now light in the Lord; hence as children of light they should walk: (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Further, they were to walk not as fools, but as wise. (Ephesians 5:15-21) Ignorance characterized Gentiles; understanding what the will of the Lord is, was to characterize them. Nor were they to seek for fleshly stimulants, but to be filled with the Holy Ghost, which would manifest itself in the joy they would possess, and the spirit of subjection which would mark them. This introduces the injunctions concerning relative duties in the family and in the household; wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters, each receiving their appropriate word. For wives and husbands the example of the Church's subjection to Christ, and His service and care for it are respectively set forth, the closest of earthly ties being a figure of the relation of Christ with the Church. One sees at a glance the propriety of this being dwelt *upon in this epistle. It would lead us, however, beyond the limits of our space to dwell at any length on that wonderful display of love, in which, as part of the Church, we share, a love which moved Christ to give Himself for her, and which moves Him to minister to her, that He may at length present her to Himself, a Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blame, thus answering to that which He Himself was, and is. No wonder then, if that is His desire for the Church, that such pains are taken with the different classes who compose it,

exhorting them in their different positions and relationships how to walk and to act.

Relative duties in the family and the household having been dwelt on, the apostle turns back to that which concerns them all equally, and exhorts all to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and to take each one for himself, or herself, the whole armour of God to stand against the wiles of the devil. The unceasing service of Christ to the Church we read of in Ephesians 5:1-33. The unceasing watchfulness of the enemy to ensnare or trip up the saints we are reminded of in chapter 6. If the saints are seated in the heavenlies in Christ, the devil is still in the heavenlies likewise. We cannot drive him out as Israel, under Joshua, were to have expelled the Canaanites and the Amorites, etc. But we are to be armed with the panoply of God to maintain our footing where God has placed us. The armour put on, and the one offensive weapon in the hand, the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, used by the Lord in the wilderness, and found sufficient, the constant spirit of dependence which is to characterize each saint is kept before us, and of the interest which all should take in the welfare of the saints, and in the spreading abroad of God’s work by His word, the apostle reminds us; exhorting all to prayer at all times, and to be watching unto it with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for him, the prisoner as he was, that he might make known the mystery of the gospel for which he was an ambassador in chains. Who should take a deeper and a more general interest in the work of God on earth than those who are the greatest subjects of divine grace?

Now he closes. Counting on their interest in all that concerns him, Tychicus, the bearer of the epistle, was charged to acquaint them with it, and to encourage their hearts. He had inculcated a spirit of love and interest in all the saints. He would himself exemplify it with his concluding words: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness." C. E. Stuart.

There is the greatest difference possible between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of truth. The former makes nothing, but the latter makes everything, of man. As a consequence, the ministry of truth appeals to a wider circle; for the natural man can delight in the knowledge which increases his own importance; but the spiritual alone will respond to the ministry of Christ. It should never be forgotten, that while Christ is the truth, the truth is not Christ."

S. The Epistle to the Hebrews

The Epistle to the Hebrews. To Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, is commonly, and we believe rightly, attributed the epistle addressed to the Hebrews, to which, contrary to his usual practice, he did not affix his name. Awaiting Timothy's return, with whom he hoped shortly to see them, he wrote beforehand to build them up in the faith.

Part of God's ancient people, with hopes proper to that people, a land assigned them by God for their inheritance, with a ritual of divine appointment, and a revelation addressed directly through Moses to Israel, a Jew on becoming a Christian had to surrender much which a Gentile had never possessed. Not that he was giving up mistaken teaching and misplaced hopes; for he turned his back on the temple-worship appointed by God, on Judaism, and on the land in which he was dwelling, as that which was no longer to be his portion, his home. For a Jew, then, to become a Christian involved the surrender of cherished hopes, and that position once assigned them by God of complete separation, socially and ecclesiastically, from admixture with Gentiles. Yet if he gave up much that he had valued, and as a Jew rightly valued, he gained far more than he had lost, though at the expense of certain trouble, probably persecution, and, it might be, a martyr's death. Hence if those once Gentiles needed encouragement (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:5), how much more those who had been Jews. To encourage such the apostle wrote (Hebrews 4:1-16, Hebrews 6:1-20, Hebrews 10:1-39, Hebrews 12:1-29), and this he did in the most effectual way by ministering Christ; first, truth about His person as God and man (Hebrews 1:1-14, Hebrews 2:1-18); then truth about Him as the apostle of our profession, and as to His present service as High Priest (Hebrews 3:1-19, Hebrews 4:1-16, Hebrews 5:1-14, Hebrews 6:1-20, Hebrews 7:1-28, Hebrews 8:1-13); and then truth about His atoning sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:1-28, Hebrews 10:1-39), followed by exhortations, and grounds for encouragement to persevere on to the end. The baneful errors of Judaizing, Paul had exposed when writing to the Galatians. The surpassing excellence of Christ above Moses and Aaron, and what as Jews they had valued, he unfolds in this letter to the Hebrews. For centuries God had been silent. Between the days of Malachi and those of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, we have no record of any communication in words between Jehovah and the earthly people. But now that silence had been broken - and God, who had spoken in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, had in the end of the days (1:e. of the age before Messiah should appear in power) spoken unto His people in the Son. Prophet after prophet had come: at last He sent His well-beloved Son. Thus, writing to those who once formed part of God's earthly people, the apostle connects all previous revelation to Israel with that which had been graciously vouchsafed in the day in which he and they lived. God "hath spoken to us," he writes, "in the Son." Then, like a master in the art of painting, who with a few bold strokes with his pencil presents the object he desires to the eye of the observer, the sacred writer, inspired of God, traces out for his readers, briefly but most clearly, the past, the present, and the future of Him here called the Son. As to the future, God has appointed Him to be Heir of all things; as regards the past, by Him God made the worlds; and as to the present, He has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High, having first by Himself purged sins.* The Son, then, is both God and man. As

man, He died; as God, He sits now on high, perfectly and everlastingly a man, yet God too, blessed for evermore - two natures in one person.

*The best authorities leave out "our" before sins. The point here is what the Son has done, and not who those are who reap the benefit of it.

Turning to the Old Testament Scriptures, the Hebrews are instructed in the teaching which they afford concerning the One here introduced as the Son; first, as to His Sonship; next, as to His divinity; and then as to His humanity. As regards His Sonship, He is here viewed as Son born in time. Hence quotations are made from Psalms 2:7, and from 2 Samuel 7:14, in proof that God owned Him as His Son; and from Psalms 97:7; Psalms 104:4, to show that though a man, He is superior to, and quite distinct from, angels. But more, He is God as well as man; and from the lips of Jehovah this truth has been proclaimed in a psalm (Psalms 45:6-7), in which, describing Him returning to earth in millennial power, Jehovah addresses Him as God, and yet speaks of His God. But more, though Son as born in time, there never was a time when He did not exist; for He is Jehovah and the Creator, who laid the foundations of the earth, the heavens too being the work of His hands. They shall perish, but He remains. He is the same, and His years shall not fail (Psalms 102:25-27); and He sits where no angel can sit, at the right hand of Jehovah, until He makes His enemies His footstool. (Psalms 110:1.) How clear the Hebrews must have seen was the old testament teaching relative to His divinity who had by Himself purged sins. Hence it behoved all who heard not to neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord, but was confirmed unto them by those that heard, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.

Following upon this exhortation, Old Testament witness to the humanity of the Lord is brought out. Of Him Psalms 8:1-9 spoke as the Son of man, under whom all things are to be put. As Son of man He will be above angels. By His death He became lower than them. Of His humanity He Himself is the witness. God attested His divinity, as we have seen. He proclaims His humanity, as the quotations from Psalms 22:22; Psalms 18:2; Isaiah 8:18, make plain. How fitting was this! Who but God should attest His divinity? On the other hand, how suitable that He should identify Himself as man with some of the race of Adam. Of some we say, because He only here identifies Himself with those who are saints; "for He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" 1:e. those who are God’s children. They were partakers of flesh and blood, so He took part of the same; 1:e. became really a man, that through death He might annul him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. What results flow from His death He tasted death for every thing. (Isaiah 8:9) Thus creation is concerned in it. By it He has annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. The arch-enemy of God and man is affected by it. By that same death He has wrought deliverance for the saints; and as a consequence of it He has made propitiation for the sins of the people. (Isaiah 8:14-18) But this introduces His priesthood, which is Aaronic now in character, and Melchisedechian in order. And so as Aaronic in character He has taken up the question of sins before God, and intercedes for the people before the throne. In a double character then the Lord has appeared. God has spoken to us in the Son. He is the Apostle of our confession, He is also High Priest, and has made propitiation for the sins of the people. "Consider then," we read, "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as also Moses was in all His house." (Hebrews 3:1-2) Now these

words are addressed to "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Abraham and Israel had an earthly calling. Christians have a heavenly calling. Now this first spoken of by the Lord (Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23; Luke 12:33) is developed necessarily in this epistle, which addresses those who once had been Jews, but who had given up all for Christ's sake. He then is set before them as surpassing Moses. Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant; but Christ as Son over His, 1:e. God's house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (Hebrews 3:5-6) Such language intimates that these Christians were, as it were, like their fathers of old, on the march through the wilderness. So suited exhortation follows. (Hebrews 3:7-19, Hebrews 4:1-11)

God had spoken in the end of the days in the Son. The coming kingdom therefore might not be far off. And living in the end of the age ere the Messiah would appear in power to establish the kingdom, the language of Psalms 95:7-11, addressing the remnant of the future, was language suited for the Hebrews in the day this epistle was indited. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3:12-14) The psalm speaks of a rest - God's rest - into which His people shall assuredly enter; not rest of conscience, but rest from all toil and work, as God did when He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He created and made. (Genesis 2:3.) "He that hath entered into his. rest hath also ceased from his works, as God did from His own." (Hebrews 4:10) This clears the passage from misinterpretation. God's rest clearly is rest from all work. Hence for His saints it is future, and those who have believed are on their way to it. Further, attention to the forms of exhortation in this passage will show the reader that no doubt is cast on the future of believers, though they are exhorted in the strongest way to bestir themselves. When exhorting the saints not to stop short, he says "you." (Hebrews 3:12, Hebrews 4:1) When exhorting them to press forward he says "us" (Hebrews 3:14. Hebrews 4:14), classing himself with them. He could not read their hearts. But each, as he, should know if he was really converted. So addressing them on the ground of profession he necessarily says "you." But each and all were to be diligent to press forward, and he shows that by writing, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11) But God does not leave His people to get on as best they can. He has provided His word, living, and powerful, which can do what the keenest blade cannot, pierce even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 12:1-29, Hebrews 13:1-25) Thus by the Word the believer may detect the springs of his actions, and see all in the light of the divine presence; "for all things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." But more is wanted than the searching and dissecting action of the Word. We need grace for the wilderness walk. Now this the High Priest procures, so the writer next dwells (Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 5:1-14, Hebrews 6:1-20, Hebrews 7:1-28, Hebrews 8:1-13) on the present service of the High Priest, before dwelling on the sacrifice and offering up of the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace needed the High Priest procures. Able to succour them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18), He is also able to sympathise with His people, having been in all points tempted like as they are - sin apart. He knows what is needed, and intercedes for us with God, that we coming to the throne of grace may reap the fruit of His intercession by receiving mercy and seasonable help. (Hebrews 4:14-16) Having then a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, 1:e. has gone up

to the throne, Jesus, Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. A great High Priest He is called. Aaron was high priest. Jesus, the Son of God, is greater. The Hebrews then were in this no losers by embracing Christianity. The Jews might boast of the Aaronic line of priesthood; these Hebrews could say, "The Son of God is our High Priest." But this new priesthood, centred in Him who is in heaven, must be shown to be really of God, else none of those on whose behalf the Aaronic priesthood was instituted would be authorized to turn away from it. So Psalms 110:1-7 is quoted to prove it. The One who called Him His Son is the One who addressed Him as Priest after the order of Melchisedec. And He has passed through death, having learnt, too, obedience by the things which He suffered. A High Priest who first passed through death, having learnt obedience by what He suffered, and having experienced deliverance by God out of the deepest trials, who among the sons of Aaron could be compared with Him for fitness to understand the difficulties of the people, and to sympathize with each and all in their need? Each year that Aaron lived he might be better able to understand the personal difficulties of the people. But the Lord had learnt them all, and fully, are He entered on His office of High Priest. What encouragement was there in this for the saints in trial! But the apostle could have unfolded more had the spiritual state of the Hebrews not hindered it. They had become gegonate, dull of hearing, needing to be taught the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God, when for the time they ought to have been able to teach others; and they had become such as had need of milk, and not of solid food. They had become this, let the reader observe. It was not the condition in which the gospel had found them. It was the condition into which they had got through not going on unto perfection; 1:e. full growth. To that the sacred writer would lead them. The word of the beginning of Christ, truth common to Jews and Christians, was not all that God was teaching, nor would that establish souls. He would therefore pass on from it to perfection; 1:e. what belonged to full growth (Hebrews 6:1-3), not now occupying himself with such as had enjoyed every advantage a professor could share in without the heart being really changed. (Hebrews 6:4-8) Fruitfulness through the truth working in power was what was desired, as the illustration of the ground shows us, and explains for any that need it, the real bearing of Hebrews 6:4-6.

Two plots of ground receiving in common rain from heaven - the one fruitful, producing herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; the other, not requiting the labour bestowed upon it, and producing only briers and thorns, is found worthless, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. So of those called Christians. All enjoying the same outward advantages, those really converted are fruitful, the rest, mere professors, are unfruitful. With such, if they fall away, he could do nothing. They had heard, and had professed to receive, all Christian teaching. These then he would leave, addressing himself to those to whom he was writing, who had given evidence of the reality of their faith. (9, 10.) Yet they needed stirring up to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, and to imitate those who through faith and patience have been inheritors of the promises. Now all was really secure, God’s promise and God’s oath made that certain, and the entrance of the forerunner, Jesus, within the veil made it plain. (Hebrews 6:11-20) And He is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. On the value of this for the saints the writer would now insist (Hebrews 7:7), reminding them of Melchisedec’s history and of Abraham’s interview with him (Genesis 14:1-24); and bow the patriarch, by giving him tithes of all, and by receiving his blessing, acknowledged his superiority. Hence a priesthood after this order must be more excellent than one after the Aaronic order; for, first, Levi, as it were, paid tithes to Melchisedec as being in the loins of Abraham (Hebrews 7:9-10); second, the institution of this

order of priesthood, after the induction of Aaron and of his sons into their priesthood, indicates a setting aside of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (for the law made nothing perfect), and the bringing in of a better hope by the which we draw nigh to God (Hebrews 7:18-19); third, the Lord was made priest by oath, which Aaron and his sons never were (Hebrews 7:20-22); and lastly, He has, like Melchisedec of old, an unchangeable priesthood (Hebrews 7:23-24), whence He is able also to save completely those who approach by Him to God, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Further, He who is our High Priest has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. He is also mediator of a better covenant, the new covenant, established on the footing of better promises. (Hebrews 7:8)

Now what could Judaism offer in comparison with all this? Who among the tribe of Levi could present such credentials, and provide what is needed for the wilderness path, as He who, uniting the functions of Moses and Aaron in His own person, was addressed by God as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec? A minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle the Lord is. So we read next of the service which He has performed inside the veil. Having dwelt on His present priestly service, as meeting what the saints needed in their pathway on earth, the writer now proceeds to point out the superiority of the Lord’s sacrifice of Himself above all that the Mosaic ritual could provide, by the shedding of His blood (Hebrews 7:9), and the excellency of the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 7:10)

There was the holiest on earth, and at the date of this epistle the Mosaic ritual was still carried on. There is the sanctuary on high, of which this epistle treats. Into the former the High Priest went alone once every year with the blood of bulls and of goats. Into the latter the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest of good things to come, has entered by His own blood, and remains there, having found eternal redemption. Now blood had a prominent and important place in the ritual of old; so on the surpassing excellency of the blood of Christ we are taught to dwell. It purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. By His death redemption of the sins that were under the first covenant is effected, that they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. By His blood too forgiveness is procured; on it the new covenant will rest, and the heavenly things themselves are purged with better sacrifices than any earth could have provided. For into heaven itself has He entered now to appear in the presence of God for us. Not to offer Himself afresh, for that He did once when manifested here for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And He will appear again the second time to them that look for Him without sin unto salvation.

Once He has suffered, never to repeat it. His death was enough. By God’s will believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10) By His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14), and has sat down in token that all has been done in the sanctuary that He intended and came to do. Thus we learn what God thinks of the sacrifice, since we are sanctified by it. We see what the Lord thinks of it, since He has sat down, never to renew it. And the Holy Ghost attests its sufficiency, as He tells us by the prophet (Jeremiah 31:34) that the sins and iniquities of the redeemed people God will remember no more. Hence there can be no more offering for sin, and believers have boldness to

enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil; that is, His flesh. And having a great priest over the house of God, we are to approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from an evil conscience, and washed as to our bodies with pure water, holding fast the confession of hope without wavering, caring for one another, assembling together, and exhorting one the other as we see the day approaching. The Lord will come. The just shall live by faith, but in one who draws back God will have no pleasure. (Hebrews 11:15-39)

Hereupon we are reminded how the worthies of old walked by faith (Hebrews 11:1-40), the order in which they appeared on the scene illustrating the life of faith for the Christian. With what interest a Hebrew must have read this portion of the epistle, learning from it how God had been ordering the appearance on earth of person after person herein mentioned in pursuance of a design which has now been unfolded.

Commencing with a statement of what faith is, the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, we learn that it takes God at His word (Hebrews 11:3), and by it the person connected with the sacrifice, as illustrated in the case of Abel, is accepted before God. Then in one of two positions will the saint be found, either, like Enoch, to be taken away ere the judgment comes; or, like Noah, to be preserved on earth through it. Christians will be in this like Enoch, the godly remnant of the earthly people like Noah. But if we stand accepted in connection with the sacrifice, awaiting the being caught up to be with Christ, we are made at once pilgrims here, whose home is elsewhere. Hence faith for the pilgrimage walk, illustrated in the lives of the patriarchs, is next set before us. They looked for a city prepared for them by God (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham by counting on the fulfilment of his hopes in the heir raised, as it were, from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19); Isaac by blessing Jacob and Esau, showing that the inheritance does not run in the order of nature (Hebrews 11:20); Jacob by blessing both the sons of Joseph, intimating that the double portion belongs to him who was rejected of his brethren (Hebrews 11:21), to be made good in the fullest way to the Lord, who will have heaven and earth as His inheritance; and Joseph by giving commandment concerning his bones (Hebrews 11:22), all tell us of the proper expectation and desire of the saints - the full deliverance of God’s people, coupled with the wish to rest in the portion allotted them by God. But if there is the pilgrimage walk, there will also be conflict. So illustrations of faith in times of conflict next come; yet all in the order of history (Hebrews 11:23-31), followed by examples of the life of faith in times of declension (Hebrews 11:32-34), and in times of persecution. (Hebrews 11:35-40) Yet encouraging as this exposition of Old Testament times must have been, no one of these worthies could be a perfect example for them or for us. One only of all who have walked on earth is fitted to be that, even Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of the faith, who, having endured the cross, despising the shame, is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-3) From Old Testament history we learn that the walk of faith was nothing new. In the Lord Jesus’ walk on earth we have the perfect pattern of it, and in His exaltation we see where the road will surely lead us.

Exhortations then follow, and encouragements, first by reminding them that their sufferings were a proof that they were God’s sons (Hebrews 12:4-17), and next by telling them to what they had come; viz., above and beyond all Jewish expectation and portion, and above all angelic ranks on high, to God the Judge of all, from whom receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, they were to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. "For also our God is a consuming fire."

With further exhortations as to brotherly love, hospitality, remembrance of those in bonds, and marriage; with warnings too against uncleanness and discontent, their leaders who had passed away by death they were called to remember, and to imitate their faith. But if leaders pass away, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Hence, they were not to be carried away by divers and strange doctrines, but to have the heart established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited those who have been occupied therein. But Christians have an altar, whereof no Jew could eat, as they feed on Him who was the sin-offering, who suffered without the gate. Since, then, that is the case, they must go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; yet offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of their lips giving thanks to His name; doing good and communicating likewise; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Then, exhorting subjection to their leaders, and asking for an interest in their prayers, and expressing his wishes for them (Hebrews 11:17-21), the writer closes his letter. What a communication it was! How it opened up the Old Testament, and ministered Christ as Apostle and High Priest, to establish the Hebrews in the doctrines and continued, confession of Christianity. "C. E. Stuart.

S. The Epistle to the Philippians.

The Epistle to the Philippians.

Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome was now drawing to a close (Php 2:24), though as yet he had not stood before the bar of the emperor Nero, to whose judgment he had appealed when arraigned before Festus at Caesarea. Meanwhile the Philippian saints, profiting by the departure of Epaphroditus to Paul, sent him a substantial token of their love and fellowship in the gospel (Php 4:18); and Paul, reciprocating their kindness, not then for the first time manifested (Php 4:15-16), wrote this letter to be conveyed to them by Epaphroditus, his brother, fellow-workman, and fellow-soldier, but their messenger and minister to his wants. Truly he was not long in their debt; for the return he gave them, all must have felt, far more than compensated for that which they had expended upon him. Each, however, did their part. They ministered to his temporal need; he ministered of Christ to their souls, and described the token of their love as an odour of sweet savour, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. (Php 4:18) Their ministry to the apostle betokened the activity of Christian life in them. So writing to these saints he dwells on that theme; hence the epistle is hortatory and practical, the affection of his heart for them being plainly manifested. (Php 4:1) The occasion and probable date of the epistle briefly noticed, let us now look at its contents. As in the epistles to the Thessalonians, and in that to Philemon, so in this one, Paul does not present himself in his apostolic character; but conjoining Timothy with himself as a servant of Christ Jesus, he writes to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi with the bishops and deacons, wishing them all grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Php 1:1-2) The Philippian assembly was evidently well provided with office bearers; and the mention of bishops here, and in Acts 20:28, proves that the notion of episcopacy current in modem days derives no support from the practice of the apostles. Both in Europe and in Asia there could be more than one bishop in the same assembly. Grace and peace he wished them; for they are always needed. None knew that better than Paul; and the source of grace being opened up to God’s saints, and the God of peace being their God, he could express his wishes for the continued outflow to them of grace, and the constant ministry of peace; for the peace here spoken of is not peace of conscience, but peace of heart - the peace of Christ, that which He gave His people, and which, writing to the Colossian saints, Paul desired should rule in their hearts. But more, he could give thanks for them, and he did. Years had passed since he had seen them, but he had not forgotten them. "I thank my God," he writes, "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 day until now." Fellowship in the gospel had always characterized that assembly. (Php 4:15) It characterized it still. (Php 1:7; Php 4:14) Now, that fellowship betokened not only love to him, but a real work of grace in their souls - a work commenced, instrumentally, by Paul and his company (Acts 16:13), but really by God, who will perfect in His goodness that which He has begun in His grace. To Him, then, Paul turns for confidence about the saints: "Being confident of this one thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus." (Php 1:6) And to the furtherance of Paul’s joy, he had not to rest simply on the remembrance of that

which they once had been in the first fervour of their love; for the coming of Epaphroditus with their tribute of affection told him of their continued interest in him, and in the work of God with which he was so closely associated. So he points to that as a further proof of the reality of their conversion. "Even," he writes, "as it is right for me to think this of you all, because you have me in your heart;* inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." Happy Paul, to have such continued evidence of the fruitfulness of his labours among them. Blessed too surely they were who furnished such proofs. Deeds, not words merely, was it with them. And what honour was put on them to have fellowship with Paul in the grace of furthering the interests of Christ and the kingdom of God! They were not ashamed of him, the prisoner. They identified themselves with him.

* So we should read the clause.

Thus the energy of Christian life was displayed in them. So he was confident about them, their unabated affection to him confirming it, and his longing desire after them in the bowels of Christ Jesus strengthening it. (Php 1:8.) And that earnest desire on his part found expression in prayer to God (Php 1:9-11), that their love might abound yet more and more in full knowledge, and in all judgment, or perception, so as to approve the things that are more excellent; that they might be sincere* and without offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Nothing short of this would satisfy him. After this he tells them how the work of God was progressing in Rome, and what he was assured was the Lord’s mind concerning himself. Then manifesting his interest in them, he turns round to encourage their hearts in the circumstances in which they were placed, and to minister what he saw was the truth suited for them. Such is a brief summary of this short but most valuable letter.

* eilikrines, lit. examined by the sun’s light; hence genuine, pure. It occurs also in 2 Peter 3:1.

How refreshing it must have been to him, instead of having to meet something wrong at Philippi, to tell them of that which was going forward in Rome! He would have them know that what had happened unto him had fallen out rather for the furtherance of the gospel. It was seen now in all the Pretorium,* and to all others, that instead of his being a malefactor, he was really a prisoner for Christ. In the camp, in the palace, in the city, it was apparent that a testimony was going forth which had Christ for its subject, and of which Paul was the marked exponent and witness. Besides this, the greater part of the brethren, having confidence in the Lord through his bonds, were much more bold to speak the Word without fear. Thus labourers multiplied, and that in Rome itself, and before any sentence from the emperor had been given in his favour. It was not that a few were emboldened, but the mass of them - the many. They spoke, they preached. If then the apostle’s mouth was at present shut, the mouths of many were opened, and Christ was proclaimed.

*The large camp situated outside the city walls.

Yet all were not sincere in this work. Some indeed preached Christ of love, knowing that Paul was set for the defence of the gospel; but others, animated by personal hostility to him, preached Christ of contention, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. Who were these? it may be asked. Their names have for centuries been wrapped in obscurity; whilst he, to whose bonds they sought to add affliction, is widely owned as one of the most devoted and most honoured servants of that Lord, whom they also professed to serve; for it was Christ who was preached. Hence Paul could

rejoice, and did rejoice. And looking beyond the motives of those who preached Christ, yet not sincerely, he saw the advancement of God's kingdom, which means the final triumph of Christ. Hence he knew it would turn to his salvation through their supplication, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, "according," as he adds, "to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed; but in all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die gain." Yet to live in the flesh was worth the while. Personally, however, he would be a gainer by death. What then should he choose? His gain, or the saints' profit? Coming to that point his choice is made. To abide in the flesh was more needful for them. Hence he knew, and could announce beforehand, the successful issue of his appeal to the emperor, since their joy, and the furtherance of their faith, would be promoted by his being again among them, that their boasting might abound in Christ Jesus through him by his presence with them at Philippi. What unselfishness was this! The interests of Christ, and those of His saints, in this governed him.

How completely was the enemy baffled as regards Paul. The preaching of Christ not sincerely did not oppress him, however much he might have grieved over those who did it. Death in prospect did not trouble him. To live too was for Paul to serve Christ. Over such an one the enemy by these assaults could gain no advantage.

Turning now to the Philippians, Paul would seek in the power of the Spirit to foil the attempts of Satan to dishearten those whom he loved so well. (Php 1:27-30) Their interest in him he owned, and had responded to. He would make manifest his unabated interest in them. "Only," he writes, "let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of the Christ." For this he was anxious. There was a manner of life in harmony with it. That he desired they should evidence. But before developing this, he makes plain the satisfaction it would give him, whether of seeing them or hearing of them, to learn that they stood fast in one spirit, with one soul striving together for or with the faith of the gospel. In what nobler contest could they be engaged? How many an ardent person has been nerved to deeds of heroism by the spirit of patriotism? But the love of one's country, unless the interests of Christ are connected with it, can be but of passing importance. A true interest in the gospel and in its conflicts is a very different matter. It was this last that he desired to have strengthened in their souls. And to this end he encouraged them not to be terrified in anything by their opposers, to such an evident token of perdition, but to the saints of their salvation, and that of God. To look around at the trials, like Peter at the waves, would not do. To look up, and to look forward can at such times alone sustain and strengthen. To the future then he turns them. To the end of the conflict he points them, reminding them of the honour put on them, not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for Him, having the same conflict which they saw in Paul when scourged and imprisoned at Philippi, and which they heard he had part in, as the prisoner of Christ Jesus in Rome.

What room could there be for the enemy to gain any advantage over them, if such considerations had weight? Their conflict assured them of salvation from God, and reminded them of the honour put on them for Christ's sake. But when force cannot stop God's work, corruption may mar it. Of the enemy's wiles Paul was not ignorant. So he proceeded to exhort them to fulfil, or fill up, his joy by their thinking the same thing, which he explains more at length by the having the same love, being of one accord, or joined in soul, and thinking the one thing. (Php 2:1-2) Entering now more at length on the subject of walking worthy of the gospel, he first supplies them with precepts (Php

2:3-4), by which to regulate their conduct toward each other, and then points them to the perfect example, the Lord Jesus Christ (Php 2:5-9), who for the glory of God, and the welfare of others, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, taking His place in the likeness of men, the lowest in rank of God's intelligent creatures. How low had He stooped! yet lower would He go, stooping to death, the death of the cross. His, humiliation thus set forth step by step, from the glory to the cross and to the grave; His exaltation is also described, the attestation of God's marked approval of Him who emptied Himself. Hence the Lord is brought before us as an example, an example none can equal; for no one has come from the height of glory to the death of the cross, and to the grave, but He who voluntarily stooped so low. Now if the Master thus stooped, if He who is our life could thus act, lowly thoughts of self and care for others should be exemplified in each one of us who are His. We learn what He did. We are reminded too in what light God regards it. Never throughout eternity shall any intelligent creature, whether lost or saved, be allowed to forget the humiliation of the Son of God, or to refuse the rendering of homage at the mention of that name given Him before His birth by the angel. With the example of the Lord thus set before them, these saints were exhorted to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; for it was God who worked in them the willing and the working effectually of His good pleasure. All the energy came from Him, and He bestowed it on them. Hence there was no reason to slacken their work because Paul was not with them. God worked in them both the willing and the doing, wherever the apostle might be. Thus furnished with all that they needed, they were responsible to use it. (Php 2:12-13) Further, he reminded them that they were God's children, and fruit of his labour. He would have them therefore to be blameless and harmless, irreproachable children* of God, and really light-bearers in the world, holding forth the word of life, so as to be Paul's boast in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain nor laboured in vain.

* Children (Tekna), not sons (huioi), is the term here employed. He was speaking of the activity of the nature; hence the birth-tie was the thought before him.

What a standard was set before them in the example of the Master! Who can look at it? some may ask. Who has attempted to follow it? others may enquire. We learn as the answer to such questions how Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each in their own way, had evidently profited by it, the Spirit of Christ being displayed in these devoted servants of God, each of whom traded with the pound entrusted to him, and with the talents given to him. Had God's glory and the welfare of souls moved the Lord to humble Him self even to death? Paul, learning of the Master, was ready to suffer martyrdom if needed (Php 2:17), and would deprive himself of the comfort of Epaphroditus's presence and service to further the joy of these beloved Philippian saints. (Php 2:28) In Timothy was developed the true spirit of service in the gospel. He sought the things of Christ Jesus, and showed a genuine interest in the welfare of the Philippians. (Php 2:19-22.) Epaphroditus was characterized by devotion in personal service to Paul (Php 2:30), and by unfeigned love for his brethren at Philippi. (Php 2:26) Thus each of these in their own way illustrated the working of the life of God in the soul. Beautiful pictures of Christian self-denial - making God's interests and those of the saints the real objects. But further, the circumstances of the saints at Philippi, and the exhortations he had given them, made it very plain that they were in a scene. which was not in order according to God's thoughts. Difficult the path might, and surely would be. Trials too and disappointments might abound, yet they could find in the Lord an unfailing ground of joy. "Finally, my brethren," he writes, "rejoice in the Lord." (Php 3:1) He had spoken of

the Lord in humiliation as the example for us. He had touched on His exaltation. He would now develop how this last can be a help to us, as exemplified in himself. Judaizing teaching was baneful. It was really subversive of true Christian teaching, as he showed the Galatians. Hence he would take every pains to put souls on their guard against it. Dogs, evil-workers, concision, by such terms does he here describe those people, claiming that which now alone could be worthily called circumcision for those who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Php 3:3) For in Christ we are circumcised, as he wrote to the Colossians, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. (Colossians 2:11.) At this point he turns to speak of himself (Php 3:4-16), as an example of the energy of Christian walk displayed in a man born in sin, and thus like one of us; for in truth no Gentile could so fully exemplify it. None but one born a Jew, as Paul was, could so illustrate it. He had much to boast in after the flesh, but surrendered it all for Christ in glory, whom he desired to know and to win. What he had once gloried in after the flesh he tells us. (Php 3:4-6) In what light he had been brought to view it all he goes on to declare. He had counted it loss for Christ, and he still counted it but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, for whom he had suffered the loss of all things, and counted them as dung that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God* by faith, to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead. (Php 3:7-11) It was Christ in glory he wished to reach. Till that was accomplished he would not be satisfied. Paul would know Him, and would win Him. Whilst here then in the body he never could attain to all that he desired, nor apprehend that for which he had been apprehended. Hence; in the energy of Christian walk he pressed forward to the goal, through whatever might be in his way, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.

*He contrasts the righteousness which is of the law (ek nomon) with that which is of God (ek Theou). It is the source of the righteousness to which he calls attention.

Now what Paul desired, that the perfect and full-grown Christian should desire likewise. And to any saint otherwise minded God was willing to reveal even that also. "Nevertheless," he adds, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same;" for this it seems he really wrote. (Php 3:16) So he would not despise, not withdraw from, any true saint, because such an one had not attained to all that he had. Still he would not be satisfied with such resting where they were, nor, on the other hand, would he surrender one iota of that to which he had himself attained. Hence he presents himself to all as one to imitate (Php 3:17); for there were many walking in outward fellowship with the saints, who were really enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end was destruction, whose God was their belly, who gloried in their shame, who minded earthly things.

How would he minister to souls to guard them from being thus carried away? He reminds them that the Christian’s citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like to His body of glory. These people were minding earthly things, whereas our citizenship is in heaven. They were enemies of the cross of Christ. But we are to look for the return in power of the crucified One. They made their belly their God. (Romans 16:18.) We await that change in our bodies by which, what governed those people, will from the saints be eliminated for ever. (1 Corinthians 6:13.) Our citizenship, our expectation, and the future condition of our bodies, these are the truths by which

he would act on every true Christian. "Therefore," he adds, "my brethren dearly-beloved and longed for my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved." (Php 4:1) What care for them all does he evince? Nothing escapes him. The want of harmony between Euodia and Syntyche concerned him. He exhorts them himself to be of the same mind in the Lord. How could those women resist such an appeal? He would also stir up his true yokefellow to help them, reminding him that they were some of those who had laboured along with him in the gospel, with Clement and the rest of Paul's fellow-labourers, whose names were in the book of life. Then addressing all the Philippian saints he again exhorts them to rejoice in the Lord, adding the word alway, and reiterating his exhortation - "Again I say, Rejoice." Much there might have been which had troubled them - as Paul's continued imprisonment, their own persecutions, the want of harmony between some in their midst, and the presence among them of those whose walk was not such as became the gospel of Christ. But, above all this, and unaffected by it, was this unchanging ground of joy - the Lord. "Rejoice in Him alway," are Paul's words from his prison. How well did he practise what he preached!

Things were not in order upon earth, and they could not put them straight. "Let your meekness," or gentleness, therefore, he writes, "be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." He is coming, and will vindicate the cause of His people. But they must wait for that. Meanwhile let them not be burdened with care, but commit it all to God, in which case "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," would guard their hearts and thoughts by Christ Jesus. Then, suggesting what should occupy their. thoughts, whatever is true, noble, just, pure, amiable, and of good report, he exhorts them to do what they had learned, and received, and heard, and seen in Paul, and the God of peace would be with them.

He had nothing more to add respecting the theme which had occupied him; viz., the energy and display of Christian life, but to tell them how he had learned to trust God for everything, content in the circumstances in which he was placed, yet rejoicing at the token of their Christian love, a sacrifice well pleasing to God, who would supply all their need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, a measure of supply for us inexhaustible. In the consciousness of this, praise becomes us; and Paul would stir it up as he adds, "To our God and Father be glory to the ages of ages. Amen." Salutations follow, and from those with Paul in Rome, addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus, a special class of saints; viz., real Christians, but all real Christians. After this he ends with the accustomed mark of the authenticity of his letters: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

Throughout this epistle the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme. In the first chapter for Paul to live was Christ, and to depart to be with Him was far better. In the second Christ is presented as the example. In the third He is the object. In the fourth He is the One in whom under all circumstances the saint should rejoice. And His return is presented to the minds of the saints in each chapter. In the first Paul prays for them to be kept faithful till the day of Christ. In the second hp, reminds them how all intelligent creatures must bow at the mention of the name of Jesus, and how the saints will be Paul's joy and crown in the day of Christ. In the third he speaks of the change which will take place in the bodies of the saints when the Lord comes for His own. In the fourth he bids them wait for His return, who will vindicate His people. In what varied and helpful lights does the Lord's return present itself! C. E. Stuart. When God comes into a house, people and things fall into their right places.

S. The Epistle to the Romans.

The Epistle to the Romans. The epistle to the Romans was written from Greece, and probably from Corinth (Romans 16:23), during Paul's third missionary journey, which terminated abruptly at Jerusalem, whither he went with the collection raised by the churches of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia for the poor saints in that city. The immediate occasion of his writing appears to have been to commend to them Phebe, a deaconess of the church in Cenchrea, the eastern port of the city of Corinth, and distant but a few miles from it. (Romans 16:1.) By whom the Church was planted in Rome, the metropolitan city of the empire, is to us unknown, but it owed not its origin to the personal labours of any of the apostles, though when founded it naturally came to be cared for by the apostle of the Gentiles. (Romans 1:13; Romans 15:15-16.) Paul was as yet a stranger to Rome, and to the bulk of the saints in that city (Romans 1:10-11; Romans 15:23-24), though there were those among them with whom he was well acquainted. (Romans 16:1-27) Purposing to visit them on his way to Spain, which we know not that he ever reached, he wrote this letter, which treats at some length of the gospel of God. At the outset, as was fit, he describes himself, and presents his credentials. He was a bondsman of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God; and from the Lord Jesus Christ he received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all nations, on behalf of His name, amongst whom were the saints in Rome, the called of Jesus Christ. Hence he writes to them as beloved of God, called saints, wishing them grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, telling them for what he can give thanks on their behalf, and of his desire to see them, to impart unto them some spiritual gift, he proceeds to enter upon his great theme of the gospel, which he was prepared, when the opportunity should present itself, to preach to the saints in Rome; for there is a gospel for saints as well as one for sinners. How Paul preached to the unconverted the Acts of the Apostles teaches us. (Romans 13:1-14) What he would preach as gospel for saints the epistle to the Romans in part unfolds to us. Now of the gospel he was not ashamed; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth - to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, for in it is the righteousness of God revealed from, or on the principle (ek) of, faith to faith, in accordance with the prophetic declaration, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Habakkuk 2:4.) And the reason for this revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel becomes apparent, when it is understood, that God's wrath from heaven is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. God having revealed this latter has provided His glad tidings to be preached, to deliver all who believe them from the judgment they have richly deserved.

Having introduced the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, the apostle proceeds to show the moral condition of Gentiles (Romans 1:19-32) and of Jews (Romans 2:17-29; Romans 3:1-20), which proves that all were liable to endure it, because of that which they had done - the former being ungodly, the latter found guilty, in addition to holding the truth in unrighteousness. Further, both were without excuse; for though the Gentiles had not the law, God's written revelation, there was a testimony to God's eternal power, and Godhead in the works of creation sufficient, if man

had wished it, to have kept him from idolatry. (Romans 1:19-20.), Thence the downward path of the human race is traced out for our instruction. Men once had the knowledge of God, but glorified Him not as God, nor were thankful. So darkness came upon them, and folly was displayed by them as they turned to idolatry. (Romans 1:23) With that they became debased and vile, God giving them up to the vile practices which accompanied idolatry. But more; they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. God then gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient. Hence the lawlessness, selfishness, and injustice which are so rife upon earth. A state of savagery then is the fruit of man's will, and not the primeval condition of the race. Of the fall we read in Genesis 3:1-24. Of the causes which led to man's debasement after the flood, we learn about in Romans 1:1-32. Concerning the apostasy, which willl characterize Christendom and the ungodly among the Jews, we read of in the Psalms, the Prophets, 2 Thess., and Revelation 13:1-18. Such is man's wretched history as traced out in the Word. The state of the heathen world cannot then be laid at God's door. He gave them up to uncleanness only when they turned to idolatry; He gave them up unto vile affections; He gave them over to a reprobate mind. The state God permitted, but He did not create man in such a condition, nor force him against his will to be debased. The true history of man therefore only magnifies the grace of God, in that He should provide good news, and at such a cost, for His wilful and vile creatures. This is now set forth. Departing from God, as man did after the flood, he had nevertheless a conscience, by the light of which he judged others for sins which he also committed, and hence condemned himself, and owned thereby that he deserved the judgment of God - a judgment which will be executed in the day of God's wrath, and the principles of which the apostle plainly sets forth. (Romans 2:1-16.) And this judgment will take knowledge of the secrets of men, and will deal with Jews as well as Gentiles. Whereupon the apostle proceeds to prove, from the Old Testament Scriptures, the Jew guilty not only of ungodliness, but also of unrighteousness. (Romans 2:17-29, Romans 3:1-20) For man, then, to escape God's wrath from heaven there was, as far as he was concerned, no hope. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), is the sweeping but true verdict pronounced by God upon the human race.

All then brought in guilty, and by One whose judgment is just, and from which there is no appeal, we are cast upon God for any door of escape from our righteously deserved doom. It is here the gospel comes in, the teaching about which runs on from Romans 3:21-31; Romans 4:1-25; Romans 5:1-21; Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25; Romans 8:1-39, and is arranged under three great heads; viz., freedom from the guilt of sin, freedom from the power of sin and from the law, and freedom from the presence of sin. As to the first of these heads, we learn that God is perfectly righteous, by virtue of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, in justifying the ungodly, and has set forth Christ as a mercy-seat, or propitiatory (not propitiation), through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the passing over through His forbearance of the sins done aforetime - 1:e. the sins of the Old Testament saints - and to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The reader should remark how God is first thought of in the gospel. His character is first vindicated, His nature too cared for, in that His righteousness and holiness are both met by the blood of Christ sprinkled, as it were, upon the mercy-seat. Boasting on man's part is thereby excluded, and the law is established. (Romans 3:21-31) The ground on which God can righteously act in grace having been set forth in Romans 3:1-31, we next learn on what principle souls can be justified, as illustrated in the history of Abraham Romans 4:1-5), and the moral class which can share in this favour, of which David is the

example. (Romans 4:6-9) Then, returning to Abraham's history, the apostle reminds us that he was justified before God instituted the rite of circumcision for him and his descendants; so Gentiles as well as Jews can share in it. He was justified by faith; so are we. But the testimony given to us to believe differs from that given to him. He believed God who quickeneth the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were. We believe upon Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:9-25)

Consequences great and blessed flow to us from being justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we have access by faith into the grace, or favour, wherein we stand, as pardoned and justified ones, before the throne of God; and we rejoice, or boast, in hope of the glory of God. And more than that, we boast in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Romans 4:1-11) This part of the gospel treats of the result of the atoning death of Christ for us, and the value of His blood before God. And believing God's testimony about it, we know what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. Thus far we learn from the gospel what it is to have, and how it is we can have, freedom from the guilt of sin. Forgiven - but of this the epistle does not treat,* for it supposed that the saints knew it - they learnt they were also justified, or reckoned righteous by God Himself; hence there was no barrier to their standing in holy boldness before the throne, and the blessings enjoyed, as the consequence of justification by faith, could not, they are shown, in their special line be surpassed.

*Forgiveness of sins is only twice mentioned in the epistle. Romans 5:7, Romans 11:27. But something else is needed, and this forms the second part of this gospel; viz., freedom from the power of sin and from the law. Now here the doctrine of headship of a race can apply. We have learnt something of it experimentally, inasmuch as being descendants of Adam, in him, as head of the race, his condition, the fruit of his fall, and consequences of that fall, we all share in. But another Man has appeared, the head of a new race; so all who are ranged under Him, as their head, are viewed as in Him, and share in His present condition as regards sin and the law, and in the consequences of His act of obedience to death, the death of the cross. (Romans 11:12-19) Would any charge God with injustice for making Adam's posterity to share in the fruits of his act of disobedience? It is on this very principle that any one of us can really be blessed; for we who believe share in the consequences of the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to share in the temporal results of Adam's sin; we do share in the everlasting consequences of the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the ground is cut away from under the feet of an objector in hostility of heart to God, and the believer has cause to thank Him that, if suffering because of his forefather's sin, on that same principle he shares in the blessed results of the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. But between Adam's fall and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ the law has come in, and that in order "that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, in order that as sin has reigned in the power of death, so also might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 3:20-21) The apostle here mentions the law and sin. He will now treat of them somewhat at length, but in an inverse order, showing that by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ believers can enjoy present freedom from the power of sin, and that those once under law are set free from it by that same death. As far as Romans 5:11 the apostle has written of sins. He now treats of sin.

"What shall we say, then?" he asks. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Antinomian teaching might encourage that. But the answer is ready and decisive: "How shall we, who died to sin, live any longer therein?" If we have died to it, we cannot go on in it, that is clear. But when? and how? Some might ask. "Are ye ignorant," he adds, "that so many of us as were baptized unto Christ Jesus, were baptized unto His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." What had they professed by their baptism? They had not died to sin by it. They were buried by it with Christ unto death. They professed, however, by that rite to be disciples of Him who had died, and died to sin.* The apostle then proceeds: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also of His resurrection." The condition of the head of the race as to sin is the condition of everyone who is ranged under that head. Christ has died to it. Christians, therefore, have died to it. Thus we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, and now await that of His resurrection. "We shall be of His resurrection." But whilst awaiting that, when we shall be free from the presence of sin, God has judicially dealt with our old man in the cross of Christ, that we should now know deliverance from its thraldom. And since Christ, who has died to sin once for all, now lives to God, we are to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:1-11.) Here for the first time in this epistle do we read of our being in Christ. This flows out of the truth of headship treated of, as we have seen, in the previous chapter. Exhortations now follow (Romans 6:12-14), after which the subject is pursued one step further. If we may not continue in sin, may we sin? some might ask. We have changed masters, says the apostle, so that even cannot be allowed. We were servants to sin, but have become servants to righteousness and to God. Hence comes the exhortation, "Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness," and so be fruitful to God. (Romans 6:15-23.)

*As another says: "We have then been buried with Him by baptism for death, having part in it, entered into it by baptism, which represents it." We thus take the ground of being dead with Christ. - ED.

Paul had spoken of the entrance of the law and the purport of it. (Romans 3:20) He will now point out how souls get free from being under it, and that is by death. But if free, as we have already learnt (Romans 6:22), we are not our own masters, that we may live to ourselves; for though we have died to the law, we are still here on earth. Hence he adduces the illustration of a woman set free by death from her first husband, able to be for another husband. "So," he writes, "ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be for another, even Him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit to God." (Romans 7:1-4.) That is the doctrine and the purport of it. The need of such a deliverance, and the experience of a quickened soul under. law, is now set forth in Romans 7:7-25. What believer has not known something of this in the process of learning himself? Yet it is not true Christian experience. Nor are we to rest contented never to advance beyond it upon earth; for there are three defined steps by which the believer gets out of it. First, he learns that in himself there dwells no good thing.* (Romans 7:18) Next, he discerns the difference of the natures within him. "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Romans 7:20) Then looking round for a deliverer, for it is that he wants, he finds he has deliverance through Christ Jesus his Lord. (Romans 7:24-25) He has not to hope for it. C. E. Stuart.

There is also another thing. The soul learns its utter powerlessness (see Romans 7:18-19, Romans 7:23), and it is this, in conjunction with what is above stated, that leads it to look without for deliverance. - ED. The two natures now clearly discerned, the special blessings connected with the teaching about sin and the law are enumerated, and in the order in which the subject has been taken up. First, there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1.) This answers to the teaching in Romans 5:12-19. Next, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (2.) This corresponds to the subject of Romans 6:1-23. And third, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteous requirement (dikaioma) of the law should be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 6:3-4) This corresponds to the subject of Romans 7:1-25. After this the different actings of the two natures are set forth; for there is, and there can be, no change in them (Romans 7:5-7); and we are taught the sad lesson that those in the flesh cannot please God. "But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in us." Without the Spirit of Christ** we are not of Him; 1:e. do not belong to Him. If Christ be in us the body is dead, because of sin; and the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. This is to be practically true in the present; and for the future, "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Romans 7:8-11) But this leads on to the third great division of the gospel freedom from the presence of sin. Freedom from its guilt, we are taught, flows out of the value of the blood of Christ in God’s sight. This for us is a question of faith. Freedom from the power of sin and of the law comes from the death of Christ, and is a matter of experience. Freedom from the presence of sin will be the result of divine power on our behalf. This is a matter of expectation, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is to us the earnest of it.

*The last clause of this verse, as commonly printed, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," is an interpolation. It comes in rightly in the fourth verse. The teaching about the Holy Ghost is now introduced; for till we reach this part of the epistle the apostle, except in Romans 5:5, has kept silence about it. What has been done by the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and what His death is to be to us, these have been the themes. And though it is only in the power of the Spirit that we can profit by the latter subject, we can see the wisdom of keeping the death of Christ before us, to be learnt in an experimental way, before teaching about the Spirit, who is the energy of the new man, is entered upon. Now, however, the apostle, guided of the Spirit, turns to instruct the saints about the Holy Ghost, as The Holy Ghost is thus called because He dwelt in Christ. dwelling in them and being with them. So he proceeds to point out some blessed results of this. Led by the Spirit we are sons of God, having received the spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Besides this He also witnesses with our spirits that we are children of God, and as such heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 5:14-17) The thought of suffering with Christ introduces the subject of the inheritance which we shall share with Christ. But in what condition is that now? Creation sharing in consequences flowing from the act of its head - Adam - was made subject to vanity, not indeed willingly, and groans, bowed down under the incubus arising from the presence and workings of sin. And we too groan who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body. Nor are these groans in vain. Creation will be set free from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. But there is no deliverance for it till that

blessed consummation is effected for the heirs of God. Thus we who are now saved are saved in hope, and meanwhile as we see and feel the wretchedness around us, the fruit of sin, the Spirit, the other Advocate or Paraclete (John 14:16), intercedes when we know not what to pray for as we ought, with groanings which cannot be uttered. And the Searcher of hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He intercedes according to God. But one thing at least we do know - that all things work together for good to them that love God. For His purposes concerning them will infallibly be fulfilled, and where it is a question of the divine purpose all can be viewed as if already carried out, so that it can be said, "Whom He justified them He also glorified." (Romans 8:30)

God is then for us. Wondrous thought! And here closing the direct teaching about the gospel of God, Paul stands forth and asks three grand questions - first, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Next, "Since He justifies us, who shall condemn us?" And thirdly, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ, or from the love of God?" No circumstances can deprive us of the enjoyment of the former; no power can hinder the outflow to us of the latter. Far-reaching then are the results of the death of Christ. A blessed and full gospel assuredly goes forth on the strength of it. Creation is deeply interested in His death, but men, both sinners and saints, how much more! Yet all to whom the gospel was preached did not receive it, and some thought that it clashed with God’s ways with, and promises to, His earthly people; for they are His people who enjoyed special privileges, and have had made to them special promises. (Romans 9:1-5.) To a consideration of this point - a most important one - the apostle next turns, in Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36.

Under three heads does he treat of this:

1, The ways of God with Israel in the past (Romans 9:6-24);

2, The word of God about Israel and the Gentiles (Romans 9:25-33; Romans 10:1-21);

3, The purposes of God about Israel in the future. (Romans 11:1-36)

Now if God was acting in sovereignty, saving whom He would, whether Jews or Gentiles, natural descent it is clear could be no ground on which to count for blessing. Yet Israel prided themselves on that. But had God dealt in the past on that principle? "They are not all Israel which are of Israel." For on the principle of natural descent the Samaritans, who called Jacob their father, might put in a claim to stand on common ground with the Jews, and the Ishmaelites, Abraham’s descendants, as well as the children of Keturah, would then stand side by side with the chosen people. (Romans 9:6-9) What Jew would have relished that? Would they quarrel then with God’s undisputable right to choose whom He would? Then the Edomite must be admitted to have part with Israel. (Romans 9:10-13) Was God unrighteous in dealing in pure grace? It was owing solely to His grace and mercy that their fathers were not cut off in the wilderness, and the nation had not begun again its existence in the offspring only of Moses. (Romans 9:15-18) So Israel must own that in the past they owed all to God’s sovereignty, election, and mercy, on which grounds God was now bringing in those once Gentiles to share with those once Jews in the fulness of His grace. (Romans 9:19-24) And all that He was now doing was in strict accordance with that prophetic Word which had also foretold Israel’s rejection of grace. (Romans 9:25-33, Romans 10:1-21)

Thus far then as to God’s ways with Israel in the past, and His dealing with souls in the present. Looking at the future, Paul asks, "Has God cast away His people which He foreknew?" No; for

Paul, who was one of them, was saved - a sample, with the rest who then believed, of the remnant according to the election of grace. There had been such a remnant in the darkest days of Israel's history, when the ten tribes had apostatized under Ahab. There was such a remnant in Paul's day. There is one still. (Romans 11:1-10.) Have they stumbled that they should fall? Was that the purpose to be carried out by their fall? No; but that, through their fall, salvation should come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. But here the Gentiles need a caution. The people of Israel being naturally, as it were, off the scene, and the Gentiles partaking of privileges which once were exclusively Israel's, as branches of the olive tree, let such beware that they abuse not their privilege, and fail to continue in God's goodness, as Israel failed before them. (Romans 11:11-24) For blindness in part has happened to Israel, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Then all Israel shall be saved, as the prophet Isaiah had said (Romans 11:25-29), "Thus God has concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." For on the ground of mercy He can bless in a way and in a measure none of us could ever claim. Having stated this, the apostle closes with an expression of admiration of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and ascribes to Him glory for ever. Here the second great section of the epistle ends, the first having terminated with the close of Romans 8:1-39.

Exhortations now follow, Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, based on two considerations - the mercies of God, as taught 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 the character of the time in which our lot is cast. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1); and to put away the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light. (Romans 13:12.) Now these exhortations apply to the various relations in life in which saints may be found, whether as members of the one body (Romans 12:3-8), as brethren (Romans 12:9-13), as men on earth having to do with others (Romans 12:14-21), as citizens in the world, in subjection to the powers that be (Romans 13:1-7), or as neighbours. (Romans 13:8-10) And since the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, it behoves us to wake up out of sleep, and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ; and not to make provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts. (Romans 8:11-14)

After these exhortations, which we have but briefly glanced at, the apostle turned to another subject, and one of great importance in his day. God was calling out from Jews and Gentiles a people for His name. The former had received a revelation from Him, in which distinction of meats and observance of days had a prominent place; the latter had previously received no written revelation, and so had nothing of that kind to unlearn when they became Christians. The believer, formerly a Gentile, was free in his conscience as regards meats and days. With some who had been Jews it was different. They had still conscientious scruples about them. To both these classes a word was now addressed. (Romans 7:14-15.) Paul himself, once a Jew, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, was as free in these things as any Christian who had been a Gentile. (Romans 14:14; Romans 14:20.) But conscience in each was to be respected. This he inculcates. The strong one was not to despise the weak one; and the weak one was not to judge the strong. "To his own master he standeth or falleth." (Romans 14:4-5.) Further, both were brethren. "Why then," asks Paul, "dost thou judge thy brother? why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God," according to Isaiah. (Isaiah 45:23.) Would we judge? "Let us," he, adds, "judge rather not to put a stumbling-block in a brother's way, and let us follow things

which make for peace, and things wherewith we may edify one another." (Romans 14:13-19) If free for one’s self, one’s brother’s interest is to be taken into account. And the ways of Christ, who pleased not Himself, is the model put before us, as an example and encouragement. His example, here adduced, guards the teaching of this part of this epistle from abuse. Would any point to this portion in vindication of what is wrong, whether moral or ecclesiastical? They could not plead the example of the Lord in vindication of such a course. The question here raised had to do with ceremonial observances instituted by the law, to which, however, as Christians, we have died, as we have already seen. The epistle now draws to a close. Paul was hoping to visit them at Rome. Meanwhile he sends his salutations to those he knew there, and they were not a few. (Romans 16:3-15.) Many here mentioned are otherwise unknown to us. But the chapter is interesting, as it shows that service done for God and for Christ is not forgotten, nor are those, who from some physical cause are past service, ignored. The beloved Persis, who had laboured, is remembered, as well as Tryphena and Tryphosa, who were still working for the Lord. (Romans 16:12) After that he warns them to mark those which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine they had received, and to avoid them, and for themselves he would have them wise concerning that which is good, and simple concerning evil. Satan would be bruised under their feet shortly by the God of peace. Now he closes, "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 writings, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to the only wise God, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." (Romans 16:25-27) With this epistle the canonical writings of Paul before his imprisonment at Rome are completed. C. E. Stuart.

S. The First Epistle to Timothy.

The First Epistle to Timothy. The pastoral epistles of Paul, all three written we may safely affirm after the termination of the apostle's first imprisonment, now claim our attention. In each of them he presents himself in his apostolic character, and that in connection with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, supplying us, by the way in which he introduces himself in these three letters, with a keynote to the contents of each of them. In the one before us, which contains regulations given to Timothy for the right ordering of God's house on earth, Paul describes himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope. Furnished with such credentials, he was fully competent to give directions for matters concerning the assemblies of God. In the second epistle to Timothy, which enjoins individual faithfulness to the Lord at all cost, Paul writes of himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." And in that to Titus, which dwells on practical piety in every condition of life, he reminds his own child after the common faith of his apostleship "according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to piety."

Timothy and Titus were apostolic delegates charged with the service of watching over doctrine, and of regulating matters which concerned the well-being and order - the one of the assembly at Ephesus, the other of the assemblies in Crete; and the letters addressed to both would serve among other things to authenticate their mission. (1 Timothy 1:18; Titus 1:5.)

Paul had visited Ephesus on two occasions ere he went to Rome. (Acts 18:19; Acts 19:1.) On the first occasion he was on his way to Jerusalem from Macedonia. On the second occasion Timothy had left Ephesus, sent by Paul into Macedonia (Acts 19:22), whilst he tarried for a season still in that city, the metropolis of proconsular Asia. Hence it is pretty plain, from the circumstances recounted in this epistle (1 Timothy 1:3), Timothy being left at Ephesus when Paul went into Macedonia, that it must have been written at a date subsequent to his first appearance before Nero.

Timothy was to keep watch over the doctrine taught in the assembly. There was need for this. Of what would take place in Ephesus after Paul's death he had warned the Ephesian elders years before at Miletus. How the prediction was verified the Lord's address to the angel of that Church surely intimates. (Revelation 2:2.) But whilst he was still in life he saw heterodoxy getting in there, and the saints in danger of being ensnared by fables and endless genealogies, which ministered questions rather than God's dispensation which is in faith; whereas the end of the command, 1:e. what was enjoined, is love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, which things some having missed had turned aside to vain talking, desiring to be law-teachers, understanding neither what they said nor whereof they affirmed. Such were the dangers at Ephesus to the maintenance of sound teaching to which Timothy's attention was especially drawn. Paul had pointed them out before leaving for Macedonia; he refers again to them in this letter.

About the fables he says nothing more. They were not in any sense from God, and they did not, it was evident, further God's dispensation which is in faith. Nothing which does not do that is of any real profit in teaching. Questions of this kind might amuse and exercise the intellect, but they did not tell upon the conscience. Of the law which some wished to teach he speaks. That came from God, and is good if used lawfully. It is like a rule which applied to anything crooked shows where it departs from the straight line; and applied to men, when unrighteous and ungodly, shows them what as responsible creatures they ought to be, and wherein they have sinned. Such is its use. It convicts and condemns men of unrighteousness and ungodliness, in a word, of whatever is against sound doctrine according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which Paul was put in trust.

Another revelation then had come from God - "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and, consequent on His death, and resurrection, and ascension, the gospel of the glory of God was to be preached. This met men in their need. The law could in a way, yet not fully even, prove to man his need. The gospel shows how fully that has been met, and proves the folly of those, when it is really understood, who would be law teachers, applying the law for a purpose, and to those for whom it was not intended by God. (1 Timothy 1:9) The mention of the gospel recalls to Paul the grace in which he shared, a sample, a pattern of the extent of God's long-suffering goodness. He who was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, characteristics severally true of men in the last days (2 Timothy 3:2), of the Jew in the apostles' time (1 Thessalonians 2:15), and of the heathen world before the cross (Romans 1:30), had obtained mercy after having opposed the truth through ignorance and in unbelief, the grace of the Lord having surpassingly abounded with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. What the law could not do was effected by the gospel; and Paul, once the ardent champion of Judaism, here stands out as the fullest illustration of grace. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," he writes, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" that in him as chief Jesus Christ might show forth the whole long-suffering for a delineation of those about to believe on Him to life everlasting. How different then are these two revelations of the mind of God, both dealing with the sinner - the former to bring out into fuller belief his sinfulness, and to condemn him; the latter to meet him as condemned that he might be saved, and that perfectly. Hence thinking of the gospel of the glory of God, which shows how fully by the atonement He has been glorified in His very nature and character, nothing could be more suited than an expression of praise - "To the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, be honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen."

Now, returning to the purpose for which he wrote this epistle, he commits the charge to Timothy, his child in the faith, who had been marked out by prophecies for this service, exhorting him by them to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. The faith he was to keep, and to maintain a good conscience as well, the effect of putting away the latter being seen in the cases of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had now made shipwreck concerning the faith, and had in consequence been delivered by Paul to Satan to learn not to blaspheme. Two points are noteworthy here: first, the importance of maintaining a good conscience, and the results that may follow its abandonment; and second, the way God can use the enemy for the profit (if such an one will learn) of the person delivered up to him. Souls once doing his behests are set free from his thraldom by the gospel. (Ephesians 2:2.) Professors could be delivered up to him to learn by

punishment their needed lesson. Thus God can use him as a creature in the carrying out, of His designs, he himself having no such power over one in the assembly, unless such an one is delivered up to him.* * He can and does tempt, but has not power over the person unless God permits it.

Following on this exhortation given to Timothy for the fulfilment of the service entrusted to him, we have instructions concerning the Church in general (1 Timothy 2:3); and after that those which in an especial way would help to guide Timothy in his work at Ephesus. (1 Timothy 4:1-16, 1 Timothy 5:1-25, 1 Timothy 6:1-21)

And, first, as to prayer. (2) The gospel of the grace of God being preached, prayer was to be made for all men, and the spirit of supplication might rightly go out on behalf of rulers and all that are in authority, whatever their ways towards Christians might be, that under the shelter of their rule, government being maintained, Christians might lead a quiet and tranquil life in all piety and gravity. But whilst this could result from prayer on behalf of rulers, no one on earth was excluded from the offer of grace. Thus the everlasting interests of any man, whether a ruler or a subject, might form the burden of a Christian’s supplication, and be well-pleasing to our Saviour God, who is willing that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; and this was evidenced by the gospel. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be borne in its own times, for which Paul was appointed a herald and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Having stated for whom we may pray, and the reason for it, since God is not acting in favour towards one nation, but towards men, the apostle proceeds to give directions for the saints when met together for prayer. All one in Christ, the distinction of sexes is, nevertheless, to be maintained in the assembly, and each receives an appropriate word. The men were to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath, and doubting or reasoning. A spirit of that kind would be unseemly for those who were to lead the devotions of others. As to the women, the character of their attire and ways were not subjects beneath the notice of the Holy Ghost. Creation order was to be remembered, and the instruction to be drawn from it was to be put in practice. The woman was to learn in quietness* with all subjection. She was not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in quietness hesuchia. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression." What a simple way of solving the question! God’s word in Genesis casts a light on it. His order of acting before the fall, and the history of the fall, both help us in this matter. So not only do these two chapters of Genesis (Genesis 2:1-25, Genesis 3:1-24) acquaint us with facts of which otherwise we might not have been informed, they also furnish guidance on a point of order in the Christian assembly. But more. If God would maintain creation order on such a matter, and would have His people remember it, He would also maintain His character as a Saviour God, and here declares it. He will preserve the woman through child-bearing, her special sorrow, a consequence of the fall, if they - 1:e. the man and the woman - continue in faith, and love, and holiness with sobriety.

*Not silence, as in1 Corinthians 14:1-40, but quietness - hesuchia. (See 2 Thessalonians 3:12, "With quietness they work;" and Numbers 11:2 of our chapter, hesuchion - peaceable; so also 1 Peter 3:4, "a quiet spirit.") From this question of order in a prayer-meeting the apostle passes on to that of office-bearers in the assembly. (3) There were such duly appointed in apostolic days. There

may be persons fitted for that work still. If any one desired to exercise oversight, he desired a good work. Now since the assembly, and the regulations connected with it, were peculiar to Christianity, directions were needed for the instruction of the saints about this. And since the preaching of grace did not set the world right, nor was intended to do that, it was requisite in the existing state of things to describe the qualifications suited for those who should be elders or deacons. This Paul here sketches out. In apostolic times more than one bishop was met with in the assembly. It was so at Ephesus. (Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28.) It was the case at Philippi. (Php 1:1.) It was the same at Jerusalem. (James 5:14.) What were requisites for an elder or bishop - for the office is the same - we learn about in 1 Timothy 3:2-7; and those needful for one doing deacon's work in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; coupled, as in the case of the latter, with instructions about their wives. For certainly the order of the subjects here treated of seems to fix the reference to the women (1 Timothy 3:11-12) (since it is introduced in the middle of the instructions about the deacons) to the wives of the last-named office-bearers. Titus was commissioned to ordain elders. Timothy, as far as we know, was not. But the qualifications needful for one who would fill either of these offices being set forth in this epistle, we learn, as Timothy might, what manner of persons were fitted to fill them. So when we meet with any one willing to undertake such service, and who possesses the requisite qualifications, room should be allowed him thus to labour for the good of all. The wisdom manifested in putting such instruction on record is apparent; and though none have the authority to ordain elders now, this chapter is of real value, and a help to all who would have the assembly ordered in accordance with the mind of God. One qualification common to both these offices we would just notice, for the rest need no comment. Both the bishop and the deacon were to be the husband of one wife, mias gynaikos andra. This does not mean one who has never remarried. The regulation is directed against polygamy, allowed by the law (Deuteronomy 21:15), and practised by the heathen. Christianity forbids the practice of it, taking us back in this, as in other things, to creation order; but it does not enjoin on the polygamist, when converted, the putting away of his wives. How God in His compassion cares for the woman The polygamist, however, was disqualified as such from being an office-bearer in the Church of God. The burden of such a state of things was thus placed by God on the shoulders of the right person - the man, not the woman.

What an interest does God take in the assembly to give such minute directions about its orderly walk and internal arrangements! And no wonder when we learn what it is - the house of God, the assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15) It is His house, so He gives commandments about it; it is His assembly, called out to own Him the living God in opposition to idols; it is the pillar of the truth, so should uphold and exhibit it; it is the foundation, the base on which alone the truth can find a resting-place on earth. Thus we learn something of the inward character and outward service of the Church. But it is not the truth, nor does it teach it, though it upholds it; yet the truth has been manifested, and the mystery, or secret, of piety has been disclosed, and that in a person. "Without controversy," or, "confessedly, great is the mystery of piety, who* was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3:16) *Who - os, not God - Theos. So most textual critics and best uncials, No ancient version has God here.

Now this was to be maintained by the assembly, and the need for this would appear, when in accordance with the Spirit's prophetic, utterance some in latter times would "apostatise from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy; having

their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." Demons trading on man's consciousness of defilement would suggest as the remedy abstinence from meats and marriage, the things which God has provided for His creature's welfare, thus making God the author of man's lack of piety. Man's lack of it is evident; but the mystery, or secret of it, God, not demons, has disclosed, and in the incarnate One has displayed. He who is the life of His saints, and is in them, is the mystery of it; and in proportion as He is really their example, true piety will be developed in each one. Nothing that God has provided for His creature is defiling. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving ; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer; 1:e. by God's grant to Noah (Genesis 9:3-4), and by the recipient's thanksgiving. Nothing can be conceived more devilish than such doctrine as the apostle here combats, and the source of which he unmasks - men made the mouthpiece of demons (for the demons are represented in the passage as speaking the lies) to inject into the mind such thoughts of God. Putting the brethren in mind of these things, Timothy would be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished up in the words of faith and of the good doctrine (the opposite of demoniacal teaching) which he had followed. From this point Paul turns to address Timothy more directly, exhorting him, first, as to that which he should avoid; next, what he should cultivate; and then to what he should give himself. He was to avoid profane and old wives' fables; he was to exercise or train himself to "piety, which is profitable for everything, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In connection with this we meet with the third of those faithful sayings recorded in the pastoral epistles. (1 Timothy 1:15, 1 Timothy 3:1; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8.) "For this cause we labour and suffer reproach, or strive, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." These things he was to teach, and to be an example, young though he was, of believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Further, he was to give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, and to be careful not to neglect the gift received through Paul with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, having been marked out for this service, for which he was fitted by the gift, by a prophetic utterance on the part of some member of the assembly. (1 Timothy 4:1-16)

Timothy then was young, yet he was placed in authority over all in the assembly at Ephesus. Hence regulations are appended for his guidance in dealing with people whether young or old. (1 Timothy 5:1-2) Injunctions too he received about widows, and the qualifications and the age of such as might well be put on the list to be chargeable to the assembly. Added to this are wholesome words for those who had widows, and for those who as young women were widows. (1 Timothy 5:3-16) All this we learn was not beneath the Spirit's notice, for it concerned order and comeliness of behaviour in the house of God.

Further, having set forth the qualifications suited for such as desired to exercise oversight, the word of God testifies of His care of such by bespeaking due honour to be rendered to them if faithfully doing their work; and especially were those to be honoured who laboured in the word and doctrine as well. All such were to be cared for in temporal matters if needing it. In proof of this, the apostle adduces God's mind from both the Old and New Testament revelation. (Deuteronomy 25:4; Luke 10:7.) One sees here distinctly marked out the difference between office and ministry. An elder was such by virtue of his office. He might, or might not be able to minister in the word as well. To the office he was appointed by the Holy Ghost. (Acts 20:28.) In himself, if a labourer in the

word, he was a gift from Christ (Ephesians 4:11), and received for the exercise of his ministry a gift from the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 12:11.) Further, if any elder was complained of, for in the carrying out of his service he might be exposed to the malice of the unruly, Timothy was cautioned against entertaining a charge against him, unless substantiated by two or three witnesses. Thus God would have such protected from malicious prosecutions and attacks, by which a sensitive and faithful servant might be crushed in his spirit. But offenders, whether elders or others, "them that sin," implying, it would appear, the existence of an evil habit unjudged, rather than an accidental fall, Timothy was to convict before all, that the rest might fear. A solemn office he was entrusted with, in the discharge of which he was to be faithful and just (1 Timothy 5:21), and to avoid any hasty identifying of himself with others. (1 Timothy 5:22-25) In the closing chapter (1 Timothy 6:1-21) two classes of society, widely different, are seen to be objects of the apostle's care - the slave, who might possess nothing that he could call his own on earth (1 Timothy 1:1-20, 1 Timothy 2:1-15); and the wealthy, who had it in their power to distribute to others of their substance. (1 Timothy 6:17-19.) As for the slave, subjection to his master he was to exhibit, whether that master was a heathen or a Christian, in order that the name of God and the doctrine should not be blasphemed. If his master was a Christian, there was an additional motive for serving him well. The flesh might suggest the despising him as a master, because the slave was his brother in the faith. God's word would remind him of the propriety of serving him well, because he was a Christian, faithful, 1:e. a believer, and beloved. These things Timothy was to teach and exhort. But all might not receive the exhortation, and a different doctrine might be promulgated. Heterodoxy might rear up its head on this as on other points, proving, however, if it did, that the men who taught it, or supported it, did not consent to wholesome words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, being proud, knowing nothing, but being sick about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, injurious speaking (literally blasphemies), evil surmisings, incessant quarrels of men of corrupted minds and destitute of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain. Here we reach the root whence such teaching comes. Godliness however, with contentment, is great gain. On the other hand, the desire to be rich is fruitful in results, damaging to its pursuer both as regards this world and the next. (1 Timothy 5:9-10) Such a pursuit Timothy was to flee from, following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; striving, too, earnestly in the good contest of the faith, and laying hold of eternal life, to which he had been called, and had confessed a good confession before many witnesses. For the servant and the soldier must work and fight to the end. Of this Paul reminds him in a beautiful but most solemn way. When Moses was about to depart this life, by God's command he gave Joshua a charge in the sight of all the congregation. (Numbers 27:19.) Now ere Paul departed he gave Timothy a charge, but in the sight of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, putting him consciously in their presence, to keep the commandment without spot and unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; for till His appearing - epiphaneia, a different thought and time from His coming for His own into the air - Timothy, as a servant, would not be discharged from his responsibility by the Master taking account of his service. Hence to the appearing of Christ he is here directed. Before God, who keeps all things in life, he was thus put by Paul, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. The mention of God in this character would embolden him, and the remembrance of Christ Jesus as a faithful witness would encourage him. With their eyes on him he was to go forward, learning how God values a good confession, and will own it, whenHebrews 1:1-14 :e. God, who is the blessed

and only Potentate, the King* of those who reign, and the Lord of those who exercise lordship, 1:e. the fountain of all authority and rule in the universe, who only has immortality, dwelling in light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, will show Christ Jesus to all as His faithful witness here on earth.

In the Revelation (Revelation 19:16) the Lord has the title of Basileus Basileon and Kurios Kurion, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Here, speaking of God, the terms are different; viz., Basileus ton Basileuonton and Kurios ton kurieuonton. To what a future does he point him! And surely with that in power in his soul he would warn the rich not to trust in uncertain riches, but in God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on that which is really life. * ontos, not aioion, is the true reading. With one word more of exhortation this earnestly written letter closes: "O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane, vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with you," not "thee;" for though writing to an individual, Paul was wont to remember all the saints. The wisdom displayed in this epistle in connection with the internal affairs of the assembly, and the earnest and frequent exhortations to maintain and to teach the truth, make it a portion of no little value in these days.

C. E. Stuart.

I don’t know that, if anyone wanted to be to the praise of God, he could do it better than by being full of Christ. I meet some aged saints full of Christ, saying, "I’ve done with this world, but I have Christ. The only thing I have got to speak of is what this Christ of God is - He is All." I don’t believe anything is better than that. If I look around me I see in saints - not want of intelligence, not lack of knowledge, not want of activity - but what they want is the affections full of Christ. There’s plenty of oil in the machine that’s full of Christ. If the heart is full of Christ, and full of joy in the Holy Ghost, then we have got our other portion, our real portion. The early Christians were so full of Christ that all their trials, all their difficulties, sank down into nothing. Why is it not so with us?

G. V. Wigram.

S. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians. Of the fourteen epistles of Paul in the New Testament those to the Thessalonians are probably the earliest. His first great missionary journey (Acts 13:14), undertaken in company with Barnabas, did not give rise to any letter from him that we are acquainted with; and to none of the churches then founded do we hear of his writing, even in after years. But part of the fruits of that journey is seen in the conversion of Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, who, being well reported of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium on the occasion of Paul's second visit to those towns, then joined his company, to be ever after most intimately associated with him in the work. With Paul and Silas, Timothy was identified in the work at Thessalonica, and is mentioned with Silas in both letters to the assembly of the Thessalonians.

Thessalonica was the capital of the second government of Macedonia, which province had been divided into four parts, Philippi being the capital of the first. Here the Jews possessed a synagogue (Acts 17:1), which it would seem at Philippi they did not. (Acts 16:13.) Arriving at Thessalonica, after leaving Philippi, having passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia on their way, they entered the synagogue on the sabbath day, where Paul availed himself of the opportunity, of which he was always ready to take advantage, to preach to his own countrymen the glad tidings of the grace of God. The Word was not preached in vain; for some of them "believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." Amongst the Gentiles the work greatly spread; many were converted, and turned from idols to serve a living and true God (the contrast to all their idols), and to wait for His Son from the heavens. (1 Thessalonians 1:10.)

What length of time the apostle remained here we cannot say. He preached in the synagogue on three different sabbaths (Acts 17:2); but it is likely that his stay in the town was longer than that, since the Philippians sent him help there once and again. (Php 4:16.) Details, however, of this kind are wanting; but the character of the work, and the results of it, are in some measure made known to us, and this more especially by the notices about it in the first epistle addressed to the assembly in that town. Driven away by the persecution of the Jews, but leaving behind a goodly number of converts, Paul had earnestly desired to return to see their faces, and to perfect that which was lacking in their faith. That consolation was denied him; Satan hindered it. But Timothy had visited them by the apostle's desire to establish them, and to comfort them concerning their faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted them, and the labours of these hearty evangelists had been in vain. Bringing to Paul a re-assuring account of their faith and love, and good remembrance of Paul and Silas, "greatly desiring to see us," as he writes, "as they also to see you": "we were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress, by your faith:" for now," he adds, "we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 3:8.) Hence he wrote to them this letter, which is more hortatory than doctrinal in its character. As the first of his epistles which is both inspired and canonical (for he may have written other inspired ones for aught we know; but they were never really canonical, nor have they come down to our time), it is of especial interest to us, as it gives an idea, such as we have nowhere else presented to us, of the way the truth was received, the

spirit in which Paul and his companions worked, and the hope which the converts had embraced, and clung to most firmly. Viewed in this light, it is well suited to be the first epistle which came from his pen, forming a kind of introduction to all that he subsequently wrote; for his epistles are all addressed to Christian converts.

Addressed "to the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ," the apostle at the outset reminds them of the perfect security of the assembly. It was in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. No power then of the enemy could destroy it. (John 10:28-30.) Suffering as they were and had been (1 Thessalonians 2:14), and would still be (2 Thessalonians 1:5-7), this must have been most consoling. Writing to the Corinthians, he reminds those saints that the assembly at Corinth was God's assembly (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1); for their spiritual state, as we learn from the first epistle (1 Corinthians 3:1-23), necessitated such a reminder. On the other hand, writing to the Thessalonian saints, against whom persecution was active, he both times reminds them (1 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) of the assembly's perfect security; and tried as they were by the enemy's attempts to stamp out through persecution the work of God in the place, since neither false doctrine nor carelessness of walk had wrought their dire and withering work among them, the apostle had no need to blame them for anything. Encouragement and exhortation were called for, and this last of the simplest kind. From 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 we learn how the work spread. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 we have unfolded the spirit in which Paul and his companions worked. In 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 we learn of his encouragement about them by the visit of Timothy, sent there at his request. This is followed (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28.) by exhortations, and the revelation about the rapture, the ministry then suited to their need.

Opening with the assurance that he could thank God for them, making mention of them always in his prayers, he states the ground for his confident thanksgivings on their behalf, and by the subjects taken up in the body of the epistle we may learn what must have been the tenor of his prayers for them. Their work of faith, their labour of love, their patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, these three fruits of the divine nature (1 Corinthians 13:1-13) he could not forget, and these assured him of their election as beloved of God, "knowing," as he wrote, "brethren, beloved of God, your election." With them as with him, the truth of election was not a matter for argument, but to be exemplified. He owned it as a truth, and they showed that it was true of them, for ample and manifest proof had been afforded of the reality of their conversion. The gospel had come to them not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; for the walk of the labourers testified to the reality of the truth preached, and the converts became imitators of them and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost. (1 Thessalonians 1:5-7.) Joy filled their hearts whilst persecution was stirred up against them. The life too, the labours, the sufferings of these evangelists, told powerfully on the converts, and produced corresponding results in them, which those around could see, and with which those at a distance became acquainted (1 Thessalonians 1:8-9); for the work was not done in a corner. What an advertisement was this! And clear was their testimony, and decided the stand which they made; for they turned to God from idols to serve a (not the) living and true God, and to wait for His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

There is a bond which binds believers together. That was owned and manifested by them. (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.) There is a special tie between the labourer and those who have received help and profit from his service. Of this last the apostle now goes on to speak. Gentiles and idolaters these saints had been, now they had become endeared (egenethete) to Paul, Silas, and Timotheus, who were willing to have imparted unto them, not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls. (1 Thessalonians 2:8.) Love working in their hearts moved them to evangelize these souls. Recently suffering for the truth's sake at Philippi, they nevertheless could not be silent when they entered the town of Thessalonica, so they were bold in their God, to speak unto them the gospel of God in much contention. How the heart of an evangelist is here displayed to us! And how did they work? Their exhortation was not of deceit, nor in uncleanness, nor in guile. They spoke as those pleasing, not men, but God, who trieth the heart. They carried on their work consciously in God's presence, so no honeyed words of flattery came forth from their lips; nor was covetousness a motive which was working in their hearts, nor of men sought they glory, nor any temporal advantage, foregoing what they might have claimed, because, as a nurse cherisheth her children, they were affectionately desirous of their souls, and laboured day and night with their hands for the supply of their own bodily wants. In such a spirit did they evangelize. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-9.) In what spirit, it may be asked, did they teach? 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 give the answer. As a father does his children, Paul exhorted them to walk worthy of God, who had called them to His kingdom and glory.

Thanksgiving filled Paul's heart as he thought of these saints, remembering how they had received the Word, not gathering round him and his companions in labour, endeared though they were to the Thessalonian Christians, but receiving the Word as it was in truth God's word, which was effectually working in them that believed. What knitting of heart there was between Paul and these converts! How he longed to be with them again, but was hindered by the enemy! To that he had to bow. But his enforced absence did not diminish the strength of his love, and whilst it was enforced he was, as it were, bereaved of them (aporphanisthentes), though only for a time. "For what," he writes, "is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20.) He looked across the interval between that day and the Lord's coming to reign, and was comforted. But what affection he had for them! For a time the enemy might seem to triumph, and those he was using as tools might frustrate the desires of Paul's heart. But where will be Satan and those instruments of his malice when the saints and Paul meet together in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ? Meanwhile, his heart yearning over them, he sent Timothy to encourage them lest by any means the tempter had tempted them, and his labour had been in vain. (1 Thessalonians 3:5.) Learning from Timothy that they stood firm, their faith and love manifested, and their desire to see Paul unabated, he was comforted in all his troubles, and turned to God the Father to open up the way for him to revisit them, which possibly was granted to him during his third missionary journey. (Acts 20:1-2.) He desired to be with them to perfect that which was lacking in their faith. Meantime he gave vent to his desire for them, that the Lord would establish their hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even the Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. And this would be effected by their increasing and abounding in love towards each other, and towards all men, even as Paul and his companions did towards them. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13.) How remarkably was the enemy really baffled whilst apparently triumphing! Sorrow and persecution he could cause them and Paul; but a joy which nothing could extinguish those Christians

experienced, and the future, when his power would be broken, was only the more vividly presented to their hearts.

Paul's desires expressed for them, the needful exhortations follow. He had spoken of holiness and of love. As to both he would now remind them. Holiness in conduct became them, and he would enforce it. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.) The debasing character of idolatry, and how it blunts the moral sense of men, these verses clearly demonstrate. Man becomes a slave to his passions, and seeks to satisfy them at the expense, if need be, of his neighbour, a brother. That would not do for the Christian. Moreover, he who in such a matter overreached his brother in Christ, sinning with his wife, despised not man, but God, who had also given His Holy Spirit to both; 1:e. the offender and the one offended against. The indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost, which makes our bodies His temples, should restrain them from sinning in such a way. But if they did, the Lord, he reminded them, was the avenger of all such. Holiness enjoined, he passes on to the subject of brotherly love. Of that he had no need to write, for they were taught of God to love one another, and they did it, only he desired that they would increase more and more (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10) and be quiet, and do each their own work, walking honestly toward them that were without, and that they might have need of nothing. How he would have them increase and abound. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10.)

Love, the activity of the divine nature, was present among them, and they gave a proof of brotherly love unexampled in the whole range of the church's experience, sorrowing for their friends who had died in the Lord, fearing that by death they would miss the seeing and being with Him when He returned. To comfort their hearts as to this, the apostle explains, by a revelation vouchsafed for their benefit (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17), the order of events, when the Lord shall cone for His saints. All who sleep through Jesus will God "bring with Him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14), that is, when He appears in power to reign. How that is to be brought about, that the sleeping saints can come with Him, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 explain. So these, if arranged in order of time, would come before 1 Thessalonians 4:14, describing the gathering together of the saints, in order that they may come with the Lord. He whose they are (John 6:37; John 17:10), though men may have forgotten them, will first think of His sleeping saints, and then of those still alive upon the earth. What a sweet thought is this! Those alive shall not go before those who are asleep; but both shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with Him. With this they were to comfort one another. But what love had they manifested that they needed such comfort?

He had spoken of the Lord's return to reign. (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14.) With that event times and seasons are connected; but of such he had no need to write. They had already learnt from Paul about them, and what a solemn moment it would be for the ungodly, involving them in sudden destruction, from which they shall not escape. But the saints could not be taken unawares by that day; they were all sons of light, and sons of day. That day could not dawn on earth without them. Were they then to be careless as to their walk? On the contrary, they were to exhibit what it is to be sons of the day, and of light. Hence, though that day had no terrors for them, the certainty of its coming was to have power over them whilst still upon earth. "Therefore," he adds (for all Christians need the exhortation), "let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith

and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore," he concludes, "comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thessalonians 5:6-11.) With a few more admonitions he closes. They were to know them that laboured among them, and were over them - proistamenous (see Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 5:17) in the Lord, and admonished them, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. This exhortation evidences the non-existence of an ordained ministry at Thessalonica, though it clearly supposes the existence of ministry, whether in the Word or in other ways, actively at work in their midst. Further, it was the concern of all to maintain order amongst those composing the assembly, to care for those who specially needed to be cared for (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15); and in addition - to this they were warned not to quench the Spirit, nor to despise prophesyings. Such an exhortation evidenced a freeness of ministry among them to which Christians have for centuries been strangers. As regards the saints individually, they were to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks; proving, too, all things, holding fast that which is good, and abstaining from every form of evil. If then the Holy Ghost was free to minister the Word by whomsoever He chose, it was incumbent on the saints to prove or try that which was set before them as truth. Then with a prayer for their sanctification in body, soul, and spirit, and with a desire expressed for an interest in their prayers, and an injunction to have the epistle read to all the holy brethren (for it concerned them all), the apostle closes with part of that formula afterwards to be known as the token that an epistle which had it proceeded from him. A letter this was, then, of exhortation and encouragement, suited to the condition in which these saints were found. For exposition of doctrine we should look elsewhere; yet it may interest the reader to be reminded of some of the doctrines set forth, or referred to in it. Clearly the saints knew their souls were saved; for they were waiting for God's Son from heaven - a hope which cheered them. But final salvation was a different matter; for that they were looking, as the apostle reminds them. (1 Thessalonians 1:9.) The indwelling of the Holy Ghost, God's gift to believers, was no unknown truth to the saints. (1 Thessalonians 4:8.) The Lord's return to reign they knew well about. (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3.) To see Him was their desire (1 Thessalonians 1:10), and to be with Him would be their delight. (1 Thessalonians 4:13.) A ministry unordained by man existed in their midst (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13), and freedom of ministry in the Word they were exhorted in no way to hinder. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20.) The coming of the Lord, too, to take up His saints before He comes to reign they were taught about by this epistle (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17), and what effect His return to reign will have on the ungodly then alive, they had personally learnt from the apostle. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3.) Truths these are, known then; but by how many of God's children in these days are they still really unknown, and by some even resisted! It is no secret that many still refuse to accept the truth of the personal return of the Lord to reign. Many too have learnt little about the Holy Ghost dwelling in the believer. To how many, we might ask, of the saints in Christendom is the exhortation to quench not the Spirit almost a dead letter? C. E. Stuart. BY CHRIST REDEEMED. By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored, We keep the memory adored, And show the death of our dear Lord,

Until He come. His body given in our stead, Is shown by this memorial bread; And so our feeble love is fed,

Until He come. His fearful drops of agony, His life-blood shed for us we see The wine shall tell the mystery,

Until He come. And thus that dark betrayal-night With the last advent we unite - The shame, the glory - by this rite,

Until He come.

Until the trump of God be heard, Until the ancient graves be stirred, And with the great commanding word, The Lord shall come.

O blessed hope! with this elate, Let not our hearts be desolate, But strong in faith, in patience wait,

Until He come.

*This hymn may be found in many collections. The intelligent reader will notice several very defective expressions, while willingly confessing the beauty of the composition. - ED.

Chapter 98

S. The Institution of Animal Sacrifice

The Institution of Animal Sacrifice. The institution of sacrifice is not shrouded in mystery. It is true that there is only one book which furnishes us with authentic information about it, and there is only one historian who has given us any account of what took place on that occasion. But that book is the Bible - God's inspired Word; and the historian is Moses, a prophet mighty in words and in deeds. (Acts 7:22.) No eye-witness then, as men would speak of one, has transmitted any record of it; yet it is from one who was present that we learn anything about it. He to whom acceptable sacrifice was that day offered has caused the history of it to be related, and has furnished us in His grace with the suited instruction which flows from it. As long then as the Bible remains extant upon earth, so long will that history be preserved amongst men. For ever and ever we know will the remembrance of that sacrifice abide before God. It was late however in the world's history, and towards the close of that period during which a written revelation was being provided, that the full teaching about Abel's offering was set forth in God's book. The Lord caused Moses to write the history as a bystander might have narrated it. God, by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, has placed on record the secret history connected with it, but only when that secret history could be made available for the instruction of mankind. For Israel under law the history of Abel's sacrifice would be instructive; for saints who are called to walk by faith, the principle on which righteous Abel acted, it is of all-importance for them to know.

Before the fall, and until after the flood, animal food was not given to man. The life of the animal was not therefore to be taken to nourish man's bodily frame. Whence then came the thought of animal sacrifice? Adam and Eve, in the garden just after the fall, learning that they were naked, sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons, or girdles - a vain attempt at covering their nakedness, as they quickly discovered, for the girdle of fig leaves was found to be insufficient the moment that they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Naked they both were, that was too true; but the attempt to cover their nakedness with the fig leaves was an admitted failure. The attempt however proved two things; first, that they had no idea of procuring a covering by killing any animal; and second, that man's own thought of that which is sufficient to cover his nakedness falls short of what is needed, as well as of God's gracious provision on his behalf. The guilty pair formed girdles of fig leaves; the Lord God made coats of skin, and clothed them. A coat is more than a girdle, and it clothed them; but the coats were of skin. The life of an animal which was not needed for their bodily sustenance had to be taken that the nakedness of the transgressors should be covered; but this thought was wholly of God.

Again, when Cain and Abel approached the Lord with an offering, they each came with a present or gift (minghah) as an acknowledgment of whose creatures they were, but without, it would seem, the offering being called forth by anything wrong that they had done. Cain, we may believe from the order of the narrative, approached first, and brought of the fruit of the ground. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and their fat. Each brought of that which they had an offering unto the Lord. Now, bearing in mind that the ground was then cursed in a way it is not now, nor has been since the flood (Genesis 5:29), Cain's offering must have cost him a great deal of toil. Wherein

then consisted the difference between the sacrifice of the brothers? What made the one acceptable and the other not? The epistle to the Hebrews tells us, as it recounts, that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." It was not then from mere intuition on his part, nor from convenience either, that his selection of a sacrifice proceeded. He offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat by faith, understanding in some way, unrevealed to us, that such would be acceptable to God. For creatures born in sin can only approach a holy God on the ground of the death of the sacrifice. From that day this truth has never been allowed to die out. But such a truth was foreign to man's thoughts till God disclosed it; for just as Adam and Eve resorted to the fig leaves, so Cain sought to approach God with the fruits of the ground. Adam and Eve learnt the inutility of the girdles; Cain was taught the impossibility of one born in sin approaching God with acceptance through offering of the fruits of the ground. The voice of the Lord God made Adam and Eve conscious of their mistake. The Lord, looking on Abel's sacrifice with acceptance, demonstrated to Cain the insufficiency of the ground on which he was attempting to stand before God. In both cases the teaching that was lacking came from God. Cain might have said that he had done his best, and that his fruit had cost him a great deal of labour; but all that weighed nothing in the balance, for the simple question to be answered was not what he would bring, but what would be acceptable to God. For this the mind of God had to be made known; and henceforth it was patent that death was needful, if the offering and the offerer were to be accepted before the throne. This truth then made known, was taken up by man after the flood in his ignorance and dread of God's wrath, and sadly perverted; for, not content with bringing animals in sacrifice to God, the heathen, and Israel too in their apostasy, resorted to human sacrifices to appease an offended deity. How the devil, if he cannot hide from a man a truth, will endeavour to pervert it, that, whilst appearing to do right, man may in reality do wrong! For man is blind indeed, and a ready prey to the devil, unless subject to divine teaching. That life must be surrendered on man's behalf is a cardinal doctrine of Scripture; and that no life, but that of one who is man, will really avail before God, is also plainly taught us in the Word (Hebrews 9:22), and this was God's purpose before the foundation of the world; but that God would accept on behalf of a sinner the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, would be either a denial of the fall and of the sinfulness of man, or of the holiness of the Being whom man thus attempted to propitiate. Thus, whether we think of the need of death in sacrifice, or of the One by whose death all was accomplished for those who believe on Him, this is clear, that man of his own thoughts, or as led of the enemy, would never have understood what God could accept on behalf of the sinner; for, apart from divine teaching, man knows not the depth of his need, nor the holy nature of his God; and nothing more is wanted to demonstrate this than to leave man to act in such a matter after the counsel of his own will. Adam and Eve, and Cain, and men after the flood, are solemn witnesses to the truth of this allegation; but Scripture, which tells us of this, instructs us as to all that is needful for the vilest and the lost to have a perfect and everlasting standing before God; and the earliest teaching about it is provided in the history of the two brothers, Cain and Abel. So early in the world's history was the question raised, and when raised settled for ever by the Lord Himself - How shall one born in sin be accepted before Him?

Adam and Eve were transgressors who had thereby fallen from innocence. As such they must always stand out apart from their descendants. Cain and Abel were the two earliest born in sin - the condition in which we all were by nature. Hence God's ways with them, and the ground on which He could accept them, is full of instruction for us. Cain brought what he thought would do.

Abel offered what he understood would be acceptable to God. By faith he did it. And the Lord, we read, settled the question speedily, simply, properly, and that for ever. Speedily, for it was settled at once; simply, "for the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect;" properly, for it is the prerogative of God to determine as He will, on what grounds He can allow a fallen creature such as man is to be at home for ever before Him. This was made clear to both the brothers. Abel understood it; Cain was fully aware of it, and his countenance fell. Both learnt it from God, and we are to learn it from God likewise. The action of God determined the question for them; the word of God settles the matter for us. But as they, so we, are taught it by God, and from the principles then established God has never departed, nor ever will; and three important ones are established for us by the history of Abel's sacrifice.

First. It is God's prerogative to declare on what terms He will accept one ruined by the fall. And He does that, never allowing a creature to act in this matter after the counsel of its own will. For what creature that has sinned has a just estimate of God's character, and a due understanding of His holiness? For all this we are cast upon revelation. So to approach Him acceptably we need divine instruction.

Second. If death is required ere we can stand in acceptance before Him, we are thereby indebted to another, and are proved to be helpless as regards ourselves; for it is a cardinal and self-evident truth, that no one can die to make atonement for himself, and no one by his own death can deal effectively with the question of his sinful nature. Needing then the death of the sacrifice, all our toil, all our efforts to establish by life-service a standing before God, must, like Cain's, be labour in vain. We shall be going on a wrong line, and one which can never by any circuitous course, however long, lead us to God. Hence we need that which God tells us He has provided, and has also accepted - the death of His own Son on behalf of those who shall believe on Him. Truth about His person, establishing His fitness to be the sinner's substitute, is brought out in succeeding revelations, which we need not here anticipate. The deep necessity of death is the point this history of Cain and Abel illustrates. Christ has died, and has also been raised from the dead - the token that God has accepted Him as the substitute and sin-offering in all its fulness, and that nothing is wanted to make His atonement of full avail before God. (Hebrews 9:14.) The importance of this truth is immense, and is especially needful in these days to be remembered, when sacrifice on the altar has ceased, as far as we are concerned, for ever; for the principle, that death must come in on behalf of the sinner, has not been altered, nor ever will. Nay, it has been established on more solid ground than ever since the death of the Son of God has been set forth in the Word, and the danger to man if he rejects that truth stands out more distinctly than ever. "No man," says the Lord, "cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6.) Through the veil, that is to say His flesh, a new and living way, we have boldness to enter the holiest by His blood. (Hebrews 10:19-20.)

Third. The offerer, as we learn from Abel's sacrifice, is associated inseparably with the offering. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (Genesis 4:4-5.) Abel was not accepted apart from the firstlings of his flock; and, as we learn from Hebrews 11:4, the bringing of his offering testified that he was righteous. The value of the offering was known only to God, and Abel stood before Him accepted according to all its value in His eyes. And Cain could see, and did see, that an accepted sacrifice had been that day presented to God. How close to the accepted worshipper was Cain! Yet how far off was he

spiritually from God! He knew his brother was accepted, as the Lord looked to his offering, but that acceptance availed not for him. The fact of a sacrifice having been accepted avails nothing for any one who is not identified with it. Identified with it, as Abel was, the knowledge of its acceptance is of great importance. Hence the question becomes an individual one. Since God has accepted the sacrifice of His Son (proved to us by raising Him from the dead, and the sending of the Holy Ghost to teach us about it), is each one standing before God on the ground of that sacrifice, or is he not? If the former, each one is accepted according to all its value; if the latter, though, like Cain, such an one may know of its acceptance, he has no part in the benefits which result from it. From this short history connected with these two brothers, who by birth after the flesh stood originally on precisely the same ground, these different principles are clearly to be deduced. But early as they were established, how many have still need to learn about them! Blessed is that man for whom this history has not been written in vain.

C. E. Stuart.

Either Christ's atoning sacrifice is sufficient, or it is not. If it is sufficient, why those doubts and fears? The words of our lips profess that the work is finished, but the doubts and fears of the heart declare that it is not. Every one who doubts his full and everlasting forgiveness denies, as far as he is concerned, the completeness of the sacrifice of Christ. C. H. Mackintosh.

S. The Meat-Offering

The Meat-Offering.

Next to the burnt-offering comes the meat or food-offering, especially called most holy. "It is," we read, "a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire." (Leviticus 2:3.) In this it had a feature in common with the sin-offering, and with the trespassoffering; whilst in common with the burnt-offering and the peace-offering it spoke of something about the Lord Jesus Christ apart from a delineation of anything that He was made for us. The burnt-offering, as we have seen, spoke of His death. The meat-offering spoke of His life, though not without a distinct reference to His death, and to that divine judgment, because of sin, which He in His grace stooped to bear. For no offering which the Israelite was permitted by the law to bring, if typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, passed over as of no moment the truth of His death. The offerer could never bring one which did not in some way or another testify of it. The wave-sheaf, typical of Him as risen, necessarily reminds us of His death. But whilst the wave-sheaf typifies Him as alive in resurrection, the meat-offering views Him as alive before death - of His life before the cross - all of which was a sweet savour to Jehovah. A perfect man then this offering prefigured - one holy, harmless, undefiled; tempted in all points like us, sin apart, and in whom there is no sin (Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5); one, too, whose delight it was to do God’s will, and who always did the things which pleased the Father, setting the Lord Jehovah always before His face (Psalms 40:8; John 8:29; Psalms 16:8); speaking what He had heard of the Father, and doing what He had seen the Father do (John 8:26; John 8:49; John 5:19); and at last becoming obedient unto death, the death of the cross. (Php 2:8.) Till the Lord Jesus appeared, no such man had been known; since His departure to heaven, no similar person has been seen. So when the meat-offering was prescribed in the law, no man had ever been known in whose life on earth its lineaments could be traced. But since the advent of the Lord Jesus in humiliation we do know one, though only one, of whom it certainly was and could be a type.

Composed of fine flour, whether dry or cooked, it typified the Lord as a man; mingled with oil, and presented with frankincense as often as that was the case, it spoke of His conception by the Holy Ghost, and of His life on earth, being a sweet savour to God. And when the anointing with oil is spoken of, we are reminded of Him who was anointed with the Holy Ghost after His baptism by John the Baptist. Under various conditions could meat-offerings be brought. They might be voluntary or compulsory. Of the voluntary, we read in Leviticus 2:1-16; as to those commanded, we have the directions in different parts of the law. After the people had entered the land, whensoever they, or the stranger that sojourned with them, brought a voluntary burnt-offering or a peace-offering to God, a meat-offering was to accompany it (Numbers 15:1-16); and the same rule held good for Israel at all their solemn feasts (Numbers 28:29), and on special occasions as well (Leviticus 9:14; Numbers 6:8), besides the daily meat-offering that accompanied the morning and evening burnt-offering (Exodus 29:40), and the weekly sabbatic-offering. (Numbers 28:9.) In all these Israel individually or nationally had part. But whereas in the case of the voluntary meat-offering no measure defining its size or quality was mentioned, for those which the people

were commanded to provide, a regular measure was laid down, according as the animal sacrificed was a bullock, a ram, or a lamb. Another meat-offering which was also commanded by God to be brought had its measure prescribed, and its daily offering was enjoined. We allude to that presented daily for the priests by the high priest, commencing from the day of his consecration. (Leviticus 6:19-23.) All these were typical of the Lord Jesus Christ. There remains, however, one other offering, called in Hebrew by the common term minghah, and translated in the authorized version a meat-offering, and that was the special offering on the feast of weeks of the two wave loaves, typical really of those from Jews and Gentiles who together form the Church of God. Dismissing all consideration of this, since no part of it was offered on the altar of burnt-offering, we shall confine our attention throughout this article to those meat-offerings which were really typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, a portion therefore of which was burnt on the brazen altar; only adding, that as minghah means a present, and meat-offering is simply food-offering, the reader may understand how the wave-loaves could be thus designated. And first of the voluntary meat-offering. Its composition was defined by the Lord Jehovah; for who, save God, was to say what would be as such acceptable unto Him? It might be either what is called the dry meat-offering, which was composed of fine flour uncooked, or it might be of fine flour previously baked, or boiled, or made into wafers, since the man Christ Jesus could be viewed either simply as a man, or as a man who passed through trials on earth at the hands of His enemies; for in both these aspects He was seen to be perfect, and God could take delight in Him. In the dry meat-offering oil was only mingled with the flour, typical of His birth who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; and consequently that holy thing which was born of the Virgin Mary was called the Son of God. Son of God by eternal generation,* the only begotten of the Father, as John the evangelist describes Him (John 1:14; John 3:16-18), He is also Son of God as born in time according to the testimony of the second Psalm (Psalms 2:7) Perfect then as a man He always was, and holy from His birth, and by the manner of His conception. As a child He "grew, and waxed strong" (for thus probably Luke wrote), "filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." (Luke 2:40.) Such was He seen to be ere He completed His twelfth year. Then, at Jerusalem, among the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, but not teaching them; "all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers," who was now about His Father’s business, as He told His mother in the temple. Perfect in His position as a child with the doctors, He was as perfect in the home at Nazareth, going down thither with His mother and Joseph, being subject unto them, where "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:51-52), and worked at Joseph’s trade, as the people at Nazareth years afterwards attested. (Mark 6:3.) Then, at His baptism by John, God’s seal was openly put on His life up to that moment when the voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17.)

*This distinction is important. Son of God as born into this world, His Eternal Sonship is altogether apart from His conception and birth here. (ED.)

Perfect, too, in His life of service, going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38); approved of God amongst Israel by miracles, signs, and wonders which God did by Him in their midst (Acts 2:22); seen to be the Holy One and the Just (Acts 3:14); borne witness to a second time by the Father as His well-beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased (Matthew 17:5); this was the One of whom the fine flour mingled with oil, and with frankincense

placed on it, was the type; His manhood typified by that which came out of the earth, the peculiarity of His conception delineated in the oil which was mingled with it, and His acceptableness as a man to God set forth in the frankincense placed upon it. The offering brought to the altar, a handful of it was cast into the fire, which was kept alive thereon by the daily burnt-sacrifice; for, until that had been done by the priest, the offering was not completed. Now this point is a most important one. The fire on the altar is the emblem of divine judgment. Hence the offering of that which typified the Lord in His life on earth as a man was not complete without the memorial also of His death. To God His walk on earth, as we have seen, was always acceptable; but no man is allowed to bring that in remembrance before God apart from the recognition of His having borne the divine judgment due to sin. To attempt to speak of His pure and perfect life before God, unless we own what He suffered in His death, is not worship acceptable to the Father. And since the priest at the altar is always the type of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, there was shadowed forth at the altar the offering up of the Lord Jesus Christ by Himself, His voluntary surrender to bear divine judgment - a truth we must always remember, if we would speak in the holy presence of God of the fragrance and acceptableness of His life. How much is this ignored, yet how clearly is it taught us in this offering! Men can admire the even walk of the Son of God across the stage of this world, who refuse to own the need or the results of His death. But God will not accept such homage; He will not allow that to be true worship to Him. How completely then is the fallen creature shut up to the recognition of Christ's atoning death, if he would worship God acceptably! We can only enter the divine presence without judgment overtaking us, as we go through the veil - His flesh. We cannot worship God acceptably if we do not acknowledge before Him the death of His Son on the cross, here symbolized in the memorial of the meat-offering burnt upon the altar. The memorial having been burnt thereon, with all the frankincense, the offerer left the remainder with the officiating priest for consumption by all the males of the priesthood, as part of the divine provision for those who ministered to God. For the offerer could not partake of the residue; God's priests alone were to feed on it. Now Christians are a holy priesthood similar in that to the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, so as priests they are to find in the life of Christ food for their souls; and as the remainder of the dry meat-offering was for Aaron and his sons, so the life of Christ is for us now, and is food common to us all. But here again God carefully guarded the truth about the person of Christ; for the fine flour was not to be baked with leaven when prepared for the use of the priests, and it was to be eaten with unleavened bread by Aaron and his sons in the holy place. The perfect purity of Christ, and His separation from the least admixture of, or connection in Himself with evil, is thus traced out, and all undue familiarity and lack of reverence towards Him as a man is distinctly rebuked. This food was holy, and differing from common food, was to be partaken of in a holy place in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation; and everyone that touched it was to be holy. (Leviticus 6:14-18.) But the Lord's life on earth can be viewed in two most distinct aspects - in His walk simply as a man, and His walk through sufferings and trials before the cross. As typical of the Lord Jesus in this second aspect, the cooked meat-offering next comes before us. Until after his baptism by John in Jordan He had not, that we read of in the gospels, ever experienced the world's enmity. His appearance in the synagogue at Nazareth, where He had been brought up, confirms this. What He said there aroused the anger of the congregation, though till He spoke it they appeared to be ready to welcome Him. But with the commencement of His ministry His sufferings from man began. Of such Peter wrote (1 Peter 2:23), and Paul likewise (Hebrews 12:3), and to them the Lord referred (John 15:20-21), and the Holy

Ghost had predicted them in the Psalms and the prophets. Hence in the cooked meat-offering we read of anointing with oil as well as mingling with oil, foreshadowing the Lord's anointing with the Spirit at His baptism preparatory to His work of testimony for God, and in service to man upon earth. With His baptism commenced a new chapter in His life. He was henceforth to minister to men, and in the great congregation, till the circumstances immediately connected with the cross should cause that ministry to cease. In harmony with this the directions about the cooked meat-offerings commence a new paragraph. For the dry meat-offering, as we have remarked, no measure was prescribed. What the offerer could, or was minded to bring, that the Lord was willing to receive. In the cooked meat-offering the same readiness on God's part was manifested - no measure for it was fixed; and three different kinds are mentioned, any of which a person was free to present. No sacrifice but one, and that the most costly, could be accepted on man's behalf, and that the Lord Jehovah provided; for nothing short of the gift of His Son could really meet the requirements of His holiness. But when any one would present a cooked meat-offering to God, the requirements as laid down in the law placed such within the reach of the poorest; and if it were only an oblation in a kettle (not frying-pan, Leviticus 2:7), it would be, when presented by the priest, an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord, though there was lacking in it the full delineation of Christ, which was so carefully portrayed in the other two, in both of which there was the mingling with oil, and the anointing with oil. In the first of these, described in Leviticus 2:4, the unleavened cakes were to be mingled with oil, and the unleavened wafers to be anointed with oil; for the wafers with the cakes really formed but one offering.* In the second case, when the offering was on a flat slice, or griddle, it was to be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil, then parted in pieces, and oil poured upon it. How precise are these directions, typical of what then was only known to God! Yet little as the Israelite could have understood it, when he brought his offering as enjoined by the law, he was presenting in type to God that which was full of fragrance to Him - His own well-beloved Son, a man dependent, obedient, and perfect, and whose life on earth, in all its stages, was fully acceptable to Him.

*This is plain in the Hebrew, which reads, "and [not, or] unleavened wafers." In Leviticus 2:5 the offering was on a flat slice, or griddle, according to the original; but in Leviticus 2:7 it is spoken of as brought in a kettle, or pot for boiling. But further, not only were the component parts of this offering defined, but all that was to be carefully kept out of it was as plainly declared. No leaven or honey was to be mixed with it under any pretext, whilst, on the other hand, salt was never to be absent from it; for with all their offerings they were to offer salt. Grace, of which salt is here the emblem, was always displayed in Christ, from whom corruption of the flesh and mere natural sweetness were wholly absent. Whatever then men might think of Him, calling Him the carpenter's son (Matthew 13:55), and forming their estimate of Him from His mother, and brothers and sisters, people like themselves, God distinguishes between Him and us. Grace, which is lacking in the natural man, was always displayed in Him. Corruption, which characterizes the offspring of the first man, was wholly absent from Him, who is the second man. This marked difference is also manifested in the contrast between the treatment of the oblation of first-fruits, which God commanded Israel annually to offer, and the meat-offering of a new harvest, an ear (not a sheaf) of corn parched by fire, corn beaten out of full ear, or, as some would describe it, garden-land grain. The former could not go on God's altar; the latter could. The former typified God's saints; the latter Christ Himself. (Leviticus 2:12-14.) Between them and Him how great the difference! The cooked meat-offering duly dealt with, its residue was removed to be eaten by the priest that

offered it (Leviticus 7:1-38; Leviticus 9:1-24), a regulation the reason of which we can understand. For as this class of offering typified the Lord, who experienced trials on earth previous to His death upon the cross, no one but Himself could know what such were; so to the officiating priest, the type of Christ, and not to all the males of the priesthood, was assigned the residue of such a meat-offering. Of the compulsory meat-offering the measures were fixed, varying in ordinary cases with the animal offered of the herd or of the flock for a burnt-offering or a peace-offering; viz., a tenth of an ephah for a lamb, two tenths for a ram, and three-tenths for a bullock. This was the rule to guide the offerer who voluntarily offered an animal for a sacrifice of sweet savour, and this rule held good for the daily, the weekly, the monthly, and the annual celebrations.* For Christ in His death and in His life were both to be brought in remembrance before God. His death as a sacrifice of sweet savour was to be foreshadowed, but His life like wise. The former was not to be prefigured without the latter. The order, however, is suggestive. The meat-offering accompanied the burnt-offering or peace-offering; for men can only take up Christ's life before God in connection with His death, reading, as it were, His history in the inverse order. Thank God, we may speak of that holy, spotless life when we own and share in the rich results of His atoning death; for in all these appointed meat-offerings there was typified simply the Lord Jesus as a man without reference to His path of trial upon earth. A dry, not a cooked, meat-offering was therefore presented on such occasions.

*To this rule, however, there were exceptions. With the burnt sacrifice that accompanied the wave-sheaf two-tenths of an ephah of flour was appointed. (Leviticus 23:13.) On the occasion of the leper's offering on the eighth day of his cleansing, three-tenths of an ephah was the measure indicated. (Leviticus 14:10.)

One other offering must now be noticed, that for the priests. In common with other prescribed meat-offerings its measure was determined by God; but, differing from them all, half of it was offered in the morning, and half in the evening. Daily therefore was it to be presented, and by the high priest himself. Further, it was a baked, not a dry, meat-offering, baked on a flat slice, and brought in pieces to the altar, on which it was wholly burnt; for as this offering did not shadow forth communion, those on whose behalf it was offered being all the priests, there was no one to eat of it. By this offering then there was daily presented to God, on behalf of the priests, that which spoke of the Lord Jesus in His life of trial as He ministered here among men. How fitting this was we can understand who form part of the holy priesthood. Aaron and his sons were priests unto God, but the One whose life on earth in ministry could be acceptable to Jehovah was not of Aaron's race, and that meat-offering each morning and each evening really proclaimed it. The perfect Man had yet to come. Now He has come; and whilst Christians, as priests, are to find in the life of the Lord, traced out for them in the Word, that which is food for their souls, we have always to remember the immeasurable moral distance there was between His walk in service on earth and our walk down here. No man was ever perfectly acceptable to God in all his ways but One - the man Christ Jesus, whose life God had thus kept continually before Him. The faithful and true witness, His life which gave full satisfaction to God, is the only perfect example for us.

C. E. Stuart.

S. The Peace-Offering

The Peace-Offering.

"Though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts." Such was God's announcement to Israel by the prophet Amos. (Amos 5:22) The two former of these offerings we have looked at; we would now consider the peace-offering, as it is called in the A. V., but which would be better understood if translated requitals, or recompences, as the Hebrew word Shelamim signifies; for, as the reader may see in Leviticus 7:12; Leviticus 7:16, it was offered on private occasions, either for a vow, or for a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and has nothing to do really with the idea of peace. As with the burnt-offering and the meat-offering, so with the peace-offering, any one in Israel, if so minded, might bring one to God; but whereas the two former were frequently enjoined on public occasions, this last, except at the feast of weeks, was only commanded on special public occasions, such as the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:28), and for Israel on the grand eighth day at the expiration of the consecration (Exodus 29:9), and on the occasion of the setting up of the tabernacle in the wilderness. (Numbers 7:1-89) Again we read of them when the people took formal possession of their land, in the very place where God had first promised it to Abraham (Joshua 8:31); and when David, by the prophet's guidance, offered sacrifices on the altar at Araunah's threshing-floor, where the plague was stayed. (2 Samuel 24:25.) So also at Gilgal, when they made Saul king (1 Samuel 11:15); and at Jerusalem, on the occasion of Solomon's accession (1 Chron. 29:31), the people in the joy of their heart willingly offered them to God. David, too, sacrificed peace-offerings when the ark entered Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:17); and the men of Beth-shemesh likewise, when the ark returned from the land of the Philistines (1 Samuel 6:15); at the dedication of the temple under Solomon (1 Kings 8:63-64); on the day of the cleansing of the altar by Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:31-36); at the memorable feast of unleavened bread, in that same king's reign (2 Chronicles 30:22); when, too, Manasseh repaired the altar (2 Chronicles 33:16); and at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:43); these sacrifices were in season. At Bethel, too, before the ark of God, when smitten by the Benjamites; and subsequently, when deliberating about the future of that tribe, Israel offered with their burnt-offerings, peace-offerings before the Lord. (Judges 20:21) At family festive-gatherings, too, whether when assembled at the tabernacle (1 Samuel 1:21; 1 Samuel 2:19) or at home (1 Samuel 20:6), these offerings had their place; and even the strange woman ventured to present them, the better, perhaps, to ensnare her victim, whom she would then invite to feast with her on the residue brought home to her house. (Proverbs 7:14.)

Thus it will be seen that, though such offerings formed part of the sacrificial ritual, they were not so frequently enjoined on Israel by the law as were burnt-offerings. Few, comparatively speaking, were the occasions on which by the law they had to be brought. See Leviticus 8:1-36; Leviticus 9:1-24; Leviticus 23:19; Numbers 7:1-89, all of which have been already noticed, and Numbers 6:17, where it appears that the peace-offering formed part of the sacrifices which the Nazarite was to bring when the days of his separation were fulfilled. Seasons of holy joy were suitable times for

peace-offerings to be brought, though any who were of a free heart might offer burnt-offerings on such occasions instead (2 Chronicles 29:31); for whereas the former was an expression of thanksgiving, the latter betokened a fuller surrender to God, inasmuch as the whole of it ascended up from the altar to Him. But whichever it was, whether a burnt-offering or a peace-offering, the trumpet was to be blown over these sacrifices on the days of their gladness for a memorial before their God; and with the peace-offering, as with the burnt-offering, after Israel entered their land, a meat-offering and a drink-offering were always to be brought as well. (Numbers 10:10; Numbers 15:12.) These two offerings, though thus classed together, were yet widely different. In the peace-offering, a portion only was claimed for God, and the offerer could feast on part of it with his family or friends. Communion between God and the offerer in that which was brought to the altar could by it be enjoyed. The burnt-offering was wholly for God. In the meat-offering, the priest, and the males of the priesthood, had part with the Lord Jehovah. In the peace-offering, the offerer, too, could share, enjoying communion with God in the sacrifice of His well-beloved Son. The grace this proclaims is apparent, yet Israel little understood what it also declared; viz., their relative distance from God, compared with that of those who form the holy priesthood. True it is this could not have been taught before the cross, yet God expressed it symbolically in the regulation about these sacrifices, so that from that memorable day of Pentecost, when Christian position and privilege were first enjoyed and displayed, it might be seen that the latest and fullest interposition of God in grace was no after-thought in His mind, for He had traced it out in the revelation about sacrifices, made known to Israel by Moses when still abiding under the shadow of mount Sinai. Gracious it is on His part to allow His people to have communion with Him about His Son, and none of those who are His people, whether they form part of the holy priesthood, of which Peter writes (1 Peter 2:5), or will be known on earth as of Israel after the flesh, in the day which is approaching, are to be shut out from this privilege bestowed on them in His goodness. But only in the peace-offering can Israel, as portrayed in type, have this fellowship with God. They will learn how the Lord's atonement has met the depth of their need. They will understand what that full surrender was of Christ Himself to die, of which the burnt-offering was typical, but they will also rejoice with God in the death of Christ as set forth in these ordinances about the peace-offering. In this way, then, they will be allowed to feast with God. Under the law, the offerer provided the animal for the sacrifice. In truth God has provided that sacrifice in which they will learn that they have part with Him. But though the offerer under the law provided the peace-offering, he could only bring of that which Jehovah had expressed His willingness to receive. For a burnt-offering he could bring of the herd, or of the flock, or a bird; for a peace-offering it must be only of the herd, or of the flock. Restricted as to what he might bring, the offerer was not bound down to present only a male. In a peace-offering a female might be brought as much as a male; but of whichever sex it was, the offering had to be perfect, without blemish (Leviticus 3:1; Leviticus 3:6; Leviticus 22:18-23), though as a free-will offering, the regulation was less strict* than when the peace-offering was for a vow. And from a stranger in Israel, too, the Lord would receive a free-will offering or a sacrifice for a vow, and that whether it was presented as a burnt-offering, or as a peace-offering.

*An animal with a limb too large or too small could be brought as a free-will offering (Leviticus 22:23), but not for a vow. The animal selected, the offerer brought it, laid his hand on its head, and killed it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, or before the tabernacle, as the case might be. If he brought of the herd, he killed it at the door; if of the flock, he slew it before the tabernacle; and the priests, the sons of Aaron, sprinkled its blood on the altar round about. The

blood, the life of the flesh, was thus presented to God. After that the offerer brought near to the altar the fat that covered the inwards, and all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that was upon them on the flanks, and the caul* above the liver, and the kidneys, and when the peace-offering was a sheep, the tail as well, all of which the priest burnt as an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord. This, and this only, of the peace-offering was offered upon the altar.

Called in the margin "midriff," and by some thought to be a membraneous covering of the liver. The kidneys, the seat of the feelings (Psalms 73:21; Proverbs 23:16; Lamentations 3:13), and the fat, the expression of human will in the energy of life (Job 15:27; Psalms 17:10; Psalms 119:70) are here seen offered to God, expressive surely of Him, who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him (John 6:38); and who said, when the Father hid things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matthew 11:26.) And all this was burnt as a sweet savour on the burnt-offering, without which as the basis of every sacrifice there could be no communion between us and God. With the service at the altar began the apportioning of the victim according to the ordinance of the peace-offering. In this the idea of communion is seen fully expressed; for Jehovah, the priest, the males of the priesthood, and the offerer, each had their portion in the one sacrifice. Jehovah's portion was the food, or bread of the offerings made by fire, all of which were a sweet savour unto Him. This is His own statement, expressive of His satisfaction in Christ, of whom the sacrifice was a type - the holy One - whose innermost feelings were perfect in God's eyes. Gracious was it thus to write of the peace-offering, that the person who brought that, and did not bring a burnt-offering, could know that the part which was God's portion was food in His eyes.

*This term food, literally bread, of the offerings made by fire was not restricted to the peace-offering, though we first meet with it when the lawgiver was writing of that offering. From Leviticus 21:6 (in the Hebrew), Leviticus 21:8, Leviticus 21:17, Leviticus 21:21, Leviticus 22:25, it is plain that all was offered on the altar as an offering made by fire was comprised under this term. And the priests, who eat of the altar as partakers with it, eat of the bread of their God. (Leviticus 21:22.) As the burnt-offering was all consumed, this description would not be needed. Where part only was burnt, such a description of God's portion was given. In this sacrifice, then, Jehovah had but a portion. Had all gone up as a burnt-offering, the offerer would have been assured of his acceptance, but would not have enjoyed communion with God in the sacrifice. Now it was the Lord's desire that he should enjoy this. So He gave these regulations about the peace-offering, and thus connected special festive seasons of any of His people with the acceptance of the sacrifice on the altar. In the wilderness this was clearly seen; for a man could not kill an ox, a sheep, or a goat for his family's food without the appointed portion of the animal being presented to God. Death was the due desert of any one who acted otherwise. (Leviticus 17:3-6.) Feasting was to be associated with the worship of God, and not with idolatrous rites. What ground of rejoicing could there be for us sinful creatures, had not the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross? Seasons, then, of joy were to be closely connected with the sacrifice on the altar. This was to be remembered. But idolatry was rife around the children of Israel, and they were tainted with it. (Acts 7:42-43.) To keep them from offering sacrifices to devils, the Lord thus closely associated feasting with the sacrifice on His altar. In the land He equally watched over them; but the altered circumstances necessitated a new revelation. Supposing the tabernacle or temple was too far

from them, if minded to kill any of the herd, or of the flock, they were free to do so to eat flesh; but the blood was to be poured out, and not eaten. If, however, they were near enough to the sanctuary to offer peace-offerings on such occasions, they were still to offer them. (Deuteronomy 12:20-25.) Thus they might enjoy the fruits of Jehovah's goodness at any time in the land, and in any place; but no religious rite could be connected with such feasting unless they were near enough to God's altar. And of none of their holy things, or of their vows, could they eat, except at the place where God's altar was located for the time being. (Deuteronomy 12:25-32, Deuteronomy 14:23-26.) Of flesh killed at home, both the unclean and clean could eat. That was in no sense a sacrifice, and on no pretence were they to treat it as such. When it was a peace-offering, the unclean could not eat of it (Leviticus 7:20), for one in that state could not have communion with Jehovah. The peace-offering dealt with aright at the altar, the priest who offered it had his appointed portion assigned to him, which the offerer was commanded to give to him. It was the priest's due; but God would not leave him to claim it: the person who brought the sacrifice was to give him the right shoulder, and to Aaron and his sons, the males of the holy priesthood, he was to give the breast. (Leviticus 7:29-35.) The Lord claimed these portions, the right shoulder to be heaved, and the breast to be waved; and then, as His, gave them to the priests. And this ordinance, as regards the officiating priest, was never to be abrogated. In the wilderness it was his, and the land likewise (Deuteronomy 18:3); but when in the land, the two cheeks, and the maw, or stomach, are mentioned as his portion also. The right shoulder, typical of strength, was given to him who typified the Lord Jesus; for who but the One who gave up His life on the cross could really know what the strength was that was needed for that? The heart, the seat of the affections, typical of the love of Christians, assigned to the holy priesthood, now represented by Christians (1 Peter 2:5), who especially share in that love. For God does in the Old Testament foreshadow blessings for a portion of His people above and beyond those allotted really to Israel. In the special place of privileges of the Aaronic priesthood we see this. In the free-will offering at Pentecost we can trace it. In Eve's place with Adam we recognize it. In the fellows of Christ (Psalms 45:7) we learn it. And here in the type we behold it. The love of Christ to His own is a special blessing for all of us who are Christians. He loved His own which were in the world. (John 13:1.) He loved them unto the end, and we prove it in His lowly service to us. He loves them still (Revelation 1:5), and we are to know His love which surpasseth knowledge (Ephesians 3:19), which Saul and John knew well.

Following the rest of the animal to the offerer's home, we learn for how long he might eat of it, with what he was to eat it, and who could not partake of it among his household or friends. All this is detailed in the law of the peace-offering. (Leviticus 7:11-21.) If offered for thanksgiving, it would only be partaken of on the day it was offered. If brought to the altar for a vow, it could be partaken of on the second day as well, but never on the third. If a man was moved to make a vow, it would arise from a more deep-seated, or from a fuller sense of Jehovah's goodness than that which prompted a thanksgiving-offering; hence whilst really in spirit rejoicing before God, he could have communion with Him. But where that had died down God would not accept the outward appearance apart from the heart's communion. Any attempt at such a thing would be abomination in His eyes (Leviticus 7:18, Leviticus 19:5-8), and death would be the only punishment one guilty of it could expect. To be on the ground of law before God was no light thing. But though we are on the ground of grace, God's nature does not alter, nor can He accept as communion what is not such in spirit and in truth. Whensoever a man was minded to bring his meat-offering, if he was not defiled, God was willing to receive it. At all times He would allow His people with a due regard for

His nature to have communion with Him. But sustainment of real communion in the heart of the creature was not permanent, and He would remind the Israelite and us also of that. With the sacrifice, or literally, on it, an offering of unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil of fine flour, was prescribed; and with (literally on) the cakes he was to offer for his offering leavened bread with (or on) the sacrifice of his peace offering; and one out of the whole oblation, a heave-offering to the Lord, the offerer gave as directed to the officiating priest. Communion with God on the ground of the death of the sacrifice, the peace-offering distinctly teaches us; but not merely on the ground of that death; for as the offerer owned the death by killing the animal, so now those only can really have fellowship with God who own that Christ's death as a sacrifice for them has really taken place. No communion, then, can be known between any of us and God, apart from and without a real recognition of the death of Christ for us; for the offerer laid his hand on the victim's head before he killed it. But if the Lord has died, He first lived; so His life in the unleavened cakes was typified of as well as His death; yet the order is suggestive. His death is first here portrayed, then His life; for the unleavened cakes were offered with (literally on) the sacrifice of thanksgiving. No communion between God and His people could have been enjoyed had not His Son died. How continually are we reminded of the moral distance from God that we were all in through the fall! But how gracious of our God to teach it us by the provision He has made to remove it, showing at once the reality and the measure of it, since nothing but the death of Christ could annul it. But who are those privileged to have fellowship with God? Creatures born in sin, in whom sin is. This the leavened bread typified. In the unleavened cakes we have figured the perfect man; in the leavened bread fallen man. The difference between the man Christ Jesus and all of us, we are never allowed to forget; nor need we, nor would we wish it, since on the ground of that which He is, and that which He has suffered, we stand before God, and have fellowship with Him; just as the leavened bread was offered with the unleavened cakes, and with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of the peace-offering. Apart from the Lord Jesus we could not stand before God. This leads on to the consideration of the condition in which this communion, could be enjoyed. Beyond the heart's occupation with Him from whom all blessing comes, the Lord, as we have seen, would not acknowledge it as real; and what was not real was offensive, an abomination in His eyes. (Leviticus 7:18; Leviticus 19:7-8.) Further, if the flesh of the sacrifice had touched any unclean thing it would not be eaten, and those only who were clean could eat of the sacrifice. The holiness of Jehovah was to be remembered and acknowledged at the Israelite festive board. So any one unclean from the working of his own flesh, or defiled from contact with some unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, an unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, was precluded from sharing in the feast on pain of death for disobedience. Was this principle confined to Israel? Does not 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 read us a solemn lesson in connection with it? Governmental dealing had removed some of the Corinthians for a sin, in principle, akin to that against which Leviticus 7:21 warned the children of Israel.

Privilege to have fellowship with God, feasting with Him on the fat of the inwards of any animal offered in sacrifice, was peremptorily denied them as food. That which the fat symbolized was for God. How perfectly in Christ was that the case, the example to His people of what should characterize them. On the other hand, the blood of no living creature could they eat; for life belongs to God. The recognition that life belonged to God is binding on all men. The acknowledgment that the will should be in subjection to God ought to characterize His saints. God

has forbidden blood to all. He forbad the fat of the sacrifice only to His people. The Lord give all His saints to enter more into this!

C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 101

S. The Re-Translation or Revision of the Bible

The Re-Translation or Revision of the Bible Original Contributions C. E. Stuart, Bible Treasury, 2nd Edition, Volume 1, June 1856.

{The original article as printed has the Hebrew text in many places. This has not been reproduced here for lack of expertise.}

(1). [01]

It is not God’s desire that any of His intelligent creatures should remain in ignorance of His will as far as He has been pleased to communicate it. Great in counsel, excellent in working, His plans, when unfolded by the Holy Ghost, must ever afford delight and occupation to those who, whatever may be their rank in the universe, know that He is God, and they are His servants.

"The angels that excel in strength do His will, hearkening to the voice of His Word." Possessed of finite intelligence, the revelation of what has been for ages hidden in the mind of God does afford them subjects for meditation as they see His counsels gradually unveiled before their eyes; and kept by God, "the elect angels" as the Word describes them, what He does, and what He says has for them an interest beyond anything else. For what can interest a creature, whose heart is right with God, so much as that which concerns Him, and redounds to His glory? Accordingly we read, that they desire to look into the things concerning the Lord Jesus, now reported unto us by them that have preached the gospel unto us with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. (1 Peter 1:12.) They learn there, not only God’s will for them, and the service He would have them render to the heirs of salvation, but God’s mind and purpose about His Son; His wonderful plan of salvation and everlasting blessing for sinners; the manner by which all that He is can be displayed; His authority, where it has been impugned, be vindicated, and Himself be fully glorified. For all this, though not yet to be recorded as having a place in the history of the universe, is nevertheless the subject of divine revelation. God has spoken of it, and from His words His creatures may now learn what He will yet do. So interested then are the angels in all that concerns God, that, although this revelation was made for man, and for the most part direct from God to man, they desire to look into it. By the church is now made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God. (Ephesians 3:10.) From His word, by the prophets, they learned the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. For the announcement of that wonder of wonders, the humiliation and death of the Son of God, was made to man, not angels. Then predictions of what He would do, and how low He would stoop, was first disclosed in the word of the Lord by the prophets.

What an honour has God put on His prophets, His apostles, the church! The children of Adam, according to the flesh, have become in His goodness and favour the medium of communicating to the angelic hosts the counsels of God, till then hidden in the secret recesses of His heart. Men, not angels, have been the general depositories of His truth, regarding His Son, the destiny of this world, and all connected with it. They needed a revelation, for they were fallen, and, without it,

must have perished for ever. They are more directly concerned in it, because, if believers on Christ — children of God, they are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. They have a place before God, and a relationship to Him, such as no angel can aspire to. They have an association with the Lord Jesus Christ, such as none but the redeemed can enjoy. All then, that God has been pleased to reveal, should surely interest His children. Shall, we rest satisfied with the knowledge of salvation and deliverance for ourselves from everlasting wrath? Had the elect angels no interest outside the knowledge of their personal safety, they would not have been described as looking into the things concerning the Lord Jesus. Should we not, sensible of the favour shown to us, desire to become acquainted with this revelation, whether it directly bears upon our personal salvation, or not? Has God been, for a period of 4000 years, unfolding step by step His mind, and shall we be careless about the terms He has employed? Shall He confide to us the manner of the kingdom, or the course of events, which must precede its establishment in power after our removal from this earth, and shall we listen to it as unconcerned and unwilling auditors? Meagre, indeed, must that soul's apprehension be of the favour conferred on it as a child of God, if it cares not to know all that its Father has told it. Selfish must he be, who, satisfied with the confidence of his own safety, cares not to hear about what concerns God's well-beloved Son. What interests God should interest us; what concerns His Son should concern us. The very words of the divine revelation should have a value in our eyes unsurpassed, nay, unequalled. God has written down His thoughts for man's instruction, for His children's edification. This should be reason enough for us. God saw fit, that we should have not a dim, hazy, tradition, of what He had once communicated to us, but, that the very terms, in which it had been made, should be handed down to the latest generations. It is a written revelation we possess, dictated by the Spirit of God, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. (1 Corinthians 2:13.) Then these Scriptures, the several books which together we call the Bible, are holy. The subjects of which they treat, the thoughts which they communicate, the words in which they are clothed, are all from God for man's use and guidance.

Moreover, it is a selected revelation. We have not recorded in it all that God has revealed during these 4000 years to His people. Jonah prophesied of the restoration of the coasts of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain. The fulfilment of God's Word is recorded, but the terms of the revelation have not been preserved. (2 Kings 14:25.) Paul writes of having heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter. (2 Corinthians 12:4.) John heard the voice of the seven thunders, but was forbidden to record what they said (Revelation 10:4.) And the same apostle tells us, that many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name. And if all had been written, the whole world could not contain the books that should be written. (John 20:30-31; John 21:25.)

Again, we would call attention to the languages chosen, by which to convey the thoughts of God, as an additional proof that what was written, and so carefully selected, was for man's use and guidance. In Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek, has the Spirit of God been pleased to write. He spake by the disciples, on the day of Pentecost, in many different tongues. In three only has He written what, it pleased God we should be acquainted with. To them must we turn, if we would learn the exact sayings of the Spirit about the Son of God, about man, about the world, the final destiny of the human race, and the earth on which we tread. And each of these languages, when employed,

was just the best medium that could have been found, by which to publish far and wide the acts and purposes of God. Hebrew, the language of Palestine, as the names of places and people, before Israel possessed it, indicate the adopted language of Abraham and his descendants, as the difference between the language of Jacob and that of Laban, the Mesopotamian, clearly shows (Genesis 31:47.) Hebrew was also the language of commerce, the Phoenicians being the great carriers of the world in their days. Westward, along the Mediterranean to the far off Islands of the Cassiterides they penetrated, Eastward, down the Red Sea, along the Eastern Coast of Africa, and to India they found their way. The navies of Solomon, too, in the days of Israel's greatest glory, went to Ophir. By such means, the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue must have been extended beyond the confines of Canaan, and so an opportunity have been afforded of letting men, of different nations, speaking languages of different families from the Semitic, hear something of the wonders and truth of that God who, was worshipped in such splendour at Jerusalem as Jehovah God of Hosts. How far, through the faithlessness of Israel, this result fell short of what might have been, we have not now to inquire. We have only to do with the fact that God chose this language, in which, for 1100 years, with only a brief interval, He communicated His thoughts to men. Was it a mere accident, as men would say, that Hebrew was the language selected; was it not rather from design? For what other tongue could have answered the end so well? Abraham gave up his native tongue for the language of Canaan; but God was by this preparing for that time, when His word should not only be written on tables of stone, or altars, in Canaan, so that Israel could understand it, but be recorded in that tongue, some knowledge of this must have extended, as names of places to this day testify, wherever the great merchants of Tyre and Sidon penetrated with their wares. With the rise of the first of the four great empires, which were to exercise supreme authority within the prophetic earth, the Aramean or Chaldee language came into prominence. A language foreign to the Jews in the days of Hezekiah, not understood by the common people when Rabshakeh appeared before Jerusalem, it was afterwards to be the tongue in which they would converse, when Hebrew would cease to be spoken in ordinary society. Hence we have the Targums, the translations (and often very free ones), of the sacred writings of the Old Testament. But, before the Jews had dropped the pure Hebrew, God made choice of Chaldee to make known the better thereby to the nations what it behoved them to be informed of. First used in Jeremiah 10:11 for the message sent by Him to the Gentiles, it was afterwards the language in which God's communications to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were made, and His gracious intervention on behalf of His suffering servants in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius recorded. From Daniel 2:4 to the end of Daniel 7:1-28, the book in the original is in Chaldee. A glance at the book shows the wisdom of this. God would teach the Gentiles that, though they had triumphed over the kingdom of Judah, they had not triumphed over Jehovah: their gods had not given them the victory. He, and He alone, was the true God, the God of heaven. Those portions, therefore, which concerned the latter days, and the vicissitudes of the city and people, are written in Hebrew; but those portions, which were designed to remind the Gentiles, that God had vindicated His honour, and manifested His power to save those faithful to Him, are in Chaldee. The wisdom of man is found incapable of explaining the thoughts of God, Daniel 2:1-49. The power of man is powerless to destroy those who trust in God, Daniel 3:1-30. The pride of man is humbled, and God alone is to be exalted, Daniel 4:1-37. The impiety of man is signally punished, Daniel 5:1-31. The hostility of men to God's servant ends in their utter discomfiture and death, Daniel 6:1-28. And lastly, the counsels of God, as to supreme dominion over the earth, are

revealed, ending with the establishment of that kingdom which shall never be destroyed, Daniel 7:1-28. In Ezra we get another portion written in Chaldee, Ezra 4:8, – Ezra 6:19; and Ezra 7:12-27, just that part of the history which records God's interventions on behalf of the oppressed and feeble remnant, now returned to their own land, that the Gentiles might learn, that Jehovah could, and did, protect His faithful people; that His word, by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, could stimulate them to work, though the decree had as yet not been reversed in their favour; and, that He could turn the hearts of Darius, and Artaxerxes to favour them, and to take an interest in the work of His house at Jerusalem. The ages were rolling by. The time was approaching when the hope of Israel should appear, and the mystery, kept secret, since the world began — the Church — should be unfolded. It is deeply interesting to trace how God was preparing for the advent of His Son, that, when He should appear, and the Scripture, be appealed to in support of His claims as the promised seed and Messiah, the nations of the earth should have within their reach a translation of the word of God, made by Jews, and accepted by the bitterest foe of the truth, as generally correct, to which they could appeal, and see for themselves, when subject to the Spirit, as the Bereans did, (Acts 17:11-12,) whether or not Jesus was the Christ. The great centre of trade had ceased to be found at Tyre. The language of commerce was no longer Phoenician, or Hebrew, but Greek. A Greek translation became a desideratum for the Jews of the dispersion. About the year 280 B.C. this want was supplied; and when God next caused fresh revelations to be written, He chose not Hebrew, nor Chaldee, but Greek, the language then generally understood throughout the Roman earth. In the Roman senate, as well as at Jerusalem, Greek might have been heard. To the strangers of the dispersion Peter wrote in Greek. To the Roman Christians, as well as to the Hebrews, Paul dictated, what the Holy Ghost would have him say, in Greek. The twelve tribes, scattered abroad, had a message addressed specially to themselves, but James announced it in Greek. At Rome, at Alexandria, at Ephesus, at Antioch, at Jerusalem, Greek was understood; so in Greek the New Testament was written, that it might be read far and wide by Gentiles as well as Jews. What care then has God taken that His word should be made known, by using the language, best adapted for it, at the different periods of its delivery; that not merely the general sense, but the very words, in which His mind was expressed, might be within the reach, as far as possible, of those concerned!

Passing from the age of revelations, we may still trace God's care for His word, in the manner He provided for its dissemination through the medium of translations. As the knowledge of Greek declined, a Latin translation for the Christians in the western part of the Roman empire became a necessity, and, when needed, believers found their want met. For the Churches of North Africa, as early as the second century, a Latin translation had been made from the Greek, called the Vetis Latina. Subsequently some parts of the New Testament, the Gospels at least, were translated in North Italy, and called Versio Itala. Jerome first connected portions of these two, which, in his day, had become blended together, and afterwards translated the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew. As years passed on his version was mixed up with the preceding ones, and hence was formed that Latin version now known as the Vulgate. Containing some gross doctrinal errors, and others not affecting doctrine, it was, nevertheless, for centuries the only translation in which the Scriptures could be read by the greater part of the nations of Western Europe. From it Bede translated. From it Aelfric likewise in the 10th century translated portions of the Old Testament. From it Wicliff learnt God's truth, and then translated the New Testament for the benefit, of his countrymen. Thus a Latin translation, first made for the Christians of North Africa, was destined to

be the only source for ages from which God's saints would learn that truth which satisfies the soul. With the dawn of the Reformation access to the original sources was reopened; and the invention of printing brought within the reach of many the Scriptures in the original tongues. Then afresh translations were made. German, English, French, Italian, and Spanish versions by degrees appeared, made more or less directly from the Hebrew and Greek. Tyndale was the first who translated the New Testament for English readers. With the Greek before him he nevertheless was influenced by the Vulgate; and thus, even in the present day, the authorised version bears traces of the influence that translation once exercised over the Western Churches. Tyndale's New Testament appeared in 1525 A.D., the Old Testament a little later. After him Coverdale brought out a translation of the Bible in 1535; Matthews in 1537; Taverner in 1539; Cranmer's Bible appeared in that same year. The Genevan version was published in 1557-1560, and the Bishop's in 1568-1572. Some preferring the Genevan, others the Bishop's, at length in 1611 came out the Authorised version, which, after some years, was generally accepted as the English version. Here too we may trace the goodness of God. The value of having one version, not two or more in common use, is great. Before therefore the Colonial empire of Great Britain had attained to its colossal greatness; before the different denominations in England and her colonies had appeared, or been moulded into distinct separate bodies; before the English tongue had spread over so large a portion of the earth's surface, and jealousies between the mother country and her colonies had led the latter to regard with suspicion anything emanating by royal authority from the former, the Authorised version appeared; and, wherever the English language is spoken, or English enterprise has penetrated, thither that version has been carried, and wherever English or American missionaries have gone, and provided the natives with a translation in their own language, the influence of the Authorised version is felt, the value of one commonly accepted translation attested. Are these slight advantages? Was this the result of accident, or of design! But here arises a further question. Is this version a faithful one? Is it a translation which admits of amendment? Is the cry for revision the cry of people ignorant of the subject, or the simple candid expression of minds competent to form a correct opinion about it? From 1702, when an essay appeared by Ross proposing a new translation, the question of revision has not been allowed to slumber for any length of time. Lowth, Secker, Newcome, Blayney, Pilkington, Brett, have in one way or other advocated it. Kennicott, by the publication of various readings of the Hebrew text, and suggested emendations of the Authorised version, stimulated the desire for it. The labours of eminent scholars on the Greek Testament, names familiar to many of our readers, have shown that the received text, and Beza's text, were neither of them an accurate representation of the Greek original. The labours of textual critics in our days have confirmed this, and demonstrated that, in certain passages, the true reading, supported by every great authority, differs from that known, and followed, when the Authorised version was made; and scholars have shown, that, in other passages, a correct version of the original would differ from that given by King James's translators. We must not shut our eyes to all this. A version, which could command the general assent of all Protestant bodies, would be an inestimable boon. Meanwhile the calling attention to passages needing revision is a work of real service. All that any one proposes he can scarcely hope will be accepted; yet it will not be time thrown away if, giving what he thinks is a more correct translation of the original, he brings out into prominence some shade of meaning, which has been hither unperceived. We are well aware that, in a matter of this kind, mere assertion is of no avail without proof of what is asserted. Our proofs we must reserve for other articles.

(2). [01:024]

It would have been strange if, after all the learning and diligent labours of Biblical students for the last 200 years, no advance had been made in philological studies. Strange, too, would it have been, if the science of textual criticism had not progressed since the authorised version was made. Much, that was then unknown, has been since elucidated. The meaning of words, but seldom met with in the Hebrew Scriptures, has been in many cases cleared up by a comparison with other languages of the Semitic group. Greek phrases have been illustrated from classical authors. The grammar of the different languages has also been attended to, and much light thrown on that department of study, so needful for an accurate acquaintance with the meaning that the Spirit of God intended should be conveyed. The texts, too, of both the Old and New Testaments have been subjected to a rigorous examination. Since that day MSS., then unknown, have been brought to light, and the readings they present of the New Testament have in many instances been given to the world. ABCDFaILNPQRTYZ, Tischendorfianus, Sangallensis, Various Codices, Oxoniensis, Zacynthius, aleph and a few others, fragments of the Gospels; ABCDEFaI aleph of the Acts and Catholic Epistles; ABCDGFaHI aleph of the Epistles of Paul; ABC aleph of the Revelation have been published, and the readings of others collated. When the authorised version appeared, the Codex Vaticanus (B) was known, but not collated; the Codex Alexandrinus (A) had not been published; Codex Bezæ (D of the Gospel and Acts was known, but its peculiar readings had not been accurately determined; the Codex Sinaiticus (aleph) was still hidden in the convent-library of Mount Sinai, and the Nitrian MSS. had not given forth their treasures to the world. Now materials have been amassed for revising the texts of both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures.

If we speak of the Hebrew Scriptures, the labours of Kennicott and De Rossi must be mentioned. If we speak of the Greek Scriptures, Walton, Mill, Bentley, Bengel, Wetstein, must not be forgotten. But these labourers, while searching out and recording readings, did not publish a revised text, being contented for the most part with stating the readings of MSS. worthy of attention; and what Wetstein and others attempted in regard to the New Testament, that Boothroyd did for the Old, by publishing an edition of the Hebrew Scriptures, with the important readings, ascertained by Kennicott and De Rossi, noted at the bottom of the page. In 1775-7, a new era dawned on textual criticism. Griesbach then first published a critical text of the New Testament. Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, have since followed his example; whilst Hamilton, in 1821, published his Codex Criticus of the Hebrew Bible, the first attempt to form a critical text of the Old Testament. By the labours of these and other scholars, what, it is pertinent to ask, has been accomplished? Have they demonstrated the perfection of the text from which the authorised version was made? Does the authorised version, when critically examined, faithfully represent the meaning of the originals? At this point the subject divides itself into an inquiry regarding the Hebrew Scriptures, and the translation made from them; and another and separate question — the condition of the text of the Greek Testament, and the translation made from it. Throughout this article we shall confine ourselves to an examination, brief though it must be, of the Old Testament, as presented by the authorised version; and the first question that meets us is this, What is the condition of the common Hebrew text? By what standard shall we try it? How shall we determine its accuracy? As for the Hebrew, so for the Greek, there are three sources to which we can turn to help us to an understanding of what the text originally was, viz., MSS., versions, and quotations from early Christian writers. A more formidable difficulty, however, presents itself at the outset,

when we come to inquire about the Hebrew text, than when we examine into the accuracy of the common Greek text. The Hebrew MSS., though by no means few in number, are nearly all of one recension, exhibiting for the most part the readings approved of by the Masoretic Scribes. Their age, too, when compared with the antiquity of some MSS. of the New Testament, is comparatively modern. The Hebraeo-Samaritan Pentateuch, 1:e., the Pentateuch in Samaritan characters, preserved by the small and decreasing sect of the Samaritans, which we might have expected would have been of the greatest use as a concurrent witness of what Moses wrote, often differs from the Hebrew so much, that its readings would require support ere being accepted in preference to that text handed down by the Jews. In one place it has substituted Gerizim for Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:4), to favour the Samaritan worship. In others, its accuracy is open to grave suspicion. Of ancient versions, the LXX, the Chaldee Targums, the Syriac, the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, as much as are extant, and the Vulgate, where it exhibits the text of Jerome's Latin version, are of great value, and often support readings differing from those of the common Hebrew text. Some of these have the support of MSS. authority. Others may reflect a text, very ancient, but no longer extant in Hebrew; but without MSS. authority such readings we could scarcely venture to incorporate with the generally accredited text. For he would be a bold critic who would amend the Hebrew by the readings supposed to have been adopted by the translators of the LXX, and other versions, however ancient, though the variations found in the different translations deserve to be noted. Lowth and Houbigant have attempted this, but it must be evident that conjecture of what ancient translators had before them is slender ground on which to meddle authoritatively with the Hebrew or Chaldee. Of quotations from the early Christian writers, those are of value which men, as Jerome and Origen, conversant with the Hebrew, have preserved, who tell us often what the text was in their day. The works of Jewish writers should also be consulted. By the common Hebrew text is to be understood that published by Van Der Hooght at Amsterdam, in 1705, in two volumes, 8vo. This was the text Kennicott used, and is the one generally reprinted, and answers in Hebrew to the textus receptus of the Greek Testament. A few various readings are here subjoined. If the reader desires to be further informed on this subject, he should consult Davidson's Revision of the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament.

Genesis 49:10, Shiloh. Some MSS. read Sheloh, supported by the Hebraeo-Samaritan (hereafter in this article quoted as Sam.), LXX, Syriac, the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem, and the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, and many Jewish authorities. Jerome, with the Vulgate, translates "qui mittendus est," as if deriving the word from to send. For the common reading, many MSS. can be adduced, and the Graeco-Venet. version. If the Hebrew text be followed, the word must be taken as an appellation of the one predicted. If the other reading be preferred (and it does seem best accredited, the word Sheloh must be translated "whose it is," 1:e., to whom the government belongs, and be regarded as equivalent to "whose it is" as translated in Ezekiel 21:27. "The sceptre shall not depart . . . until he comes, whose it is."

Deuteronomy 33:2, "A fiery law" two words as commonly printed, but to be read as one according to the Masora. Many MSS. with Sam. agree in this. Accepting this correction, the word, which means "Springs," must be regarded as a proper name Sinai, Seir, Paran having been mentioned, the sacred writer speaks of two others, Meribah Kadesh, here translated "with ten thousand of saints," and Ashdoth (as the two words joined together form) translated "a fiery law." The verse would then mean, as Fuerst has translated it, "Jehovah came from Sinai, and appeared to them

from Seir; He appeared in brightness from Paran, He came forth to them out of Meribah Kadesh, having Ashdoth at his right hand, 1:e., on the south." Ashdoth is the name of a place near the Dead Sea, in the south of the territory of Reuben (Joshua 13:20), Meribah Kadesh being in the wilderness of Zin (Numbers 20:1-29). The LXX. leaves Kadesh untranslated kades, and renders the last clause, "at his right hand angels with him." The Vulgate has probably here been the original of the English version.

2 Samuel 8:12-13. Syria. Many MSS. supported by LXX. and Syriac, read "Edom," as in 1 Chronicles 18:1-17, which seems correct, the valley of Salt being in Edom (2 Kings 14:7.) The interchange of the letters (r) and (d) makes the difference.

Judges 18:30, "Manasseh:" so many MSS. Others have the letter n enlarged; the common text has it suspended above the line, thus Manasseh. Some, followed by the Vulgate, omit n: so Jerome with some Jewish writers. Omitting the n, the word in Hebrew becomes Moses, who was the father of Gershom the Levite. Jewish tradition tells us the name was altered, that the shame of having an idolatrous priest in the genealogy should not rest on the house of the lawgiver. Probably Moses is the true reading. The LXX. reads Manasseh, but, being originally a Jewish translation, its authority here would be scarcely entitled to much weight. It shows, however, how early this alteration must have been made.

Joshua 21:36-37. These verses are omitted by the Masora. Very many MSS. with many printed editions, have them, and all the versions. The common text omits them. Without them the list of cities is incomplete.

Nehemiah 7:68 is an example of the converse. Whilst the common text retains the verse, very many MSS., the LXX. (Vatican text) and Syriac, omit it.

Again in 2 Samuel 14:21, the Masoretic text punctuates "thou hast done," referring to Joab, whilst all the versions, and some MSS., agree with the English translation, which adheres to the written text or ch'thib, "I have done." In 2 Samuel 12:21, for "he called," some MSS., with the Syriac, Targum, and approved of by the Masora, read "she called," speaking of Bathsheba. When and how some of the variations in the Hebrew arose, it would now be impossible to say. The origin of others, if their date be unknown, can however be easily traced. Similarity in the form of letters, as in examples already quoted, is one source of alterations; similarity in the sound of words is another, e.g., the substitution of aleph lamedh for holem lamedh, or vice versa.

1 Samuel 2:16. Here the authorised version following the common text, which reads holem lamedh - to him for aleph lamedh - nay, has to supply the negative to make sense. Many MSS., with LXX., Syriac, Vulgate, and one of the Targums have the negative in the place of the pronoun and preposition. Isaiah 49:5, the text of the authorised version gives one reading "be not gathered," the margin has the other "gathered to him." The Vulgate here supports the authorised version. Some MSS. with LXX., Targum, and Aquila read as the margin without the negative. In Isaiah 9:3, we meet with another example "not increased" (so Symachus and Vulgate; but the margin with several MSS. the Targum and Syriac read, "to it increased." In these instances probably the best attested reading is that which differs from the common text, and the authorised version which follows it. In Isaiah 63:9, the authorised version differs from the common text, and follows that supported by many MSS., the Talmud, and Jewish writers, "He was afflicted," lit. "to him there was

affliction." But the LXX., Syriac, and Vulgate agree in the substitution of the negative for the pronoun and preposition, though they differ as to the translation of the clause. If we follow the text here which many prefer, we must translate somewhat as follows: "In all their afflictions he was not an adversary;" or, "in all their straits he was not straitened." A comparison of the variations of the Hebrew with those of the Greek, will show that in the latter the alterations are often more important, and affect more materially the sense and form of a passage, than is generally the case in the former. This is easily accounted for by the reverence amounting almost, if not quite, to superstition with which the Jews regarded the originals. Though blinded to the full meaning of the word, they took great care of it. They would not alter, as a rule, a letter of the text, even if that letter was enlarged, reversed, or misplaced. They handed down the text as they found it, after they had settled in an early age of the Christian era, what they believed it to be; but noted in the margin what they conceived should be read. Such corrections are termed

K'ri, "read," and the text ch'thib, "written." Again, if a word had been accidentally dropped out of the text, they did not insert it. Its vowels would be found without the consonants to which they belonged, and a note would tell the reader that such a word should be read; see, for an example of this, Judges 20:13. Yet, with all the care bestowed on the text, we cannot say it is faultless, or that readings have not crept into it, which were not in the originals as they came from the inspired writers. On the other hand, we should not be hasty in altering it, but we might have the important differences noted in the margin of the English Bible, as is already done in the case of some of the examples given above.

Turning from the text to the authorised version, let us see whether the translation at all times faithfully represents the meaning of the originals, in those places where the readings of the Hebrew are not open to doubt. We shall arrange the examples now to be quoted under different heads —

1. Passages, the translation of which depends on the meaning of one or more difficult or uncommon words.

Genesis 36:24, "mules," rather "hot springs," so Vulgate. See Fuerst's Lexicon. The LXX. leaves the word untranslated iamein. It occurs nowhere else.

Numbers 14:34, "My breach of promise," "alienation" or withdrawal from anything; hence, metaphorically, "enmity." Occurs elsewhere Job 32:10. LXX., "the anger of my wrath," Iumon tes orges mou. Vulgate, ultionem meam, "my vengeance."

Deuteronomy 32:42, Judges 5:2, "Revenges," "avenging." The noun occurs nowhere else. What can it mean? The context in Judges helps us to an understanding of it. A victory has been secured by the leaders and people of Israel. God is to be praised, the leaders having led, and the people having willingly offered themselves. This meaning is confirmed by the construction of the two clauses in Judges 5:2, and by the meaning of the root when compared with the Arabic, which has the sense of projecting, standing forth prominently. Hence, leadership suits the context in both places, "from the head of the princes of the enemy," — (Deut.) — "when the princes led in Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves." In this sense the LXX. translates in Deut., and Theodotion in Judges.

Judges 5:7; Judges 5:11, "The inhabitants of the villages ceased," and "towards the inhabitants of his villages." To make sense, the authorised version in both places supplies inhabitants of. What, then, is the meaning of the word, which is met with nowhere else? The root bears the sense of cleaving, dividing, hence judging, and thus the idea of a ruler, which suits the context, is arrived at. "As for a ruler they ceased in Israel." "The righteous acts of His ruler." The Vulgate has translated the word by fortes, the LXX. in verse 7 by dynatoo. A kindred word is met with in Habakkuk 3:14, and nowhere else. There the authorised version introduces the idea of "villages." But ruler, or chief, will suit the context. The LXX. has translated it by dynaston. The Syriac, the Targums, and Jarchi, in the main agree with the idea of ruler; and the Vulgate translates it bellator.

Judges 5:11, "They that are delivered from the noise of archers." Here again, to make sense, the authorised version supplies a great deal. In Hebrew we have only two words. All turns on the meaning to be assigned to the participle, Piel, of. Proverbs 30:27 here comes to our assistance, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;" margin, "are gathered together". Hence the idea of an orderly procession, which suits the context in Judges, so we may translate "more than (i.e. louder than) the noise of men marching in procession."

Judges 13:18, "a secret," rather "wonderful," so margin. He does not conceal His name. See Isaiah 9:6, "His name shall be called Wonderful." He, therefore, who appeared to Manoah was Jehovah Jesus.

Job 17:6, "And aforetime I was as a tabret". In the previous clause Job speaks of himself its a by-word. It is best to take this clause as describing something similar. The meaning then would be, "I am one whose face is spit upon," 1:e., an object of abomination before them. The word occurs elsewhere only as a proper name. Here the versions vary in their translations, the LXX. expressing it by gelos, the Vulgate by exemplum.

Psalms 7:13, "He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors". Better "He maketh his arrows burning ones," 1:e., to consume His enemies. See Fuerst’s Lexicon.

Psalms 56:2, "O Thou most high". So the Chaldee and Aquila. But it is best to take the word here as an adverb, "haughtily," "insolently." See Rosenmüller’s Scholia, and Fuerst’s Lexicon.

Psalms 68:6, "With chains", rather "into prosperity." It occurs nowhere else.

Psalms 77:2, "My sore ran and ceased not." What is the meaning of the word translated "sore?" A better translation has been proposed, "my hand at night was stretched out, and ceases not," 1:e., he continued in prayer.

Isaiah 19:10. The meaning here turns chiefly on two words. A better translation is given by Henderson, "and her foundations (i.e. nobles, pillars of the state) shall be broken, and all workers of hire (i.e. labourers) are grieved in mind." See also Fuerst.

Isaiah 30:7, "Their strength is to sit still". Various have been the renderings of this difficult clause. Some join the pronoun to the first word, others connect it with the following. Fuerst translates, "their violent pressing after aid ceases." Lowth and Henderson apply the clause to Egypt, "I have called her Rahab, the inactive," 1:e., the one who sits still. Lee and Gesenius also apply it to Egypt, "Insolent in their habitations." Rosenmüller, Ferocia, nunc desidia; LXX., hoti mataia he paraklesis humon aute; Vulgate, Superbia tantum est, quiesce. All these different translations are

so many confessions of the difficulty of the passage. But none of them supports the authorised version, which, though it expresses what is true of God’s people, does not express the truth in this place.

Isaiah 30:32, "grounded staff," rather "rod of appointment," 1:e., appointed for punishment, Gesenius, Fuerst, Henderson.

Ezekiel 1:24, "Voice of speech," "sound of a multitude," Fuerst, "tumult," Henderson, "falling rain," Rosenmüller. It occurs also in Jeremiah 11:16, translated "tumult." The versions generally appear to have read "speech," except the Vulgate which translates "sonus multitudinis," which might be followed.

Daniel 7:9, "Were cast down." better, "were placed," so LXX., Vulgate.

Hosea 6:3, "As the latter and former rain unto the earth", Better, "as the latter rain which fructifies the earth." Here * must be taken as future Hiphil of * governing "earth," and not the noun, which is elsewhere translated "former rain." See Lee and Fuerst.

Habakkuk 1:9, "Their faces shall sup up as the east wind." * only met with here, according to Lee means "desire." "The desire (Lee), direction (Fuerst), of their faces is eastward." Coming on the land of Canaan, their aim is to move eastward with their spoil.

{* The original has the Hebrew text.} 2. Passages in which the translation might be improved.

Genesis 4:8, "And Cain talked with Abel his brother." Rather, "and Cain said to Abel his brother." There is an evident hiatus in the sense in the Hebrew which the authorised version does not show. The Sam, with most of the versions, supplies "let us go into the field," but without MSS. authority, except in the Samaritan codices. Genesis 41:40, "According unto thy word shall all my people be ruled." This is too free. The original is as follows:– "And on thy mouth shall all my people kiss." Compare Psalms 2:12. Martin translates, "Et tout mon peuple te baisera." Samuel, when he anointed Saul, kissed him (1 Samuel 10:1). Numbers 12:11-13, "Alas, my lord, I beseech Thee lay not . . . . Let her not be as one dead . . . . . Heal her now O God, I beseech Thee." The urgency of Aaron with Moses, and the importunity of Moses with God, are beautifully expressed by the repetition in each case of the particle of entreaty "Alas, my lord, I beseech Thee . . . . . Let her not, I beseech Thee . . . . . O, God, I beseech Thee, heal her, I beseech Thee." Martin gives expression to the particle in each case, "Helas, monseigneur, je to prie. . . . . Je te prie qu’elle. . . . . O, Dieu Fort! je te prie, gueris-la je t’en prie." Numbers 16:13, "except thou," rather "that thou." Noldius "quod," LXX hoti; but, the Vulgate agrees with the authorised version. Dathan and Abiram, in reality, bring two charges against Moses, that he designed to lead the people into the wilderness to their destruction, and that he aimed at making himself a prince over them. The English translation conveys the idea of an alternative; the Hebrew of an additional ground of complaint, because Moses had sent for them. The historical books will furnish a few examples:–

Joshua 24:2-3; Joshua 24:14, l5, "the flood," * lit. "the river," 1:e., Euphrates; so also Isaiah 59:19. But in Jeremiah 46:7-8, "the flood" is * lit. "the river," 1:e., the Nile. Judges 2:21, "Will not drive out any," Hebrew "a man" *, which is more forcible. Judges 5:13. Another translation of this verse is as follows:– "Then descended part of the people among the nobles: the Lord descended for me among the mighty." The difference of translation here turns on whether the word be from the root

to descend, or to rule. The LXX. connected it with the former, which yields a sense in perfect accordance with the details of the battle; for Barak descended from the mountain to the valley (Judges 4:14, Judges 5:15), and the Lord went before him. The verb must be regarded as the Aramaic form of the perfect. Judges 13:12, Manoah's question, as given by the authorised version ("How shall we order the child? and how shall we do to him?") fails to convey what he really did say. "What shall be the manner (condition) of the child, and his work?" See Vulgate. A curious mistake we meet with in Ruth 3:15-16 :– "And she went into the city. And when she came to her mother-in-law she said." It should be, "And he went into the city. And she went to her mother-in-law, and she said." So LXX. and Martin. Probably the Vulgate here led the English translators astray, which translates "ingressa est civitatem et venit." Often, as the reader must have remarked, it might have been followed with advantage; here its lead should be discarded. 2 Samuel 23:4. "As a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." If the order of the original is attended to, we get a good sense: "As a morning without clouds for brightness; as the young grass of the earth (nourished) by rain."

See Vulgate.

{* The original has the Hebrew text.} From the poetical books we select the following:–

Psalms 16:3 "To the saints that are in the earth, and the nobles (i.e. excellent), in them is all my delight." In Psalms 55:22, a little alteration would improve the passage so often quoted; "Cast thy lot," 1:e., that which God has appointed thee. In Psalms 68:4, if we read, "Cast up for him," or "level for him," 1:e., prepare his way, we shall better understand what the Psalmist wrote. Compare Isaiah 40:3-4. Again, in Psalms 74:18, the Lord is reminded that the enemy has reproached Him — "hath reproached Jehovah." So LXX. and Vulgate. Another correction should be made in Psalms 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after the glory thou wilt receive me." Compare Zechariah 2:8, for the same phrase correctly translated. This is a most important difference, and shows that the saints who will use this psalm will understand their position as sharers in the blessings on earth when the Lord reigns. Their calling is earthly, ours is heavenly. We shall be received by the Lord before the glory (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18), they after it has appeared. Such a verse in the Psalms shows that the hopes they express of future blessing are for others of God's saints than those who share in the heavenly calling.

Turning to the prophets, a more exact rendering helps its to understand Isaiah 6:13, "Which being cut down have still the trunk," for "whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves." The prophet speaks of violent dealing with the nation, and compares it to a tree roughly used; the English version, on the contrary, speaks of an annual operation of nature. A little attention to Isaiah 53:11, shows that the prophet speaks of two things, "He shall make righteous the many, and (not "for") He shall bear their iniquities." So Vulgate. At times we believe the authorised version has failed to convey the sense of the original, because the translators had not seized the great outlines of prophecy. Psalms 73:24, has been already noticed as an instance of this. Ezekiel 37:26-27 affords another. Two things are spoken of here, God's sanctuary and God's tabernacle. His sanctuary will be among them. His tabernacle over them. See Revelation 7:15, in Greek — "will tabernacle over them." In the following chapter we read, Revelation 8:8, "which have been always laid waste," rather "continually." They were once fruitful, but since God's judgement has been poured out on Israel their fertility has departed. Martin translates more correctly "continuellement."

Another instance of want of accuracy is found in Daniel 7:18; Daniel 7:22; Daniel 7:25; Daniel 7:27. The Chaldee has two words translated always in the authorised version by one. "Most High" which occurs only in verse 25, "He shall speak great words against the Most High." Elsewhere, in verses 18, 22, 25, 27, it is not God of whom the prophet writes, but the high places. The saints of the high places shall take the kingdom (Daniel 7:18), and judgement be given to them (ver. 22). He shall wear out the saints of the high places, the heavenly saints; the heavenly saints who are subsequently martyred (ver. 25); but the people of the saints of the high places shall have the kingdom under heaven, 1:e., shall share in the earthly kingdom (Daniel 7:27). This clears up the passage greatly. The translation of Haggai 2:9 should be noticed. God owns but one house as His. It has been twice destroyed, it will be again; but in His eyes the house, however often rebuilt, is ever the same. So the Hebrew should be here translated, "the latter glory of this house," not "the glory of this latter house. In Zechariah 10:4, the prophet is speaking of those who shall proceed out of Judah in a future day. "From him shall proceed a corner or chief (So. Judges 20:2; 1 Samuel 14:38; Isaiah 19:13) . . . . . from him every ruler;" for this word, elsewhere translated taskmaster, oppressor, is here used in a good sense. In Zechariah 11:10, for "all the people," read "all the peoples." The covenant made with all the peoples — God’s promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed — was apparently broken when the Lord was rejected and died. It is this the prophet is occupied with — the effects of his rejection and death to others beside Israel. Afterwards the other staff which shadowed the brotherhood between Judah and Israel was broken. The Staff called Beauty concerned all the nations. Similarly, in Zechariah 12:3-4, "all the people" should be "all the peoples," 1:e., the nations arrayed against Judah and against God. One more passage remains to be noticed, Zechariah 14:3, instead of "Then shall the Lord go forth," we should read, "And the Lord shall go forth," with LXX., Vulgate, and Martin, who has "car." The text does not fix the time, but the order of the events.

3. Passages in which words have been added, materially affecting the sense.

Exodus 34:33, affords a notable instance of this, which makes the sacred writer to have written just the opposite of what he did write, and necessitates the omission of the conjunction "and." "And till Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face." Moses wrote, "And Moses finished speaking with them, and he put a veil on his face." So LXX. and Vulgate. Affrighted at Moses, whose face was resplendent with divine glory, the children of Israel feared to approach him; but they had all to draw near, to behold the glory, and to learn what he had to communicate. That finished, he covered his face with a veil, till he entered again the presence of God; afterwards he came out and again spoke to the people with his face unveiled, but veiled it when he had done speaking to them. Thus the passage is in harmony with 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, which gives the real reason of the veiling of Moses’ face, "that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." They could not "steadfastly behold his face for the glory of his countenance," and they could not, because the veil hid it, see the transient character of the glory with which it was illuminated. To be brief, one more passage is referred to — Hosea 6:3, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." The Hebrew expresses no condition, "And we shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord." So LXX. Martin renders it, "Car nous connaitrons L’Eternel, et nous continuerons le connaitre."

4. Passages where, through a want of accuracy in the tenses, the sense is obscured. This is oftenest the case in the prophetical portions of Scripture. Thus, in the prophetical Psalms 67:6, the

Hebrew states, "the earth has yielded her increase." The authorised translation translates "Then shall the earth yield her increase." A reference to Leviticus 26:42, shows that God promises in the latter days to remember the land. Hence, when that takes place, the remnant, observing the returning fertility of the soil, will know their time of blessing approaches, so add, "God, our God, shall bless us." Again, in Psalms 97:6, the verbs are in the perfect: "The heavens have declared His righteousness, and all the peoples have seen His glory." The manifestation of the Lord having taken place, all idolators shall be confounded 5. Passages in which the definite article has been improperly omitted.

Judges 2:11, Judges 3:7, Judges 8:33, Judges 10:6; Judges 10:10, should be rendered "the Baalim" — not one, but many male gods; and "the Asheroth," translated "the groves," but rather, the female divinities, in Judges 3:7, and "the Ashtaroth," in Judges 10:6. The article, when expressed, brings out the enormity of their guilt — they forsook the one God to serve the many, the true God for the false ones. 1 Samuel 31:13, 1 Samuel 22:6, "a tree" should be "the tamarisk," a well-known one. Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:39, "the many." Judges 15:19, "the hollow place." It remained after Samson had drank at it.

6. Passages in which a proper name has been translated.

Judges 15:19, for "the jaw," we should read, as the margin, "Lehi." The spring was not in the jawbone, but in Lehi, so named from the instrument Samson used. So in Judges 13:25, it should be as the margin has it in "Mahaneh Dan," a place so named because of what happened, as recounted in Judges 18:12. In Judges 20:43, we read the children of Israel trod down the Benjamites "from Menuchah," not as in authorised version "with ease." See LXX. and Martin. Zephaniah 1:10, "an howling from the second rather "Mishneh,'' a part of Jerusalem. See 2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22, in the margin. In Ezekiel 27:19, "going to and fro" should be "from Uzal," a district of Arabia (so LXX. and Aquila); but in Ezekiel 27:11, "Gammadim" should be translated "garrisons." See Fuerst.

7. Passages where the punctuation should be amended. Deuteronomy 1:32-33, these verses form part of the speech: "And in this matter ye are not trusting the Lord your God, who goes before you in the way," etc. The speech ends with verse 33. In Psalms 56:4, there should be a question, "I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?" So Martin; but in Psalms 101:2, we should probably read without the note of interrogation, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way, when Thou wilt come to me." So Vulgate, Lee, and Roseumüller. Again, in Jeremiah 38:15, the last clause we should read without a question, "and if I counsel thee, thou wilt not hearken to me," so Vulgate and Martin; but LXX. in both these places agrees with the authorised version. From the instances brought forward, want of space alone necessitating a selection, it will be seen that our English version is decidedly in need of amendment. How that may best be accomplished is not the subject before us; but if we dwell for a time on its defects, we must not shut our eyes to its excellencies. It has been pronounced, and with truth, as a whole, the best of modern versions. For it we have much cause to thank God. Compared with the Douay version, made for Roman Catholics in England, how great is the difference, how immense its superiority; but if it can be improved by being made a more faithful translation of the originals, shall we refuse to see its deficiencies? Surely the translators, were they now alive, would desire nothing else than that their defects should be amended, and the word of the living God, which they sought to convey to the English

reader, be as accurately rendered as possible. But if a revision be undertaken, it should be of a text based on MS. authority. It must be of the Hebrew and Chaldee, read with points; and it must proceed on the understanding that it will as faithfully as possible — the idioms of the languages being duly considered — translate the text, remembering that the business of a translator is to convey the meaning of what the author wrote, and not what he thinks he should have written. The tenses of verbs, and the numbers of nouns, should be carefully attended to. In this our translators have failed, forgetting at times that the work of a translator is to translate the text — the business of the teacher to expound it. These two offices should be kept distinct. Were this work carried out efficiently, many passages might undergo a slight change, familiar words and phrases might disappear, portions of the prophetical parts might be greatly altered, and the poetical writings emerge from the pen of the translator in places almost wholly recast. How differently, for instance, the song of Deborah would read, if translated from the Hebrew afresh, with all the light we now possess regarding the meaning of the terms the prophetess employed. But if with these changes we felt sure we had approached more closely to the meaning of the Spirit of God, we should gain and not lose. In the meantime passages may well be examined, and suggested improvements canvassed.

(3). 2nd Edition, Volume 1, September 1856.

[01:065]

Much has of late years been done to verify, as far as possible, the text of the Greek New Testament. Whether any critical text yet published should be invariably followed as correct is a question open to doubt, or perhaps some would say, one which admits of no doubt. Perhaps the text which, from the abundant materials now gathered together, shall generally command the confidence of scholars and Bible students has yet to appear. Meanwhile, we can in some places clearly see what should be read, and what corrections of the common Greek text (whether the second Elzevir edition, published in 1633, or the third edition of Stephen, published in 1550) should now be made. That neither of these texts can be accepted as an accurate reprint of the originals or even of what was read as such in the early ages of Christianity, we need not now stop to prove. Nor, since several attempts to revise the authorised version of the New Testament, or to translate afresh from the Greek, have of late years appeared, need we stop to inquire whether that version needs amendment. We shall, therefore, confine our remarks to pointing out some corrections of the authorised version which, in any revision, will most probably be made.

And, first, of corrections arising from changes in the Greek text.

1. Words or clauses which should be omitted.

Matthew 6:13, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, amen;" Matthew 25:13, "wherein the Son of man cometh;" Matthew 27:35, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots;" Acts 10:6, "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do;" Acts 8:37, the whole verse; Acts 9:5-6, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Romans 1:16, "of Christ;" Romans 6:11, "our Lord;" Romans 8:1, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" Romans 15:29, "of the gospel;" Romans 16:18, "Jesus;" 1 Corinthians 5:1, "so much as is named;" 1 Corinthians 6:20, "and in your spirit, which

are God's;" 1 Corinthians 7:5, "fasting and;" 1 Corinthians 10:28, "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;" 1 Corinthians 11:24, "take eat;" 2 Corinthians 4:10, "the Lord;" Galatians 3:1, "that ye should not obey the truth;" Colossians 1:2, "and the Lord Jesus Christ;" Colossians 1:14, "through His blood;" Colossians 1:28, "Jesus;" Colossians 2:11, "the sins of;" 2 Thessalonians 2:4, "as God;" 1 Timothy 1:17, "wise;" Hebrews 3:1, "Christ;" Hebrews 11:13, "and were persuaded of them;" Hebrews 12:20, "or thrust through with a dart;" 1 John 5:7-8, "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth;" 1 John 5:13, "that believe on the name of the Son of God;" Jude 1:25, "wise;" Revelation 1:8, "the beginning and the ending;" Revelation 1:11, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and;" Revelation 2:20, "a few things;" Revelation 2:24, "and unto;" Revelation 5:14, "him that liveth for ever and ever;" Revelation 11:17, "and art to come;" Revelation 14:5, "before the throne of God;" Revelation 16:14, "of the earth and;" Revelation 20:5, "again." A fertile source of errors in the text has been the tendency to harmonise two independent accounts of the same thing. The Spirit of God surely had a reason for every word He saw fit to use. As the sacred writer wrote it, He intended it should appear. All that one recorded, it was not God's mind that others should record likewise. So, in Mark 2:17, "to repentance;" Mark 3:5, "whole as the other;" Mark 11:10, "in the name of the Lord;" Mark 14:22; Mark 14:2 nd, "eat;" should be omitted, whilst in the parallel passages of Matthew or Luke the words will be found in the text unchallenged.

2. Additions which should be made.

Acts 4:27, "together + in this city;" Acts 16:7, "Spirit + of Jesus;" Acts 20:23, "witnesseth + to me;" 1 Corinthians 9:20, "as under the law + not being really under law;" 1 Peter 2:2, "grow thereby + unto salvation;" 2 Peter 3:3, "scoffers + in their scoffing;" 1 John 2:23, "Father + but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also;" Jude 1:25, "Saviour + by Jesus Christ our Lord;" Revelation 8:7, "earth + and the third part of the earth was burnt up;" Revelation 14:1, "having + His name and."

3. Alterations which should be made.

Matthew 9:36, "were harassed," for, "fainted;" Matthew 18:28, "pay if thou owest anything," for, "pay me that thou owest;" Luke 2:22, "their purification," for, "her purification;" Luke 3:2, "high priest," for, "high priests;" John 3:25, "a Jew," for, "the Jews;" John 17:11, "keep them in thine name, which," for, "keep through thine own name those whom;" Acts 3:20, "before was appointed you," for, "before was preached unto you;" Acts 6:8, "grace," for, "faith;" Acts 9:6, "but," for, "and the Lord said unto him;" Acts 14:3, "by granting," for, "and granted;" Acts 14:14, "rushed forth," for, "ran in;" Acts 14:17, "you," for, "us;" Romans 2:17, "but if," for, "behold;" Romans 7:6, "having died in that," for, "that being dead;" 1 Corinthians 1:23, "heathen," for, "Greeks;" Galatians 4:26, "our mother," for, "mother of us all;" Ephesians 1:18, "heart," for, "understanding;" Ephesians 3:9, "dispensation," for, "fellowship;" Ephesians 5:9, "light," for, "Spirit;" Ephesians 5:21, "Christ," for, "God;" Ephesians 5:29, "Christ," for, "Lord;" Colossians 3:22, "the Lord," for, "God;" 2 Thessalonians 2:2, "the Lord," for, "Christ;" 1 Timothy 6:19, "that which is really," for, "eternal;" 2 Timothy 2:19, "of the Lord," for, "of Christ;" Hebrews 8:11, "fellow citizen," for, "neighbour;" James 5:9, "judged," for, "condemned;" 2 Peter 2:18, "in some degree," for, "clean;" 1 John 5:13, "who," for, "and that ye may;" 2 John 1:7, "gone out," for, "entered;" Jude 1:12, "carried away," for, "carried about;" Revelation 1:5, "loveth," for, "loved;" Revelation 2:15, "in like manner," for, "which

thing I hate;" Revelation 8:13, "eagle," for, "angel;" Revelation 11:4, "Lord," for, "God;" Revelation 11:15, "the kingdom is," for, "the kingdoms are;" Revelation 15:3, "nations," for, "saints;" Revelation 17:8, "and shall be present," for, "and yet is;" Revelation 18:20, "saints and apostles," for, "holy apostles;" Revelation 20:12, "the throne," for, "God;" Revelation 21:7, "these things," for, "all things;" Revelation 22:6, "spirits of the," for, "holy;" Revelation 22:19, "from the tree," for, "out of the book;" Revelation 22:14, "wash their robes," for, "do His commandments."

Attention to these and other alterations which might be noticed will often throw great light on Scripture, and will correct the thoughts of God's children. For example, in the alteration of "Christ" for "the Lord" in Ephesians 5:29, we learn that "Lord" is not a correct term to use when speaking of Christ and the Church. The propriety of the changes in Ephesians 5:21, Colossians 3:22, 2 Timothy 2:19, will be apparent. Set on high as Lord and Christ all are to own not only God, but Him who is Lord.

Besides these changes in the text, others must be made in the translation.

1. In some cases the definite article has great force, and should be inserted.

John 6:32, the bread from heaven; John 16:13, all the truth; 1 Corinthians 10:5, with the most of them; 1 Corinthians 12:12, the Christ, because speaking of the Head and the members together; 2 Thessalonians 2:8, the wicked (or rather, the lawless one); 2 Timothy 4:7, the good fight; Revelation 7:14, the great tribulation.

2. The translation should be amended.

Acts 7:59, "praying and saying," for, "calling upon God, and saying," so Syriac, Vulgate, Martin, Tynedale; Romans 11:31, "have not believed in your mercy, that they," for, "have not believed, that through your mercy they;" 1 Corinthians 9:21, "in lawful subjection," for, "under the law;" 1 Corinthians 15:2, "hold fast," for, "keep in memory;" 2 Corinthians 3:7, "began with glory," for, "was glorious;" 2 Corinthians 3:8, "subsist in glory," for, "glorious;" 2 Corinthians 3:11, "was with glory," for "was glorious;" "subsists in glory," for, "is glorious;" 2 Corinthians 3:18, "unveiled," for, "open;" 2 Corinthians 4:3, "veiled," "it is veiled," for, "hid," " it is hid;" Galatians 5:17, "in order that ye should not," for "so that ye cannot;" Ephesians 3:15, "every family," for, "the whole family;" Ephesians 3:18, "may be thoroughly able," for, "may be able;" Ephesians 6:4, "discipline," for, "nurture;" Php 4:5, "gentleness," for, "moderation;" Colossians 3:10, "unto full knowledge," for, "in knowledge;" 2 Thessalonians 2:2, "is present," for, "is at hand;" 2 Thessalonians 3:5, "patience of the Christ," for, "patient waiting for Christ;" Titus 2:13, "our great God and Saviour," for, "the great God and our Saviour;" Hebrews 4:14, "passed through," for, "passed into;" Hebrews 10:23, "hope," for, "faith;" Hebrews 12:2, "leader and perfecter of the faith," for, "author and finisher of our faith;" 1 John 2:19, "all are not of us," for, "they are not all of us;" 1 John 3:4, "practises lawlessness," "lawlessness," for, "transgresseth the law;" "transgression of the law;" Revelation 7:15, "shall tabernacle over them," for, "shall dwell among them."

3. The needless insertion of some words, and the omission of others should be attended to.

Matthew 20:23, read, "is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared of my Father;" Matthew 25:14, read, "for it is as if a man, going from home, called his servants;" 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, read, "tongue," simply; John 8:1, read, "and Jesus went," so Tynedale and Geneva; 2

Corinthians 5:6, read, "and know that," so Tynedale, Cranmer, Geneva.

4. More care should be exercised in the translation of words. The distinction between (wios)*, a son, manifested as such to others, and (tecnon)*, a child, expressive of relationship, should be carefully preserved. The Lord Jesus is called (wios), never (tecnon), except in Luke 2:48 (when addressed by His mother), and Revelation 12:4. Of believers both terms are used, but only in the writings of Paul, Matthew 5:9; Matthew 5:45; Luke 6:35, Luke 16:8, Luke 20:36; John 12:36; Revelation 21:7, excepted. John generally speaks of relationship to God, a child, so uses (tecnon). Paul speaks of this, and of the position before the world as a son as well, so uses the word (wios) likewise. (See Romans 8:14; Romans 8:16.) To the Lord as an infant, (paidion), a little child, is applied (Matthew 2:1-23; Luke 2:17; Luke 2:40); and when twelve years of age he is called (pais), a child, the same word used of Him after his resurrection, in Acts 3:13; Acts 3:26, Acts 4:27; Acts 4:30. Paul is the first in Acts who proclaims Him as Son (wios, Acts 9:20) of God. Between the fold aule (John 10:1; John 10:16) and poimne (John 10:16) there is a wide difference, which should be noted. God owns now no fold; the sheep formerly in it have been led out of it; but He has a flock. Hell, (hades), the place of departed spirits, and hell, (gehenna), the place of torment, which occurs only in Matthew 5:22; Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15; Matthew 23:33; Mark 9:43; Mark 9:45; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6; are not the same place; yet the authorised version fails to point this out. Again, should not the reader be informed that comforter (John 14:16; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7) is the same word in the Greek as advocate (1 John 2:1), (paracletos), showing that whilst the advocacy of the Lord is carried on on high, there is another advocate, the Holy Ghost, on earth? Again, why should (episcopos) be translated bishop in 1 Timothy 3:2, and overseer in Acts 20:28?

{May be found elsewhere transliterated as huios and teknon.}

Examples might be multiplied, but our business is not to translate, but to show the need of a careful revision, both of the text and of the authorised version. When undertaken, if faithfully executed, will it not be the most convincing proof that those whose religion is professedly drawn from the Bible, and by which word and that alone, they profess to be guided, are above all party considerations, desiring for themselves and others God’s word in its purity and its simplicity?

Chapter 102

S. The Resurrection of the Body.

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"I believe in the resurrection of the body." This has been in substance an article of the common creed of Christendom from the earliest days of the church's existence upon earth. The ancient creeds made mention of the resurrection of the flesh. Scripture teaches us of the resurrection of the body. In whatever form, then, the doctrine was expressed, the truth meant to be conveyed was the same, namely, that the body is to be raised again, and to be reunited, and that for ever, to the soul which never dies. But is this true, or is it false? Have the saints of God, age after age, departed this life in the expectation of the fulfilment of a hope which, like that of the hypocrite's, shall perish? Have they put off their mortal coil, never more to have to do with it in any form or condition? Or is it true that the hope concisely expressed in that one Latin word resurgam, which so often meets the eye, shall yet have its accomplishment? In an age in which popular belief is so closely scrutinized, and popular mistakes are exposed and corrected, it need surprise no one if the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is not allowed to pass unchallenged, and even its possibility be plainly denied. For this is nothing new. Some of the Athenian philosophers, when they heard Paul teach the resurrection, mocked at it. (Acts 17:32.) Christians at Corinth, led away by human reasoning, denied it. (1 Corinthians 15:12.) Hymenaeus and Philetus appear to have spiritualized it. (2 Timothy 2:18.) On the other hand the apostle, to encourage the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews, reminded them that the great Shepherd of the sheep had been brought again from the dead. (Hebrews 13:20.) Timothy, too, was cheered in his path of testimony, which might lead him to martyrdom, by the remembrance of the raising from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the Seed of David. (2 Timothy 2:8.) The question, then, is this, Does the body rise? Is that body, once indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and bought by the blood of Christ (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:20), ever lost, as it has been said, in the circle of matter? Will the man who has made his body minister to his carnal desires whilst on earth, be free for ever from it after death has claimed it? Now, many a question, once debated with keenness and acuteness, has been set at rest, and is no longer regarded as a matter open to dispute. Who, for instance, now doubts that the earth moves round the sun? Who would deny the truth of the circulation of the blood in the human frame? Those, however, who deny the resurrection of the body have yet to establish their case. The scoffs of heathen philosophers, and the reasonings of men, have failed as yet to obliterate from the christian man's creed the belief in the resurrection of the body.

After Adam fell, God acquainted him with the origin of his body: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Was Adam only dust? Surely not. He had a soul and a spirit, as we learn doctrinally from a passage in the New Testament (1 Thessalonians 5:23), which states what other scriptures confirm, that body, soul, and spirit together make up the man. The distinction between body and spirit all but the most pronounced materialist would admit. (Ecclesiastes 12:7.) The difference between soul (psyche) and spirit (pneuma) the word of God distinctly asserts (Hebrews 4:12), though often in scripture, and in common language, the word soul (psyche) is used for both. (Matthew 10:28; 1 Peter 1:9.) Adam died, and all his posterity, in the antediluvian world, except

Enoch, who was translated, and Noah, and those with him, who survived the divine visitation of the flood within the ark. In process of time Noah died, and his offspring, with one exception — that of Elijah, who was taken up by a whirlwind to heaven without passing through the portals of death. Death, then, having been the common lot of man, and exemption from it having been limited as yet to the two just named — Enoch and Elijah — it is a most important question, which closely concerns man, Is there a resurrection of the body, or is there not? A book has been recently published denying this doctrine, which the author is pleased to call "a theological dogma." (Page 93.) Let us turn to an older book, to learn what it says on this subject. But before entering at length into this question, a few remarks in explanation of the use of terms may be helpful. When we say of a man that he died, we speak of the individual as ceasing by death to exist on earth, his place here knows him no more. (Job 7:10.) Yet we are assured from scripture that his spirit does not die. The body can, and does; death claims it; the grave holds it. The person, however, lives to God, as the Lord told the Sadducees in the temple at Jerusalem. (Luke 20:38.) By death the soul is set free from the body, and the latter thereupon ceases to live, so we talk of a dead body in contradistinction to a living body. Viewing the individual as a whole, we say of him what is true of a part, he is dead; for the body, which is part of him, is dead. On the other hand, if we think of the individual in the unclothed state — for there is such a state (2 Corinthians 5:4; 2 Peter 1:14; Revelation 6:9) — remembering that the soul does not die, we speak of him as living. Personality, which is attributed to him when in the body, is attributed to him equally when out of it. Christians are absent from the body, and present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8.) The penitent thief was with Christ in paradise, but of the disposal of his body we have no record. Nor is this true of saints only. The rich man died, and was buried, yet was alive in hades. And Samuel, speaking to Saul years after his body had been laid in the grave, told the king that by the morrow Saul and his sons would be with him. (1 Samuel 28:19.) Hence, if we say such an one has died, we understand that a separation has taken place between his body and his soul, the former thereby merely died, though the latter still lives, for in common language we speak of the individual as he appears to us. Thus when we read of the dead, meaning thereby those who have departed this life, we understand that they are so called on account of their present bodily condition. As unclothed spirits they are really alive, but their bodies being dead, they are termed the dead. So we read of the Lord, "These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead and is alive." (Revelation 2:8.) We read of those who share in the first resurrection, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4.) We read, moreover, of the lost, "The rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished." (Revelation 20:5.) In each of these instances, the condition, whether dead or living, is viewed as dependent on the state of the body. If that is dead, the person is dead. If that is raised again and reunited to the soul, the person is said to be living.

Next, when scripture speaks of the dead as sleeping, what sleeps, the body or the soul? Stephen fell asleep we read in Acts 7:60, but we know from 2 Corinthians 5:8, Php 1:23, that he was with Christ. Looked at from man’s point of view he slept, for the body was still, and unconscious of all that was passing around it. The same might have been said of the rich man by any who gazed on his corpse. But look behind the curtain which hides the other world from our view. The rich man was in torment, no rest, no sleep, for him (Luke 16:23), yet nothing disturbed the peacefulness of the chamber of death. Still, motionless, because lifeless, was his body, whilst in hades he was suffering excruciating torment. Still, motionless, was Stephen’s body. He slept. But he was with Christ, to whom he had committed his spirit. And all can understand such language. For when

natural sleep overtakes us, what sleeps? The body. And whilst that is wrapped in slumber, the spirit may be holding converse with God, and receiving instruction from Him. (Job 4:12-21; Jeremiah 31:26.) Yet we say of the person, he sleeps, nevertheless it is of the body only that the statement is critically correct. So of natural death, which Adam entailed on his posterity. It is called sleep, because the body is lifeless, motionless, and at rest. Speaking, therefore, of such things as man on earth can view them, the condition of the body, whatever that condition may be, guides us in our description of the man. He slept, he is buried, he stinketh, he saw corruption, all these are facts predicated of the person, though critically true only of his body. To turn to another point. What is the meaning of the resurrection (he anastasis)? Before the Lord came the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead formed part of the creed of every orthodox Jew. (Hebrews 6:2; Hebrews 11:35; Acts 23:6-8.) The Lord's teaching confirmed it. His resurrection proved it. The Sadducees denied it, and clearly, from their question about the woman who had seven husbands, they opposed the thought of the resurrection of the body. Did the Lord by His answer acknowledge that they were right in such opposition? By no means. They erred, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. The power of God they knew not, for they thought that the resurrection state could not differ from the present one. On that the Lord enlightened them. They knew not the scriptures which taught the resurrection. To such the Lord turned them. A resurrection of the person apart from the body, which the author teaches, would not have fitted in with their crucial test, as the Sadducees considered it. Against the resurrection, including that of the body, their question was aimed, but their doctrine was by the Lord condemned, and they were put to silence. (Matthew 22:34.) His answer met with the approval of some of the scribes (Luke 20:39), who clearly did not discern in it any condemnation of that which they considered to be the orthodox View of the subject. Against the resurrection of the body the question of the Sadducees was undeniably aimed, though their heretical teaching was not confined to a denial of that. The Lord completely silenced them. They gained not even a partial victory. Their tenets He utterly repudiated.

After His resurrection a prominence was given to the doctrine of the resurrection in the teaching of the apostles, to which the Jews before the first advent had been wholly unaccustomed. The fulfilment of all Jewish hopes, it was now taught, was inseparably bound up with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 13:34.) And further, resurrection from the dead, first taught by the Lord (Mark 9:10), was a doctrine now established on a sure basis, since He was risen. Now it was the promulgation of this doctrine which stirred up the marked animosity of the Sadducees, of which we have the account in Acts 4:2; Acts 5:17. Whilst ministering on earth, the Pharisees were those who had bitterly opposed the Lord Himself. The Sadducees now took a prominent place in attempting to stem the advancing tide of christian truth, being grieved that the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead, ten anastasin ten ek nekron. Such being their doctrine, what did the apostles regard as an essential feature of the resurrection? Let Peter instruct us, as he did his hearers on the day of Pentecost. David, he said, "spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hades, neither his flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2:31.) A resurrection of the individual, apart from that of the body which died, did not enter into Peter's preaching. No theory then of a resurrection which does not admit that of the body which has died will be in accordance with apostolic preaching, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Will it be objected that Peter, in Acts 2:1-47 :, is only speaking of the resurrection of Christ? Granted. But we learn from Acts 4:1-37 : that the apostles taught the resurrection from the dead, and their enemies well understood it, not merely of the Lord Jesus, which had taken place, but that of others

which had not. They based on His resurrection, already effected, the doctrine of the resurrection from among the dead. Now what Peter taught of the Lord Jesus distinctly affirmed the resurrection of the body. We learn, therefore, what the son of Simon included in resurrection, which, if he did not define, he certainly explained. Speaking thus by the Holy Ghost, we learn that God, when He teaches us about the resurrection of the dead, does not mean the resurrection of the person apart from his body. This doctrine is not new. It is not confined to Christianity. Old Testament worthies accounted it possible. Old Testament saints looked forward to it. Abraham accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac, even from the dead, from whence he received him in a figure. (Hebrews 11:19.) For in Isaac should Abraham's seed be called. His resurrection, therefore. if he died, must take place, and that clearly involved the resurrection of his body, if the promises which centred in him were to have their accomplishment. Godly women, we read of at a later date, received their children raised to life again, elabon ex anastaseos tous nekrous auton (lit. received by resurrection their dead); but others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, hina kreittonos anastaseos tuchosin. It would be difficult, surely, comparing and contrasting such statements, to doubt that, as some received their dead brought back from the grave, the well-known and much-loved form again energized by life, so others looked for their own bodies to be raised again, though after a different manner, and for a different end, never again to die, but to live for ever beyond death — a better resurrection indeed! Now, of such a resurrection David distinctly prophesied when he penned that psalm fulfilled by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Resurrection of the body, therefore, Old Testament saints knew was possible and looked forward to as certain.

Coming to New Testament times, we have the Lord teaching about the future of the body. Death may claim it, but God can deal with it after death. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," or Gehenna, that is, the place of everlasting torment. (Matthew 10:28.) But when will this take place? The Lord, in Luke, tells us it will be after death. "For 1 say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he bath killed, hath power to cast into hell (or Gehenna); yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12:4-5.) Death then is not the end of the body. It can be cast into Gehenna, called in Matthew 5:22 the Gehenna of fire, which is the lake of fire of Revelation 20:1-15 :, and that after death. As yet this has not been done. But how many of those whose portion will be in that lake have been dead for centuries. The dissolution of the body, and its resolution into dust, will be found no hindrance to God's thus dealing with it. For He can thus deal with it, and He will, and that after its death and resurrection. With these two scriptures before us, that man is bold indeed who would deny the resurrection of the body, and openly assert that "it is lost sight of in the ground for ever." (Page 139.)

Further, the Lord distinctly declares that He will raise the dead. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of

God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. 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 judgment." (John 5:21-29.) A very full statement have we in these few verses. The Father acts in quickening power, so does the Son, who quickeneth whom He will. Has this quickening reference to the soul, or to the body? We believe the Lord is here speaking about the soul. Every man is not quickened in the sense in which He speaks in this verse. Some only are the subjects of that power — "whom he will." By-and-by He will call from their tombs all that are in them. Now He is dealing with a class, but with a class who are dead, otherwise they would not need to be quickened. In what sense, then, are they dead? Does scripture recognize death, as at present existing, in two senses, or only in one? Does the New Testament speak of those spiritually dead, as well as of those who are physically dead? It surely does. And the first passage in its pages which speaks of the one, speaks also of the other. "Let the dead bury their dead." (Matthew 8:22.)

Having announced, then, His quickening power to be exercised on behalf of some spiritually dead, the Lord describes in verse 24 certain characteristic features of those who are the subjects of it, and their full exemption from the judgment which He is empowered to put into execution, that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. The characteristic marks are these — hearing His word, and believing (not on, but) Him that sent Him. These are they who have everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but have passed from death unto life. Dead they once were spiritually. Dead in that sense they should be no longer.

Now this change, the passage from death unto life, takes place whilst they are yet in the body, alive upon earth. It is not resurrection in any sense. It is the entrance into a condition in which they never were before. They have passed (ek) out of death into life. But when was this change to take place, and how? The following verse (25) instructs us both as to the time and the means. "Now," when the Lord spoke, that change was taking place, and the means employed was the voice of the Son of God. "They that hear shall live." Not those, however, in the tombs, but the spiritually dead upon earth, for of such scripture undoubtedly speaks; and the meaning to be attached to the term, "the dead" (hoi nekroi) in this verse, the Lord by His statement of the change to be effected definitely fixes. They live who hear the voice of the Son of God. Are these the souls at present in hades? Do souls there hear that voice and live? Do souls there now pass out of death into life? It is impossible thus to apply the Lord’s words. For the dead would not remain in hades any longer if that was the case. But they do not live again till resurrection takes place. (Revelation 20:4-5.) As immortal beings all of them at this moment live to God. In that sense they have never died. None, however, who have died are said to live again till the resurrection takes place. Now the dead in Christ have not risen as yet; of this 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; are witnesses. Christ risen is the firstfruits of those fallen asleep, who had not risen when Paul wrote, nor will rise till the Lord shall descend from heaven. The resurrection of these people is still future. The Lord, however, tells us of the present effect of hearing His word — the dead who hear it live. Of resurrection He speaks not a word in this verse; but the result of hearing the voice of the Son of God is, that life is communicated to the dead, who thereby pass out of death into life. He quickens the dead, and He raises the dead. Both are effected by His voice, but the result in the former case

is to give life, the result in the latter is to call forth from the tombs. In each case the dealing is with individuals. They that hear live. All that are in the tombs come forth. Between verse 25 and verse 28 the difference, however, is marked, for the objects in view are different, and the results are different. To quicken is the object in verse 25, so living is mentioned. To call forth from the tombs is the object in verse 28, so resurrection is spoken of. In the former case there is experienced a change of condition — they who were dead live. In the latter there is a change of locality as well, for they come forth from the tombs.

Now by no amount of ingenuity can we evade this conclusion. The words are so clear. "The dead" is the term in verse 25, where soul-quickening is mentioned. "All in the tombs" is the designation, in verse 28, of those that shall hear the voice of the Son of man. Had the Lord spoken of those spiritually dead in the same terms that He does of those physically dead, ambiguity might have been pleaded as a reason for teaching that He speaks only of one class after all. To make His language clear, He has been pleased to speak in the one verse of "the dead," in the other of "all in the tombs."

How, then, does the author attempt to get over this? These are his words: "It is now clear to me that the dead here (ver. 25), and those in verses 28 and 29, are of the same class; that is, they are the actually dead in each case, though apparently differently designated. For, as I conceive, the little word ’ALL’ plainly proves that it must be so. Some of the dead were to hear the voice of the Son of God in the hour mentioned in verse 25; but now all those in the grave are to hear His voice in the hour that is to come. Thus the class is the same in each case; for clearly some of the dead, and all of the dead, must refer to the same class of persons. That is to say, you cannot have one kind of dead in verse 25, and another kind of dead in verses 28, 29, included at the same time in the one all. Neither does it follow, I judge, that, because the Lord changed the designation in verse 28, therefore He changed the class." (Page 92.) From one who insists so literally on the rigid interpretation of terms, when they militate against his theory, we might have expected different reasoning from this. The author elsewhere insists that, because those physically dead are said to sleep, therefore the persons, not the bodies, really sleep. (Page 33.) He also intimates, that as he cannot find in the word the modern formula, "the resurrection of the body," that doctrine is no scriptural doctrine for him. (Page 4.) But here, whilst admitting the change in the Lord’s language from "the dead" to "all in the tombs," the author writes of the latter as "all of the dead." Just what the Lord avoids, evidently from design, that the author adopts. "All of the dead," says the author; "all that are in the tombs" were the Lord’s words. Now the mischief of this change of terms is great. The author probably thereby mystifies himself, and certainly may mystify some of his readers, when he writes, "some of the dead, and all of the dead must refer to the same class of persons." His reasoning, all may see, is based on a mistake, and a mistake of his own making. Attention to the Lord’s language throws light on the subject. The marked difference in His language suggests, to say the least of it, that the assumption that the same class of dead are mentioned in verse 25 and verse 28 is quite wrong. But why must "the dead" of verse 25 be the same as "all in the tombs?" Was the Lord only occupied on that occasion with those in their graves? Had He no word for those then alive in the body? Had the Jews been combating the doctrine of the resurrection? The Sadducees excepted, the Jews for the most part believed it. What, then, was it which called forth these personal and pointed addresses? They objected to the Lord healing the man on the sabbath-day. They challenged the lawfulness of His telling the man to carry his bed on that day,

and affirmed that the Lord had broken the sabbath. They stoutly opposed the announcement of His divinity and relationship to His Father. Then the Lord addressed them, and pressed on them the importance of receiving His teaching, and the necessity of recognizing His authority; for life, spiritual life, He was giving, and judgment by-and-by would He execute. Observe too, that when He speaks of those in the tombs, He drops that pointed personal appeal, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." The way He speaks, and His selection of terms in which to convey His teaching, have a definiteness of purpose in them, if the spiritually dead are those spoken of in verses 24, 25, which is lost completely if we take the author's view of the passage. Why address them in that pointed manner, if He were enunciating truth that did not then directly concern His auditors? Regard "the dead" in this passage as the spiritually dead, and the vigour and point of His teaching become apparent.

Again, "the dead" need not be, and indeed are not, synonymous with "all in the tombs." For, though those of them who shall have entered the tombs before the Lord comes for His saints will be included in the first class mentioned in verse 29, yet every quickened soul, formerly dead, will not at that day come forth from them, for there will be a company of saints still alive upon earth, who will be caught up without passing through death. This is admitted (page 155), and the Lord's language, though not here teaching it, clearly leaves room for it. Since, then, there are those once dead, who will never die, "the dead" in our passage need not on prima facie ground be synonymous with "all in the tombs;" and to make plain that they are not, the Lord, when He speaks of those who had died, does not here call them "the dead."

"All that are in the tombs." Surely that must include the bodies laid therein. No, says the author, it does not; and to substantiate his assertion, he directs attention to Ezekiel 32:1-32 :, whereby, from a portion of the Bible, highly and confessedly figurative, he would seek to explain away the teaching of the Son of God in one of the most solemn and plain-spoken passages which the New Testament contains. Ezekiel writes of graves in sheol: therefore, says the author, there are graves in the region to which spirits, divested of their natural bodies, have gone. Now, since he has also taught us that the earthly body does not enter sheol at all, it is difficult to see what use there can be for graves in that region. Do you bury a spirit? The idea is absurd. Is the spiritual body, which the author tells us the unclothed spirit gets on its entrance into sheol, to be laid in the grave? (Pages 50, 72, 107.) But that, according to his teaching, can have never been associated with sin. On it, therefore, death has no claim. As, then, the spirit clearly cannot be buried, nor can the spiritual body be required to submit to burial, what is buried in sheol, if the author is to be our guide? To ask such a question, from his point of view, is enough to demonstrate the untenableness of his position. The fact is, he has started with a mistaken idea of what is comprehended in the term sheol, which really includes the grave, as well as the region in which the unclothed spirits await their resurrection. Thus Jacob exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul, when called to part with Benjamin, that his sons would bring down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave (sheol). (Genesis 42:38.) The congregation of Dathan and Abiram went down alive into the pit (sheol). (Numbers 16:30; Numbers 16:33.) After the same manner Job speaks (Job 24:19), and the psalmist (Psalms 30:3; Psalms 49:14; Psalms 141:7), and Isaiah (Isaiah 14:15). For by sheol was understood what we might call the whole underworld. Both body and soul are represented as entering it. Hence the prophet can depict in graphic language the dead in their graves (in sheol), with the worm above them and under them. (Isaiah 14:11.) To a Hebrew this language was not

incongruous, for there are worms in the grave. Graves then can be described as in sheol, for into it the whole person, both body and spirit, was regarded as entering. Now this is a very grave fact for one who opposes the correct teaching of John 5:1-47, and denies the resurrection of the body, affirming that it "is lost sight of in the ground for ever." (Page 139.) The supposed scripture authority (page 99), for interpreting John 5:28 of dead persons as distinct from their bodies, is found to be no scripture authority at all. The resurrection of the body, which our Lord there distinctly teaches, the author avowedly denies, and, as he states, on the authority of scripture, which, when examined, only demonstrates his mistaken view of what in the Old Testament is called sheol. But let us proceed. The Lord having announced what He was then doing for all who would hearken to Him, and what He will do at a future time, namely, call forth all that should be in the tombs, He, in the following chapter of the Gospel (vi.), presents Himself to the multitude and to the Jews as "the True Bread," "the Living Bread," "the Bread of Life," in contradistinction to the manna on which their fathers had fed in the wilderness. The manna sustained life, but could not give life, neither could it preserve from death, nor ensure resurrection to those who cat of it. The Bread of Life, communicating everlasting life to all who eat of it, ensured resurrection at the last day. Not only, then would the Lord quicken souls, but those who eat of the Living Bread, if they afterwards entered the grave, He would raise up at the last day. The whole person He would thus care for, the body as well as the soul. (Vers. 39, 40, 44, 54.) By eating of that Bread one lives for ever. (Ver. 58.) Having eaten of it, if death should supervene, and that is physical death, resurrection should assuredly take place. "I will raise him up at the last day."

Continuing in the company, as it were, of our evangelist, let us listen to the Lord Jesus when He met Martha outside the village of Bethany. To His statement, "Thy brother shall rise again," Martha assented, and fixed the time of it, as she responded, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." To this the Lord at once replied, "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?" (John 11:23-26.) Now what does this mean? Lazarus was already a quickened soul. It was not about his soul the Lord spoke. Yet Lazarus was dead. The Lord knew it. Mary reminded Him of it. Martha, when she met Him, owned it, and again at the grave called His attention to it, "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days." The Jews who were with them believed it. Physical death was the only thing in their minds. Of spiritual death there was no manner of surmise. The sorrow which filled the sister’s heart arose from this, that death held Lazarus in its grasp. Death and burial had taken place when Christ was not there. For resurrection, however, He was needed. His power, and in this instance His personal presence too, were requisite. And now, on His way to the grave, He revealed what He is, the answer to that which had filled them with sorrow; for here among His saints He was ministering to such in their distress. "I am the resurrection and the life." Resurrection he mentions first, then life. For He was speaking with reference to death the wages of sin, and with reference to the circumstances in which at that moment they all were. He is the resurrection.

If, then, His people enter into death, they shall be raised up, for" he that believeth on me" (are His words) "though he have died (kan apothane), shall live." Clearly He is speaking of physical death; the death of one who already has everlasting life by believing on Him. If such an one dies, he shall live. On the other hand, we learn for the first time that a saint may never die, that is, never be separated from his body, as Lazarus was at that moment. "For he that liveth, and believeth on me

shall never die." Mark here the order of thought, "Liveth and believeth," not believeth and liveth. The never dying has respect to the body, between which and the soul there shall be, under the circumstances indicated, no separation. The living after death must refer to the body likewise, the reuniting of soul and body, which is here called resurrection, anastasis. Till resurrection takes place, the one viewed as about to be a subject of it is not said to live. For resurrection and living are in this passage corresponding terms. As risen the saint lives. Till risen he does not live. And this will he true of all the dead saints, Lazarus, as raised up, being a kind of illustration of it; a kind of illustration only in one way, because Lazarus was raised to die again, but the dead will be raised to die no more. An illustration in another way, because it teaches what resurrection involved, the calling out of the tomb the body which had been laid in it and, as in his case, his body was raised up again, and till then, after death had come in, he was not regarded as living, so, with the sleeping saints, their bodies must be raised up for them to live.

Thus far we have learnt from the teaching of Christ three important things. He can, and will, deal with the body alter death, calling out from the tombs all who are in them, the one class to a resurrection of life, the other to a resurrection of judgment. Next, that it is through eating His flesh and drinking His blood one can be sure of being in the first of these classes; and, lastly, that the Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Death, therefore, can have no power, save as long as He permits it, and then only over those whom He intends to enter into it: for He can, and will, raise up His sleeping saints; He can, and will, preserve from entering into it some who shall believe on Him. We would now turn from His teaching to a consideration of His own resurrection, and the consequences of it. Of His own resurrection He had several times spoken (John 2:20-21; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:9; Matthew 17:23; Matthew 20:19; Matthew 26:32; Mark 8:31; Mark 9:9; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:34; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:33; Luke 24:7), and His enemies understood by His words that He predicted the raising of His body; for they asked Pilate for a guard to watch the tomb lest His disciples, coming by night, should steal Him away, and, counting on the credulity of the populace, affirm that He really had risen. (Matthew 27:63.) The soldiers did guard the tomb, yet He rose. The clothes in which His body had been wrapped were left behind, and the arrangement of them, as seen by Peter (John 20:6-7), betokened nothing like haste in His exit from that rock-hewn sepulchre. Neither the apostles, John and Peter, nor the women, found the body of the Lord. Of His resurrection there was no doubt. He was seen. He was handled. He was spoken with after it. He ate, too, to convince His disciples that it was Himself. He showed to them His hands and His feet, and bade Thomas thrust his hand into his Master’s side.

Now, in treating of resurrection certain terms are made use of by the inspired penmen, namely, two nouns, egersis, and anastasis; and three verbs, egeiro, anistemi, and anago. Of the two nouns, the first is met with but once in the New Testament (Matthew 27:53), and has reference to the Lord’s exit from the tomb. The other word, anastasis, is the common term for resurrection, whether of the Lord Jesus, or of anybody else. Of the verbs, egeiro, when used of the dead, suggests the existence and exercise of power to raise them, the power being vested in and exercised by another than the one who is the subject of it. For no dead man could be said to raise himself. The dead are raised. God raises the dead. Any one also to whom that power has been delegated is said to exercise it (Matthew 10:8); but none of the dead are ever said to raise themselves, the Lord Jesus excepted (John 2:19), who on that occasion spoke of Himself as God as well as man. The second verb, anistemi, being intransitive in some of its tenses, namely, the

present and imperfect passive, and second aorist, perfect, and pluperfect active, directs attention, when any of these are employed, to the condition of the one as risen who once was dead, without suggesting, us egeiro does, the action of another to raise them. (Sec Mark 8:31; Mark 12:25; Luke 16:31.) The third verb, anago, occurs but twice in connection with resurrection (Romans 10:7; Hebrews 13:20), and on both occasions refers only to that of the Lord. Thus far as to the terms employed.

Very momentous are the consequences which flow from the Lord's resurrection. By it He is declared to be God's Son with power (Romans 1:4), and is marked out as the future Judge of quick and dead. (Acts 17:31.) By it likewise the believer's justification is declared (Romans 4:25); the resurrection, too, of all the dead is a truth no longer to be doubted, whilst, of the resurrection from the dead of Christ's sleeping saints, His own resurrection is both the illustration and the earnest. Thus man, whether saved or unsaved, is most deeply concerned in the resurrection of the Lord from the dead. He rose, the firstfruits of them that sleep. But His grave is not the only one which has been bereft of its occupant. For "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matthew 27:52-53.) Yet not alone are saints concerned with, and share in, resurrection; for all who enter the grave shall come forth, since Christ has risen. Of this general truth 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 : treats, though it dwells at length on the resurrection of the saints.

Now, in treating of this subject, the truth of which was denied by some at Corinth, the apostle dwells on three important points: first there is a resurrection of the dead (vers. 12–23); secondly, the bodies of our humiliation will share in it (vers. 35–50); thirdly, that event, namely, the resurrection of the saints who form part of the church, will be accomplished in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. (Vers. 51 -58.) With the first of these points all are concerned. Christ has been raised from the dead, so there is a resurrection of the dead. Its possibility is proved. Its certainty is established. But further, the body will be raised up; and here, writing to and of Christians, the apostle has dwelt at length on the resurrection of Christians. Their bodies, sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption — sown in dishonour, they will be raised in glory — sown in weakness, they will be raised in power — sown natural bodies, they will be raised spiritual bodies. Great indeed is the change to which the body will be subject, the body placed in the tomb. Perfect, too, and abiding will be the condition in which it will be raised; for, sown in dishonour, it will be raised in glory, sown a natural body, it will be raised a spiritual body; and this will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. That which is sown will be raised, though a change will pass over it, so that the body will not emerge from the tomb in the same condition in which it entered it.

Thus, in common with the bodies of those saints who will never die, the frame laid in the grave will be subject to a change, though the change to which it will be subject must perforce be different from that of those who shall never die. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.'' (Ver. 53.) But here the author joins issue, and chiefly on two grounds — the one a question of translation, the other a question of interpretation. The translation of egeiro to raise, he will not hear of, when the subject on hand is resurrection. According to him, this verb, egeiro, must always be rendered to awake, when used of the dead, and the person who dies, he would have us believe, is awakened immediately on his entrance into hades, and then and there receives his spiritual body, in which, clothed at once, he awaits, it may be, and with multitudes it

must be, centuries, ere he participates in resurrection (anastasis), anastasis. Is this really the case? Have we been all wrong, both ancients and moderns, Jews and Greeks, in the understanding of the true meaning of egeiro? Let us test this statement. When the Lord first spoke of His death and resurrection, He did it in figurative language, it is true, but in language which conveyed what He wished to be expressed. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" egeiro. Now here, unquestionably, egeiro means to raise up. To speak of awaking a temple would be absurd. To say you would raise it up is not. In this sense the Jews clearly understood the Lord to speak, as they replied, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up (egereis) in three days?" (John 2:19-20.) Further, after His death the Jews applied to Pilate for a guard to watch the sepulchre, on the ground that He had said, "After three days I will rise again," egeiromai (Matthew 27:63), and by that they understood the exit of His body from the tomb. Clearly, then, the author, by the translation on which he insists (page 36), is at variance with the Lord, the evangelist, and the Jews, all of whom attached a meaning to the verb, egeiro, which he distinctly rejects. But, happily for his readers, he is inconsistent with himself, and with his own weapon lays low the edifice which he seeks to build up. He tells us the dead are awakened

(egeirontai) in hades, and that is always spoken of as a present reality. (Page 36.) This awakening, he insists on, has nothing to do with the body. It is the person, apart from his body, who is awakened. (Page 58.)

Well, let us test this statement. The Lord was raised (egegertai) on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4) — so says scripture, and so we believe. Now was He awakened on the third day? Was He personally, and apart from His body, sleeping till then? Nobody but a heretic would dare to teach that. Yet if egeiro, when used of the dead, must always be translated to awaken the person, that is the only conclusion to be arrived at, but one which we must repudiate, and which the author would not venture to adopt. For the moment he writes about the raising of the Lord, or, as he terms it, awakening, he tells us Christ was awakened here. (Page 57.) The addition of that one word, "here," is a confession (perhaps an unconscious one) of the untenableness of his position. The raising of Christ was not immediate, but on the third day. Nor was it apart from His body, but expressly included it. The verb, egeiro, is used of the raising of the body from the grave. All, therefore, that he contends for about the awakening of souls in hades is really surrendered, the moment he has to speak of the raising up of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was raised the third day. All is clear if we keep to the common translation of egeiro, for "if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised." (1 Corinthians 15:16.) But all is confused and inconsequential if we adopt the suggested translation. For how the awakening of Christ here on the third day after He died is a proof that the dead are awakened in hades the moment they die, is a difficulty which the author has not solved, and one for which, on his hypothesis, there is no solution. But how did Paul understand his own terms? Did egeiro in his mind mean to awaken the dead person apart from his body? What, then, is the force, the meaning, of his language in 2 Corinthians 1:9? But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth (egeironti) the dead. Was it the awakening of the apostle, or of the dead in hades, which here occupied his mind? We know it was not. One more remark on this question of translation, and we will pass on. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised (egeiretai) in glory." (1 Corinthians 15:43.) Are those in hades in glory? Does the saint close his eyes in death, to awaken in hades in glory? St. Paul, writing of the resurrection (anastasis) of the dead, says, the body is raised in glory, thus

connecting the raising with resurrection. The author admits that the resurrection is future. (Page 36.) Then the raising is also future. This has to do with the body, for of that which concerns the body 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 : undeniably treats. Here, then, let us very briefly look into the question of the interpretation of this chapter, on which a few words will suffice. The language of verse 42 is clear enough. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." That which is sown is raised, though a change will pass over it. What it is which is sown none can gainsay. In addition to this, it may be remarked that the chapter throughout treats of the body, so of death, which claims the body, and never of hades, in which the unclothed spirit awaits the resurrection, does the apostle speak; for in the only place in which hades occurs in the common text, we should, it is generally admitted on the authority of B D E F G I Aleph, read, thanate, death. "O death, where is thy victory?" Could that question be asked, if the body was never to be recovered from its grasp? If it is to be raised again, how suited is the triumphant exclamation. Think of the body bought by the blood of Christ, and once indwelt by the Holy Ghost, never to be redeemed from the condition imposed on it by sin! Then death would have gotten a victory indeed.

Now let us see what further light is thrown on the future of the body by the divine word. First, the bodies of the saints shall be quickened and redeemed. (Romans 8:11; Romans 8:23.) Next, we shall all be changed, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality. A natural body we each have now, suited to that condition in which we are; a spiritual body we shall have by-and-by, suited to our condition then. (1 Corinthians 15:53; 1 Corinthians 15:44.) Now the body is as a tabernacle, capable of dissolution; then it will be a building of God eternal in the heavens. (2 Corinthians 5:1.) If the earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have, says the apostle, our house from heaven. He does not say that the dead saints put it on the moment they have died, for he speaks afterwards in the same chapter of the unclothed state, but we have it, the time for being clothed, with it being altogether a different question. Besides this, we learn that the condition in which we shall exist will be very different from our present one. Marriage will not take place (Luke 20:35-36), nor will the frame need, as it now does, sustainment by food. (1 Corinthians 6:13.) Yet the body, whatever the change, will be the Lord’s. Lastly, the body of our humiliation will be conformed, the apostle Paul teaches us, to Christ’s body of glory (Php 3:21); and John tells us that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2.) This is the bright side of the subject. There is also a dark side. For the bodies of the ungodly are to be raised. This John saw in vision. "I saw the dead," he writes, "small and great, stand before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them." (Revelation 20:12-13.) What is in the sea, and in death, as distinct from hades, but the bodies of those which have died, those unburied and those buried. Why does John say of death and hades, "the dead which were in them?" Let the reader compare these words, the last statement in the New Testament on this subject, with those in Matthew 10:28, spoken by the Lord, these last explaining how what He says is to be fulfilled. The ancient creeds, then, and modern confessions of faith, which assert the resurrection of the body, are in that respect correct. The body which dies will be raised up, to share with its owner his condition for ever and ever. The attempts to set this truth aside, whether by means of suggested translations, or supposed scriptural authority, are futile in the extreme, and on no better ground does the statement rest, that it is the person who sleeps, and not his body. On this point the author has been misled by a

statement in Dr. J. Fuerst's Hebrew Dictionary, according to which the Hebrew phrase, "he slept with his fathers," is said to be equivalent to the phrase, "he was gathered to his fathers". Thereupon we are told that to sleep with his fathers is a statement descriptive of the person apart from his body. On this supposition a great deal of the author's argument is made to rest. (p. 28.) But is it true? A little examination will demonstrate that the statement cannot be relied on. For, first, "gathering to one's fathers," mentioned in Judges 2:10; 2 Kings 22:20; 2 Chronicles 34:28, will, on examination, decide nothing about the point in question, but the phrase more commonly employed, "gathered unto his people," may help in the matter. For, comparing that with the one in question, "he lay with his fathers," we see that the notice of the person's death nearly always precedes the statement of his being gathered to his people. (Genesis 35:8; Genesis 35:17; Genesis 25:29; Genesis 49:33; Deuteronomy 32:50.) Once only does it follow it. (Numbers 20:26.) Whereas the only occasion on which the person's death is mentioned with the phrase, "he lay or slept with his fathers," the notice of his death follows that well-known statement. (2 Chronicles 16:13.) This fact would suggest the possibility, not to say probability, that sleeping with one's fathers is not equivalent to being gathered unto them, or to one's people.

Dismissing, therefore, the latter phrase as one with which we have nothing more to do, let us see what is the meaning of, "he lay, or slept, with his fathers." Does it refer to the body, or does it not? It can be applied to the body, for Jacob, the first who introduced the phrase, as far as we know (Genesis 47:30), certainly by it referred to his body. And in the books of Kings and Chronicles, where we so frequently meet with it, coupled as it always is with burial, and taking precedence of the mention of death on the only occasion where the two ideas are expressed together, it seems pretty certain that the meaning attached to it by the patriarch was the meaning the sacred writers in their turn intended to convey to the reader. And this is confirmed by the fact that we only once find the words, "he slept with his fathers," when the king met with death by assassination at the hand of his subjects. If the phrase refers to the spirit in hades, apart from the body, it is difficult to understand why on such occasions that phrase should be generally left out, for the manner of death could make no difference as to the presence of the spirit in hades after it. If, on the other hand, it has reference to the body, and originally described its recumbent position, according to the simple meaning of, "he lay down," we can better understand why it should be used at one time, and not at another. For it is certain that "he lay down," by itself is used of the death of the body. (Job 7:21; Job 21:26; Psalms 88:5.) What, then, has been built on this phrase is a mistake. The edifice so reared lacks one grand essential — a good foundation. And indeed the whole theory of resurrection, as set forth by the, author falls to the ground, when one attempts to examine it. The soul does not sleep in hades. The term sheol embraces more than the region in which the unclothed await their resurrection. The suggested translation of egeiro, to awaken the dead in hades the moment they enter that region, is opposed to the use of the term by the Lord, the evangelist, the Jews, and the apostle Paul. The resurrection of the body is a truth of scripture, and an article of the Christian faith. He who denies it contradicts the divine word, and rejects a foundation truth of Christianity. "For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Corinthians 15:16-18.) C. E. Stuart.

S. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The second epistle to the Corinthians was written not long after the first, and when the apostle was in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 7:1-16), having gone there to meet Titus, who had been to Corinth to ascertain the present condition of the assembly in that city, and the effect made on the saints by Paul's former letter. In the former he had told them how to deal with the offender; in this one he stirs them up to forgive him, as really repentant.

More restricted in its range than the first epistle, which, though addressed primarily to the assembly in that city, takes in all professing Christians as well, this one, though written and sent to Corinth, was for the benefit also, we learn, of "all the saints which are in all Achaia;" for besides treating at length of Christian ministry (2 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1), Paul herein writes of some things in which saints in Achaia were especially interested; viz., the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, in which service the Macedonian saints had shone so brightly (2 Corinthians 2:8-9), and the proof of his apostleship, which had been called in question at Corinth. Questions these were of more local interest than those treated of in the former epistle, yet not devoid of interest for saints in all time. The first epistle was written whilst Paul was in great anxiety about the assembly at Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:4), and whilst the work at Ephesus was progressing, despite the presence of many adversaries. (1 Corinthians 16:9.) This, the second epistle, was written after the tumult raised by Demetrius the silversmith at Ephesus had ceased, and Paul had left Asia for Macedonia (Acts 20:1), and when Titus had rejoined him in that country with the welcome intelligence of the salutary effect of his former letter on the saints in the metropolis of the Roman province of Achaia; so his heart was full, both of God's delivering power exhibited towards himself, and of joy for the conscience-work in the saints at Corinth. (2 Corinthians 7:4.) Hence we gather from these two epistles something of the exercises of Paul's heart, arising from the ministry to which he had been called, and of the sorrows and joys connected with it, to which he was no stranger. How he felt as he commenced his work in that city we read of in the former letter. (1 Corinthians 2:1-16) His deep sorrow of heart, caused by the condition of the assembly (2 Corinthians 2:4), and his fear as to the effect of his former letter (2 Corinthians 7:4-9), coupled with the joy and relief that he experienced on learning from Titus how it had worked on them, we learn about in this second letter. Great as he was as an apostle, powerful as his letters were, uncompromising too as a champion for the truth of God, we are permitted in these epistles to see the man, the vessel, who felt keenly and deeply all that he was called to pass through, but who realized in proportion a joy and comfort such as one less exercised would never have known. It was no light thing to him that in places where he had been signally blessed, as Ephesus, Corinth, and Galatia, the enemy came in to make trouble and discord between him and the saints of God. His heart full, he begins, after his customary apostolic salutation, with a thanksgiving such as is found at the commencement of no other epistle save that to the Ephesians, and the first of Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort [or encouragement, parakleseos]; who encourages us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to encourage them which are in any tribulation through the encouragement wherewith we

ourselves are encouraged of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4.)

It is right to speak well of God the Father, who exercises His children that they may minister to others in similar circumstances of the encouragement wherewith they have been themselves encouraged of God. Pressed beyond measure at Ephesus, so that he despaired even of life, having the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God, who raises the dead, he had proved delivering power as to his person, and the sustaining power of divine consolation as to his soul. Thus the enemy was outwitted. Attempting to crush the vessel of testimony at Ephesus, God had interposed, not to shield from trouble, but to bring His servant through it. And now the one so recently the object of the devil's attack, became the channel to communicate to other saints in trouble that encouragement which had been divinely ministered to him. But more. The persecution stirred up by Satan furnished an opportunity for prayer to flow forth from saints on behalf of Paul and those in trouble. (2 Corinthians 1:11.) Thus the Christian bond would be strengthened, and the natural interest in each other deepened. (2 Corinthians 1:14) Paul and his companions were their boast, as the Corinthians were his in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Now their prayers on his behalf he could confidently seek, for in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world, and especially toward them. (2 Corinthians 1:12) They knew that, and acknowledged it, and he hoped they would to the end. For already had they in part acknowledged that he was their boast, as they were his in the day of the Lord Jesus. It was in this confidence that he had wished to go to them, that they might have a second benefit. But he had not made out his purpose. Was it that he was fickle, or that he purposed such a thing lightly? He could appeal to the character of his ministry among them in refutation of such an idea. So he reminds them of the tenor of it. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him is yea. For whatever [eis] promises there are of God, in Him is the yea, wherefore through Him also is the Amen, to the glory of God by us. Now He that stablisheth us with you in [eis] Christ, and has anointed us is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Corinthians 1:19-22) All here is definite and unchanging, but only in connection with Christ. "Whatever are the promises of God, in Him is the yea." Therefore God has firmly connected us with Him, that we may have part in their fulfilment. So we are anointed, that we may know the truth (1 John 2:20); we are sealed by the Spirit; thus marked by God as His own; and we have the Spirit too as the earnest of the inheritance, which we shall share with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Definiteness and certainty being characteristics of the truth he announced, his practice was in harmony with them. Why, then, had he not revisited them? He tells them: "To spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." (2 Corinthians 1:23.) Unless God worked in them in grace, how could he revisit them with joy? For that, however, he had not waited in vain. The Corinthian offender was broken down, so that his restoration was called for, and the assembly consequently were to forgive him. Further, the apostle's former letter had called forth an expression on the part of the mass [ton pleionon] of their sorrow and of their judgment of the sin. Hence Paul could write, "If any hath caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part (that I may not overcharge) you all." (2 Corinthians 2:5.) So from the man broken down in conscience and restored in soul, the punishment inflicted by the many was to be removed, "lest such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." What care had Paul evinced for God's glory! what care does he here manifest for the offender! and what watchfulness does he show to defeat any attempt of the

enemy to make discord between the Corinthian saints and himself! "To whom ye forgive anything, I also, for what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ, lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Corinthians 2:10-11.)

What sorrow had he passed through from learning the sad state of that assembly! What anxiety had he experienced as to the effect on them of his first letter! His whole soul, which generally went out in burning desire for the gospel, had been so overburdened, that at Troas, where a door was opened unto him of the Lord to preach the gospel of Christ, he could not take advantage of it, because Titus had not rejoined him from Corinth. So, leaving it, he went to Macedonia, on the way to Corinth, the sooner to receive tidings of them by the arrival of Titus. (2 Corinthians 2:13.) How little had they understood the feelings of his heart towards them! But at this point he interrupted his narrative, to resume it in 2 Corinthians 7:5, by a long digression on Christian ministry, which he commences by a thanksgiving to God, who always led him in triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savour of His knowledge by Paul in every place. A sweet savour he declares he was of Christ to God in them that are saved, and in them that perish, like the perfume burnt in the triumphal procession of the conqueror - the token of death to those captives who were about to be slain, but of life to those who would enjoy the conqueror’s clemency. "But," asks the apostle, "who is sufficient for these things?" The answer to this is supplied further on (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). For himself, however, he could say, conscious of what God was doing by him, he did not adulterate the message, but as of sincerity, as of God, before God, he spoke in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14-17.)

Hereupon he gives us, first, distinctive features of the Christian ministry (2 Corinthians 6:3-4), then states circumstances into which the exercise of it brought the labourers (2 Corinthians 4:7-18), then motives which actuated him in his service (2 Corinthians 5:1-17), and the message entrusted to him. (2 Corinthians 5:18, 2 Corinthians 6:1.) After that he tells them of the care with which he walked, that the ministry should not be blamed; and how he approved himself as a minister of God (2 Corinthians 6:2-10), closing this long digression with the exhortation to the Corinthians, to respond in truth to this ministry carried on among them. (2 Corinthians 6:11-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1.) Was there need, he asks, of a letter of commendation on his behalf to them or from them? They were his epistle, known and read of all men; for they were manifestly declared to be an epistle of Christ, ministered by Paul and his fellow-labourers, written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart.* Now this illustration and contrast naturally draws attention to the history of Israel and of Moses, in Exodus 34:1-35, which we see was in the apostle’s mind when he penned these sentences. And anyone who refers to the Greek Septuagint will see that the passage in that translation was in his mind, if not actually under his eye, at the moment this epistle was written.** *Or, as some read, "fleshy tables, your hearts."

**Compare dedoxasmene, dedoxastai, kalumma, henika d’an . . . . periereito to kalumma of Exodus with dedoxastai, dedoxasmenon, kalumma, henika d’au . . . . periaireitai to kalumma of 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.

Now there were two ministries, both of which were of God; but the difference between them is immense. Paul was a minister of a new covenant, not of letter, but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens. A covenant which demanded obedience from man as the terms on which he

could enjoy its blessings was of no avail. Man wanted life. This by the gospel was provided. Hence he contrasts the two ministries - the one was of death and condemnation, ushered in indeed by glory, but a glory which was to pass away, paling before the brighter glory attending the ministry in which he was privileged to have part. This last was of the Prince of righteousness, and ushered in by a glory which will never pass away. Transient then was the glory connected with the ministry of the first covenant (2 Corinthians 3:7), which itself was to pass away. (2 Corinthians 2:13) Abiding is the glory of that of which Paul, not Moses, was a minister, and which will never be annulled.

He had spoken of the ministry of the new covenant, not of letter, but of spirit. Now the Lord Jesus is the Spirit referred to. It all speaks of Him. And the effect of this ministry was twofold. It set those free to whom it was ministered, and emboldened the minister to use great plainness of speech. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, and we all beholding the glory of the Lord prove its transforming power. With Israel it was different. They could not stedfastly look at the glory in the face of Moses. Freedom in his presence they could not enjoy, though they had to behold his face resplendent with divine glory. (Exodus 34:30-31.) But he subsequently veiled it, that they should not look to the end of that which is annulled (2 Corinthians 2:13), which is done away in Christ.* (2 Corinthians 2:14) But now since that which abides is ministered a veil is no longer required. There was nothing to conceal. So Paul did not use one, but spoke with great plainness of speech, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

*Throughout this portion katargein, to annul, is used of the glory and of the covenant, and peiriairein, to remove, of the veil. Hence, in 2 Corinthians 2:14, it is the covenant it would seem, not the veil, that is said to be done away in Christ.

Yet veiling was still practised. The veil rested on the heart of Israel as they read the Old Testament Scriptures; and the enemy covered or veiled the minds of those to whom the gospel had been preached, but who had refused to believe it, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine forth. Thus, on the one hand, Israelites did not see that the glory of the former ministry was eclipsed by that of the latter, and that the old covenant is done away in Christ. But when Israel shall turn to the Lord, as it was with Moses in God’s presence so it will be with them, the veil will be removed. For the rejecters however of the gospel, whether Jews or Gentiles, there is no such prospect. The enemy blinds the thoughts of those that believe not that the light of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, the image of God, should not shine forth. The knowledge of Christ being in glory, the accepted One on behalf of sinners, who is the image of God, gives confidence to the soul that believes it, and demonstrates what he must be who is here styled "the god of this world [or age];" viz., the enemy of God and of man, who led men to crucify God’s Son, and blinds the thoughts of the unbelievers. What malice and activity does he display! To them the gospel was veiled. That arose not from the infirmity of the messenger. Plain, indeed, was the word that was preached, and clearly was it set forth who was preached - Christ Jesus, Lord, and the apostle and his co-workers their bondsmen for Jesus’ sake. Blessed, too, was the truth made known, that the glory of God now shines in the face of Christ as once it shone in the face of Moses. (2 Corinthians 4:1-6.) The enemy then worked where God’s grace was proclaimed; but the opposition was more than negative against the servants of God. Persecution was aroused, so the apostle acquaints his readers with the circumstances into which he and others were brought by the exercise of his ministry. (2 Corinthians 4:7-8.) The treasure was in earthen vessels. Of that

the labourers were fully conscious, being reminded of it by their daily experience. (2 Corinthians 4:11) But that only evidenced that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of man; the labourers being strengthened in the inner man as they looked on things eternal and unseen. God thus enabled the vessel to bear and to serve without removing the opposition of the enemy.

Now that opposition could only extend to this life. So Paul looked beyond its bounds, and was encouraged, and tells us how. "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." (2 Corinthians 5:1.) Two statements he here makes which deserve attention. He speaks of death as an uncertainty, of his being clothed upon with his house from heaven as that of which he was certain - language, thoughts, the exact opposite of those which are commonly met with amongst Christians. To them death is a certainty, and the future condition of blessedness at best an uncertain hope. Let us mark also the contrasts. An earthly house, a building in the heavens, a tabernacle, a building from God; dissolved, eternal. Still Paul did not desire death, but the coming of the Lord. His wish was not to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (2 Corinthians 5:4) And this is the proper Christian hope, if the person knows that being clothed (1:e. in his body now) he shall not be found naked, or unfit for the presence of God. (Revelation 3:17-18; Revelation 16:15.)

How near the future and the eternal state of heavenly saints seemed to him! Without passing through death, he and others might be, and some will be, clothed upon with their house from heaven. Clearly in his teaching there was no room for purgatory. The proper Christian expectation is to pass at once into the fixed and eternal condition as regards the body in which we shall dwell for ever with Christ, and be at home in the Father’s house. Of this the Spirit is the earnest. Hence Paul was always confident yet willing to die to be present with the Lord; for while at home in the body he was absent from the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8) Wherefore he laboured that whether present or absent he might be acceptable (euarestos) to Him; for, though certain he was accepted, he never forgot that he had to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ to receive that which he had done. Now the judgment-seat concerns every body. Every one must stand before it. Hence with Paul to be accepted and to be acceptable were two different, but all-important, questions. He knew by the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that He was accepted; he laboured to be acceptable. Thus the doctrines of grace were not weakened, though his responsibility was ever present to his thoughts. Nothing less than being acceptable to Christ would satisfy him. It befits a servant to be acceptable to his master (Titus 2:9), so not only for himself, but for others, did he desire this. (Ephesians 5:10; Hebrews 13:21.) But other considerations there were by which also he was moved. As he thought of the judgment-seat of Christ, knowing the terror of the Lord, he would persuade men. As he remembered who had died, the love of Christ constrained him. His death, by His dying for all, proved that all were dead; and He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. "Wherefore," he adds, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, they have become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." But more, "He has committed unto us," says Paul, "the word of reconciliation." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

That was true when the Lord was on earth. But He has been rejected; so now, ere judgment is poured out, God has raised up a ministry of reconciliation, and provided the message, the tenor of which the apostle sets forth. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ's stead, Be reconciled to God. He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

He was not ashamed of the gospel; for it was God's power unto salvation. (Romans 1:16.) He did not adulterate the message (2 Corinthians 2:17); for what more fitted to attract any one who would listen than the story of God's love to the world, and the proof of it - the surrender of His Son to die for sinners? What more powerful motive could there be to induce a human creature to live to Christ than the knowledge that He died for him. True, all are not attracted by it; all are not won by it. True, too, it is that Christians need to be reminded of it; a witness surely of what man's wretched heart is. Nothing, however, that Paul could have urged would have made the gospel more powerful, or his ministry more successful. Hence he only exhorts them not to receive the grace of God in vain, reminding them of the special characteristic of the present time, during the Lord's rejection by the nation of Israel, that now is the well-accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

After which he tells them of his walk, and of the proofs by which he and his fellow-labourers were commended as ministers of God. (2 Corinthians 6:1-10.) Then, his heart full, his mouth was opened to the Corinthians in earnest desire for faithfulness to God on their part. He had reminded them of the character of the day in which through grace they and we are living, as described by the prophet. (Isaiah 49:8.) He now would remind them of a principle, enunciated in one of the precepts of the law (Leviticus 19:19), applicable to saints, though they are not under law. "Be not diversely yoked (heterozygein) with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Five important questions thus follow close one upon another, indicative of the ways of some at Corinth, but illustrative too of the immense change introduced by the gospel. After that he sets forth special Christian privileges under three distinct heads. They were a temple of the living God; they were His people; they were His sons and daughters. (2 Corinthians 6:16-18.) A threefold ground of exhortation this is to holiness. (1) As God's assembly at Corinth they were His temple. Of old He dwelt in the midst of Israel in the tabernacle; now He dwells in the company of His people as His shrine; a closer association this than Israel ever knew or will know. (2) As His people, though surrounded by evil, they were, like the remnant of Isaiah 52:1-15, to be separate from it. (3) They were in a known relationship to Him of which saints in Israel could never have spoken. He was the Father of Israel as a people (Exodus 4:22); of this Jeremiah too could write (Jeremiah 31:9); but none before the cross could say they were His sons and daughters. And who is their Father? Jehovah-Shaddai. As Shaddai He revealed Himself to Abraham. As Jehovah He made Himself known to Moses. Now the God of Abraham and of Israel is our Father if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1.)

Here this long digression about Christian ministry comes to an end. The character of it, the need of it, the message conveyed by it, and the practical effect it should have on souls, the apostle has set forth. He now returns to that about which he had been writing - the effect made on him by his meeting with Titus, who rejoined him in Macedonia, on his return from Corinth. How truly could he

rejoice! Grave had been his exercise of heart about the Corinthians. Great now was his joy respecting them. "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 7:4) God, who comforteth those that are cast down, had comforted him by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the encouragement wherewith Titus was encouraged through their deep expression of godly sorrow - a sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. They had dealt with the offender, and they had cleared themselves. His letter had the desired effect. He had written, not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that had suffered the wrong, but that their care for Paul might be made manifest to them before God. "Therefore," he adds, "we were encouraged, and in addition to this our encouragement, we exceedingly the more rejoice for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him."

Encouraged by his visit there, we can well understand the readiness of Titus to return, in order to collect their contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem. About this Paul next writes (2 Corinthians 8:1-24; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15), acquainting them with the liberality of the saints in Macedonia, and reminding them of that readiness to help to which they had begun to give expression a year previously. The liberality of the saints in Macedonia had exceeded the apostle’s expectations - the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. This outflow of real Christian love was beautiful and spontaneous. Beyond their power they gave, and even entreated of Paul the grace and the fellowship of the service to the saints. It was favour bestowed on them to be able to help, and to be allowed to help. They owned it, and desired to have fellowship in that service; for they had first given themselves to the Lord, "and to us," writes Paul, "by God’s will." Cheered by such tokens of love in these saints, he encouraged Titus to finish the work of collecting the alms from Christians at Corinth. And what a motive does he bring to bear on them! Even "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, being rich, for their sakes became poor, that they through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9.) The willing mind would produce a cheerful giver. Two points should here be noticed. The offering should be spontaneous, and according to that which a person had. Grace and righteousness were both to be displayed. God did not ask any one to go beyond what he had. (2 Corinthians 8:12) Being generous at the expense of others formed no part of Christian practice. On the other hand, to give grudgingly, or of necessity, could not be the true fruit of Christian love. God loves a cheerful giver, and glory flows to him by that proof of divine grace in the giver, and by the thanks which ascend upwards from those who share in the bounty. Paul had reminded them of the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would encourage them by the remembrance of what God can do, and will do, for His people, quoting from Psalms 112:1-10, which, the reader may see on reference to it, is the counterpart, as displayed in the saints, of the actings of the divine nature as seen in God. Psalms 111:1-10 describes the state. Psalms 112:1-10 fitly comes after it, as it describes the former. One sees too how he avoided all appearance of evil, or occasion for surmises, against those engaged in such a service (2 Corinthians 8:18-21), and maintained the full right of the almsgivers to select their own almoners. (1 Corinthians 16:3; 2 Corinthians 8:19; 2 Corinthians 8:23.)

He had written the first epistle "that your care for us," as he tells them, "might be made manifest unto you;" for this seems to be the best attested reading. That having been markedly proved, of which Titus was the witness, he was free now to enter on the matter of his apostleship (2 Corinthians 10:1-18; 2 Corinthians 11:1-33; 2 Corinthians 12:1-21; 2 Corinthians 13:1-14), the validity of which some at Corinth had called in question. Looking on the outward appearance they disparaged the apostle, and, it would seem, questioned the validity of his commission to concern himself with Corinth. Little did such would-be teachers know about Paul. Weapons he was furnished with by the Lord that would be used for their edification or for casting them down. Man in nature might have used these weapons for the latter purpose; Paul aimed at their edification. Powerful indeed were his letters - all felt that; but his personal appearance was not in harmony with the power of his writing. He terrified by words, but who would be afraid of him when present? His speech was contemptible. Such were the thoughts and sayings of those people. Well, as regards his personal appearance and his speech, their remarks might be true. His figure was probably not a commanding one; his speech was anything but eloquent; but as to power, what he was when absent, that he would be when present. Nor had he overstepped his commission in going to Corinth. Looking at the outward appearance would not do. "Let him that glorieth," he writes, "glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." (2 Corinthians 10:17-18.) From this he passes on to a comparison between others and himself. But why this line of things in an inspired epistle? He tells them he fears lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, their minds should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ. Hence he enters on a comparison as to his preaching, his Jewish descent, his endurance of trials and hardships, his sympathy with others. Then he tells them where he excelled all others, and claimed them as being witnesses of the truth of his apostleship. What could others preach of truth which he had not preached? Unskilled in speech he might be, but not in knowledge. As to correct Jewish descent, who could surpass him? As to labours and sufferings, who had outdone him? He preached at Corinth, feebly it is true; he would continue to do it, that the false apostles should have no ground of boasting over him. But he had been where they had not, even in the third heavens, and in paradise; and he bore in his person the marks of these favours in the thorn in the flesh, which the Lord, though thrice entreated by Paul, refused to remove. Of how much could he have boasted! But he forbore. And why? Lest any man should think of him above that which he saw him to be, or heard of him. (2 Corinthians 12:6.) What a reason for his reticence! Paul, who had been in the third heavens, and had heard when in paradise what he could not utter on earth, was looked down on by these really false apostles, who had enlisted the Corinthians on their behalf. How utterly contemptible they must have appeared after the bare recital of his labours and sufferings for Christ! Completely crushed they ought to have been by the mention of his visions and revelations. Before he had ever visited Corinth he had been in the third heavens, yet they apparently knew nothing of it till they forced him to mention it. "I am become a fool," he writes; "ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." (2 Corinthians 12:11-12.) Trying it must have been for him to have to write thus. Condemnatory of them it was that he should be worked upon to do it.

Yet his love was unwearied. He could revisit them, and gladly spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved the less he was loved. (2 Corinthians 12:15.) And did they

think that in all this he was excusing himself to them? "We speak before God in Christ," he says, "and all things are for your edifying;" for the moral condition of some in the assembly he well knew. (2 Corinthians 12:20-21) So coming again he would not spare. Did any doubt that Christ spoke in Him? They had but to examine themselves to see. By whom were they evangelized? Christ Jesus was in them unless they were reprobates. Was it then in vindication of himself that he thus wrote? Again he reminds them that it was their real edification which he sought, that he might not be called upon to use sharpness towards them.

Now, after an exhortation and salutations, he closes with, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." C. E. Stuart.

We are not looked at as risen with Christ in Romans, but justified, and Christ our life, as men living in natural life down here, only Christ our life in it - in Him before God, not in the flesh. For faith the flesh is gone in death, and Christ is come in life. The Christian is always looked at as born again, forgiven, and sealed.

S. The Sin-Offering

The Sin-Offering.

Pursuing our investigation into the history of sacrifice, we now come to that one called the sin-offering (chattath), and which, next to the burnt-offering, was more frequently called for than any other; though till the law was given this sacrifice had no place in any ritual. Offerings for sins committed were previously known. Job offered them, and the Lord accepted them (Job 42:1-17); but a sin-offering, distinct in its treatment from that of a burnt-offering, was only appointed by the ritual which the Lord instituted by Moses. Now, this is in perfect harmony with what we have already traced out. The institution of animal sacrifice was of God. The knowledge that blood could shelter men from divine judgment was also from God. Now, we learn of the aspect of the Lord's atoning death, in which He is viewed as the sinner's substitute, made sin for us, who in Himself knew no sin; but in this, as in other cases, the type falls short of the antitype. The sin-offering was for the most part for sins committed through ignorance, the only exception to that being the case of an unwilling witness in a court of justice. For the man who sinned presumptuously there was nothing to expect, according to the law, but death. (Numbers 15:30-31.) That God could provide a sacrifice for a sinner the law of the sin-offering indicates; but it also shows us that more is really wanted than the law could provide. A substitute to make atonement for even presumptuous sins is the only thing that could meet our case; and, thank God, nothing less than that has He provided by the death of His Son on the cross.

Provision for sins of the deepest dye manifests the abounding grace of our God. The call, on the other hand, under the law for an offering for a sin done through ignorance proclaimed the holiness of God, and the call for an offering for every such sin told out plainly that God would not pass over even one, unless a sacrifice was offered up for it. "I was not aware of it," the offender might truly have said, but the law was in exorable; for Jehovah could make no compromise with evil. Little sins then, as people speak of (measuring their sins by a standard of their own), we shall look for in vain in God's law, or God's word; for apart from the death of His Son no sin could ever have been forgiven. How brightly, then, His grace shines out who has provided such a Lamb for the sacrifice! Brightly too did His grace shine out under the law, limited though it then was in its provisions; for instead of cutting off by death every one who sinned, God made a distinction between an act of frailty, which is sin, and the presumptuous deeds of a man who would act after the dictates of his own evil will. Had the Lord acted simply in righteousness, every sinner must have been cut off; for there is no child of Adam who has not sinned (1 John 1:10); and king Solomon bears witness that in his day no one kept the law perfectly. (1 Kings 8:46.) The Lord then provided the sin-offering - a token that on the ground of an accepted sacrifice He could act in grace towards one who had sinned.

We pass, then, now from the consideration of those sacrifices which the people were allowed to bring, to those which they were obliged to present when the circumstances of the case permitted of it. What they were the law set forth; for if it was Jehovah's prerogative to declare what sacrifices

He was willing to receive as the voluntary expression of His people's thankfulness, it clearly was for Him, and Him alone, to announce what those offerings were to be which could meet the claims of His holiness. And this He did, classing those sins for which sin-offerings could be brought in two categories; viz., sins against any of the commandments of the Lord, which ought not to be done, 1:e. violations of natural conscience; and sins which were made such by special divine enactment. The former are treated of in Leviticus 4:1-35, the latter in Leviticus 5:1-13. As regarded the former, the Lord took note of the responsibility of the offender. With reference to the latter, He took account of the sinner's ability to procure an offering for his sin. How gracious was this! In Leviticus 4:1-35 the circumstances under which the sin was committed determined the question, whether or not the offender could avail himself of the Lord's gracious provision; for the Lord therein provided only for sins against any of the commandments of the Lord which ought not to be done, when committed through inadvertence, or in error, as sh'gagah means, rather than ignorance. In the cases specified in Leviticus 5:1-19 ignorance was for the most part the reason why an offender in the ways described was permitted to draw nigh with his offering. In each case the commandment was clear which the person had broken; hence nothing less than bloodshedding could meet the necessities of the case. Measuring his sin, as man is apt to do, by the circumstances under which it has been committed, the guilty one might have thought lightly of his offence, in extenuation of which he could rightly urge the plea of inadvertence. But God, as we have said, measures sin by a different standard. His holiness therefore must be cared for, and the measure of the offender's responsibility may also have to be taken into account, as we learn from Leviticus 4:1-35.

Whoever had sinned through inadvertence, the death of the appointed sacrifice had of necessity to take place. Life had to be taken for the offender to be saved from death. Blood had to be presented to God for the guilty one to be forgiven. But a greater degree of responsibility attached to the anointed priest, the whole congregation, or even the ruler, than to the common person, when any one of these different classes had sinned through inadvertence. Now, this is not according to man's ordinary judgment of such things, who, provided the matter does not personally concern himself, is wont to deal more leniently with the great ones of the earth who offend than with one of the common people. Not so God who judges righteously. The sin known and owned, the offender or offenders approached with the prescribed offering, which for the anointed priest, or the whole congregation, was a bullock, for a ruler a he goat, but for one of the common people a female kid, or a female lamb; then laying his or their hands on its head, the offerers killed it before the Lord. Thus whether a burnt-offering was brought, a peace-offering, or a sin-offering, identification of the offerer and the offering were in each case openly declared. But in the last the offender's guilt was, as it were, thereby transferred to the sacrifice offered up in his stead. After that the priest's work began in the dealing with the blood, and here one essential difference between the sin-offering and the burnt-offering, or peace-offering, comes out. In the case of either of these latter the blood was simply sprinkled round about on the altar; in the case of the former it was dealt with in various ways, "being sprinkled first of all where the standing of the guilty one was, which under the law was not the same for every individual. For the anointed priest, or for the whole congregation, whose standing according to the law was the same, the blood was sprinkled seven times before the veil in the sanctuary, after which some was put on the horns of the golden altar, the altar of incense, and the rest was poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering, the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. For a ruler, or for a common person, the blood was carried no farther than the altar of burnt-offering, some being put

on its horns, and the rest poured out at its base. The blood poured out spoke of the life (for the blood is the life of the flesh) being poured out before God. That sprinkled on the horns of the altar, whichever altar it was, spoke of the standing according to the law of the guilty one before God; and that sprinkled before the veil shadowed forth more nearly propitiation by blood, which in type was only made annually on the day of atonement. Propitiation, standing, and substitution, the life of the sacrifice, poured out for the sinner, all these are really needed for an offender to be accepted before God. All these, fully set forth in type only on the day of atonement, were but faintly traced out as often as the anointed priest or the whole congregation had sinned through inadvertence, and brought their sin-offering in consequence; whereas the guilty person, who represented nobody but himself (for the anointed priest represented the people), learnt that his standing was made good by blood, and that a victim had been provided in his stead.

After that, the altar received its portion, which was the same in the case of a sin-offering, or trespass-offering, as it was in that of the peace-offering, and all that was thereon burnt was a sweet savour unto the Lord (Leviticus 4:31); for it spoke of what the Lord Jesus Christ was in Himself, so contrary to what man is, even though he may be a saint of God, as David owned when he said, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." (Psalms 51:6.) But he had not answered to that. Of the Lord it is said, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness;" and truth, meekness, and righteousness characterized him. (Psalms 45:1-17.) Perfect in His inmost soul, the trials of the way, the opposition of enemies, the lack of intelligence among His disciples, the loneliness of His path and position, nothing that He passed through, nothing that He suffered at the hand of God, nothing that He experienced from man, brought forth from Him in word or deed aught that was not perfect nor in season. In the wilderness He would wait for God. (Matthew 4:4.) In service He would bow to the Father’s good pleasure. (Matthew 11:25-26.) In the garden He would yield up His will to the Father. (Luke 22:42.) On the cross He justified God. (Psalms 22:3.) Reviled, He reviled not again. Suffering, He threatened not. Rejected by Jerusalem, He wept over her. Crucified by His creatures, He prayed for them. With the cross before Him, He could yet be occupied with His own people; and on the night previous to His crucifixion He instituted the supper for them. Passing through the agony in the garden with none, not even Peter, to watch with Him; such was the Lord Jesus, perfect in everything, thus proving that He was without blemish, fitted to be the sinner’s Substitute on the cross, and the sacrifice which God could accept for the sin-offering was to be without blemish (Leviticus 4:3; Leviticus 4:23; Leviticus 4:28; Leviticus 4:32), typical of the perfectness of the true sacrifice, the Lamb of God.

All done at the altar that had to be done, the offerer could return to his tent, not uncertain about his condition, but assured of divine forgiveness; and of this the Lord Himself assured him. "It shall be forgiven him" declared it (Leviticus 4:20; Leviticus 4:31; Leviticus 4:35; Leviticus 5:10; Leviticus 5:13; Leviticus 5:16; Leviticus 5:18; Leviticus 6:7), God’s gracious announcement when atonement had been made; but, let the reader mark, not before it was made. Forgiveness there was, but only on the ground of a sacrifice, and when that sacrifice had been offered up; but the moment atonement had been made, ere the offerer left the altar he could know on the authority of the word of his God that his sin was forgiven. In accordance with this order in the type, the Lord Jesus on the day of His resurrection announced it to His disciples, by telling them what they were to preach to all upon earth. How willing and desirous is God to set the sinner at home before Him! How that can be done righteously, without compromising His holiness, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, of

which the sin and the trespass-offering were but types, alone makes plain; and to make it evident that the guilty one's forgiveness depended solely on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgiveness of his sin was declared as soon as all the work at the altar was completed, and before the sin-offering was all disposed of. God had received His part, and the blood had been duly dealt with; but the victim to which the offerer's sin had been transferred was not yet put out of sight.

Before considering that, let us look at the provision for sins, which were made such by special divine enactment.* (Leviticus 5:1-13.) Here the offerer's ability to bring an offering was taken into account. The normal one for sins of this class was a female of the sheep or of the goats, just the same as the sin-offering for a common person who had sinned in the manner defined in the previous chapter. If such a sacrifice was beyond his reach, he might bring two birds, young pigeons, or turtle-doves, the one for a sin-offering, the other for a burnt-offering. If they were also beyond his reach, the Lord would graciously receive the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour instead. In a land where every family owned some ground, no one would be so destitute, that a tenth of an ephah of flour would be beyond their reach. A sacrifice, or an offering, the Lord told them He must have; but the pecuniary value of it He graciously provided should not be above the ability of the poorest to procure. Could a sin have been passed over without an offering, surely that was the opportunity for announcing it, when the offerer was too poor to procure a living creature for God's altar. But no hint is there in the Word of such a thought on the part of God. With a sin-offering of God's appointment the offender had to approach the altar, if his sin was to be forgiven. How jealous is God of His holiness! But how wonderfully gracious is it to declare what is needed on the sinner's behalf! No one in Israel was left in doubt about this, and no one was placed by a sin described in this chapter (Leviticus 5:1-13) beyond the pale of divine forgiveness.

*A difficulty might be here raised as to whether the offerings described in Leviticus 5:1-13 were sin-offerings or trespass-offerings, since in verse 6 we read: "He shall bring his trespass-offering. [or guilt-offering, ashamo] for his sin which he hath sinned." The clue to the solution of any difficulty that might arise, is met with in the purpose stated for which the offering was to be brought. Here it was to be brought for his sin (Leviticus 5:6-7; Leviticus 5:11), so it was really a sin-offering. Where the guilt of the offender required a trespass-offering, we read it was brought for that purpose. (See Leviticus 5:15; Leviticus 5:18; Leviticus 6:6.) A marked difference too between the sin and trespass-offering can be traced in the manner of dealing with the blood.

Turning now to the treatment of the victim after the work at the altar was finished, we learn that it varied with the appointed dealing with its blood. "No sin-offering" (was the divine command) "whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire." (Leviticus 6:30.) There were then two ways of disposing of the victim, either the priest eat it, or it was all burnt. If eaten, the priest who offered it eat it, and all the males of the priesthood could share it with him, but in a holy place in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, for it was most holy. If burnt, it was burnt in a clean place outside the camp, where the ashes were poured out; for we read, "And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt." (Leviticus 4:12.) How precise these directions, and how complete. Every part of the animal was to be burnt; nothing of it was to be preserved. Either to be burnt, or to be eaten; such was the

command concerning it. Why was this? God was here teaching the non-imputation of guilt to the sinner for that sin, on account of which he had just brought the sacrifice. Laying his hand on the head of the animal he confessed over it his sin. The victim was thus charged with that sin, and when either eaten, or burnt, the sin could no longer be found; for the victim to which it was transferred was nowhere to be found. So when Moses sought for the goat of the sin-offering offered up for the people on the eighth day of Aaron's consecration, which in the ordinary way Aaron and his sons should have eaten, it could not be found, for they had burnt it. (Leviticus 10:16.)

Thus God provided in the sin-offering; first, that a sacrifice should be offered on the offender's behalf, such as He could accept; next, that the guilty one should be forgiven, and should know it; and thirdly, He taught him that no imputation of guilt could ever rest on him for that sin, which was by the priestly dealing with the victim put away, since the animal could no longer be found. Man's thought, how often is it the case, is to deny his guilt, in order to cover it up. God provides that the sin dealt with by sacrifice, if sought for, shall not be found. Under law every sin could not be thus put away. Now by the blood of Christ all are thus dealt with for those who believe on Him. Who would stand out against the proffered mercy, and attempt to justify themselves, rather than be justified by God? Of public and special sin-offerings we also read. On the day of atonement, of course, the sin-offering was in season, and on that day it took precedence of the burnt offering, and some of its blood was taken within the veil for the high priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people, and to make atonement with it for the sanctuary as well. Again, if the congregation, or any individual, after Israel had entered their land, had sinned inadvertently by not observing all the commandments enjoined on them by Moses, a sin-offering was called for, and had to be brought for atonement to be made. (Numbers 15:22-27.) Further, on the recurrence of every feast, and on each day of their feasts, a sin offering to make atonement with the appointed burnt offering was to be offered on God's altar (Numbers 28:29); and with the offering of the two wave loaves a sacrifice for sin was appointed (Leviticus 23:19), in addition it would seem to the special sin-offering commanded for that festal day. (Numbers 28:30.) Nor could any month begin its course unless a sacrifice for sin was brought for the people. (Numbers 28:15.) On the Sabbath-day, however, no such offering was demanded. That day spoke of rest - God's rest in creation - ere sin had defiled this scene; but the new moon spoke of renewal, thus looking on to the future. But how could there be renewal in connection with gladness unless a sin-offering was provided, and accepted? On those public occasions, then, which had special reference to man's blessing or man's acceptance, they were forcibly reminded by a sin-offering of that which they needed. But on the sabbaths, and at the offering of the wave sheaf, which typified the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the burnt-offering was in season, and a sin-offering was not required. On special occasions also was this sacrifice appointed. Throughout the week of the consecration of Aaron and of his sons, on each day there was a sin-offering offered up for them. And on the grand eighth day, when, for the first time in the history of Israel, they had a high priest qualified to represent them before God, a kid of the goats for their sin-offering was presented to the Lord. (Leviticus 8:1-36; Leviticus 9:1-24) So, too, when the Levites were set apart for their work, a sin-offering, a kid of the goats, Aaron offered up on their behalf. (Numbers 8:1-26) And when the princes of the tribes brought each their offerings, commencing with the day that the tabernacle was fully set up, and on the eleven succeeding days, each brought a sin-offering with them. The leper, too, on the eighth day of his cleansing had need of such a sacrifice and the Nazarite, on the completion of his

vow, and the happy mother, when the days of her purification were accomplished, had likewise to own the holiness of God and the grace which provided that of which they had need. (Leviticus 14:1-57; Numbers 6:1-27; Leviticus 12:1-8) Thus when the service specially appointed had respect to those who brought the offerings, a sin-offering was in season. So much for the past. In the future such offerings will be again called for. (Ezekiel 44:1-31; Ezekiel 45:1-25.) In the past they looked onward to the true sacrifice. In the future they will point back to it. For in themselves there was no inherent efficacy (Hebrews 10:4), but of that of which they were types, the efficacy is everlasting. Hence there is no real difficulty in understanding that animal sacrifice will by-and-by form part of the earthly people's ritual of worship, even when the Lord shall be reigning over them in power and blessing. And since that sacrifice is of abiding efficacy, of which they were but types, we can understand Hezekiah's action in offering a sin-offering for all Israel (2 Chronicles 29:23-24), though the captivity of part of the nation had already commenced, and that of the remainder of the ten tribes only awaited the fulfilment of the word by Ahijah to Jeroboam's wife. (1 Kings 14:15-16.) Great as had been their sin, the true sin-offering can atone for it. In the same spirit surely it was, that the returned remnant (Ezra 6:17; Ezra 8:35) offered twelve he goats as a sin-offering for all Israel. They counted on the efficacy of that sacrifice, then future, to which we look back. And now looking up, as we can, to where He is who offered up Himself, we know of God's acceptance of His sacrifice; and from the truth as to His person, thus manifested, we are assured of its abiding validity for all who believe on Him. C. E. Stuart.

S. The Sweet Savour of the Sacrifice.

The Sweet Savour of the Sacrifice.

Animal sacrifices, instituted by God before the flood, were continued after it; and Noah, on his coming forth from the ark, offered up burnt-offerings on the newly-ordered earth, on which that sacrifice was subsequently to be offered to God, which could for ever satisfy and glorify Him. And now we meet for the first time with a description of the sacrifice. Of Cain and Abel we read that they brought an offering unto the Lord. Of Noah we learn that he offered burnt-offerings (Genesis 8:20), but only of every clean beast and of every clean fowl; the institution of animal sacrifice having necessitated an understanding of which of the creatures endowed with life men might bring an offering unto the Lord. With this essential element in an acceptable sacrifice Noah was before the flood well acquainted (Genesis 7:2), though the means by which he had learnt it have not been recorded. But reading, as we do in the law, God's definition of clean beasts and clean birds, and finding that there is moral teaching connected with the subject (Leviticus 11:1-47), we must surely conclude, that no man by natural intuition could have discovered which would be regarded in God's eyes as clean, and which would not. With the giving of the law further teaching in reference to sacrifice was unfolded; but prior to that we meet with burnt-offerings (Genesis 8:22; Exodus 10:25, Exodus 18:12; Numbers 23:1-30; Job 1:42), with sacrifices which resembled in character somewhat the peace-offering of the Mosaic ritual (Exodus 10:25; Exodus 18:12; Exodus 24:5), and drink-offerings. (Genesis 35:14.) At times burnt-offerings and those called sacrifices could be offered up together. (Exodus 10:25, Exodus 18:12; Exodus 24:5.) At times it would seem each was offered alone. Noah, Abraham, and Job offered burnt-offerings alone. Jacob probably at Galeed (Genesis 31:54) offered that which had somewhat the character of the peace-offering, apart from any accompanying burnt-offering. But when at Beersheba, on his way to Egypt, he sacrificed (Genesis 46:1) unto the God of his father Isaac, the sacred historian has probably left undefined (as he has done in Exodus 5:3) the nature of the sacrifices which the aged patriarch there offered to God. But they were animal sacrifices; and throughout the book of Genesis, subsequent to the deluge (Jacob's drink-offering excepted), we read of none others being brought to God. What God had instituted outside the garden of Eden was continued after the flood; and since every one of the human race who survived the deluge was present before Noah's altar, no fresh revelation to re-establish the truth of the acceptability of animal sacrifice was needed by the nations which peopled the earth. Each progenitor of a nation must have carried with him from the cradle of the race the knowledge that such sacrifices could be offered to God. Immensely important as such teaching was, it was not all that God intended to impart; for ere He had called Israel out of Egypt, and had given them a ritual in which sacrifices occupied so prominent a place, the Lord made known in His own way what He thought of the burnt-offering, and something too of what it was in His eyes to give up to death an only son. We learn these lessons from the histories of Noah, of Job, and of Abraham.

Noah, as he came forth from the ark, reared up his altar, and offered his burnt- offerings. We read of nothing more that he did. With the remembrance fresh, as it must have been, in his mind of what

the earth had been when last he had trodden upon it, seeing what it then was, and surveying all that remained of man, and of every living thing in which was the breath of life that moved upon the earth, then gathered together near the ark, every animal which had entered into it having come out of it, gratitude for preservation, and a sense of the sustaining care of the Creator must surely have filled his heart. Yet for aught we know no prayer was uttered on that solemn occasion, nor was any hymn of praise raised by the patriarch, as the common expression of the feelings of his heart and of those that were with him. It may have been a silent service that went on. We read of nothing that God had heard, but only of what He smelled. A silent service perhaps, yet how full of meaning to Him, and instruction to us; for our attention is clearly meant to be fixed on the sacrifices then offered up, on which the Lord's eyes rested, and which were well pleasing to Him. A sweet savour! This is the first time we meet with such an expression. From earth it ascended to God. Surveying an undefiled world prepared for man, God pronounced all that He had made to be very good. (Genesis 1:31.) When He brought Noah out of the ark into a newly-ordered scene, we read of the sweet savour of the sacrifice. This earth was defiled; but what ascended to Him from the altar of Noah spoke of the pure and spotless death of the Son of His love. In that He could take delight, though man was a fallen creature, and this world was defiled by sin. But who could have told us what that sacrifice was in His sight? None but God Himself. So He acquaints us with this; first by revealing the thoughts of His heart in consequence of it, and next by recounting what He did, and what He said to Noah and to his sons. For all that we know of that day's proceedings are detailed only in the written Word. No tradition yet discovered has preserved any account of them.

"The Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart" (before He spoke to Noah He spoke to Himself), "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:21-22.) The Lord would change His way of dealing with man, and would institute, as long as earth should last, an abiding order of things. We are all witnesses to the faithfulness of His word in this. He has not again cursed the ground; He has not again smitten every living thing; He has not broken in upon the established order of seasons and times. But why these thoughts and purposes of God? Because of the sweet savour of the sacrifice. Man had not improved so as to furnish any reason for a change of dealing with him. The Lord's estimate of man after the flood differed little, if at all, from that before it. (Compare Genesis 6:5 with Genesis 8:21.) Before the flood God spoke of evil as being constantly in the heart of His creature man. After it He declared it was innate. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Beholding the active wickedness of man, God traced it back to his heart, every imagination of the thought of which was only evil continually. Viewing all that yet remained alive on earth of the human race, God declared that man himself was unchanged. "Only evil!" What a description of us all by nature! As children of Adam, then, we have nothing to boast of before God.

Now this estimate of man expressed in Genesis 8:1-22 refers (let the reader mark it) to those alive after the flood, who had been in the ark, and had been preserved through the judgment. There were but eight people on the earth, and one of them was Noah, the righteous one (Genesis 7:1), when the Lord thus communed with Himself. The ungodly (2 Peter 2:5) had been swept away, but man was no better; and the Lord's ways with man before the flood, cursing the ground (Genesis 3:17), had not altered him; nor did the witnessing by man of divine judgment at the flood improve

him in the least. His nature, inherited from Adam, is incurably bad. Now if centuries of God's dealings with man on earth did not change it, will centuries of punishment elsewhere be likely to effect the alteration? Adam at the end of his nine hundred and thirty years' life on earth was no better than he was just after the fall. Methuselah, who lived for nine hundred and sixty-nine years, had just as corrupt a nature at the close of his life as he began with when born into this world. Time then is no element to be taken into account in this matter. Nothing can change a nature. What man really needs is a new one. And as no length of punishment can alter what a man really is in his nature before God, so no amount of punishment inflicted by God, and endured by man, would justify the divine Being in removing His hand from off the sinner, and putting him in heaven before Him. The man will remain unaltered in his nature by all that he has passed through. And God, who is unchangeable in holiness, would have on that ground no reason to consent to any remission of punishment. How early was the incurability of man's evil heart declared by God, of which subsequent history affords such abundant proofs. Take Israel, God's earthly people, hedged round with ordinances to keep them separate from the idolatrous nations around them. God's estimate of them, and of man in general in the days of David, Psalms 14:2-3, plainly tells us. And the apostle in Romans 3:1-31 quotes from that psalm, and from other Old Testament scriptures, to acquaint us with God's judgment of man after the cross. The education of the world, as men speak, had been going on for centuries; men's minds had been cultivated very highly, as the writings of the ancients abundantly testify; yet man, the apostle was inspired to declare, was, in himself unchanged. By the new birth those subjects of it became children of God, and as such had a new nature; but in all others there was no change nor real improvement.

Passing on to the closing days of this dispensation, we learn that even the presence of Christianity upon earth, unless man is converted by the testimony of God, will leave him no better morally than it found him. We have only to compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5 with Romans 1:28-31 to prove that; and when the Lord shall come to reign, the unconverted will not desire His advent. All in heaven will rejoice at the establishment of the kingdom in power. Creation too will be glad; but the nations will be angry. (Revelation 11:18.) Such will be their feelings at the commencement of His reign. What will be their state at its close? Having enjoyed outward blessing throughout it, such as this earth and men on it have never yet known, Revelation 20:8 supplies us with the solemn answer. They will be ready to combine under the leadership of the devil against the beloved city, and the camp of the saints. Hatred to God, and to all that is of God, will still characterize them.

Punishment then, whether suffered or witnessed, does not change man. Advantages and education, whatever external polish the latter may give, equally fail to alter his evil nature. Truth professed, but not possessed, will leave him in the condition it found him; and millennial blessing will not eradicate his innate hostility to all that is of God. The announcement therefore of a change in God's dealings with him did not arise from any improvement in man, whether present or prospective. It arose simply and solely from the sweet savour which God smelled. Hence we are permitted to see what God can do for man by virtue of the death of His Son. It was this that was before Him as He smelled a sweet savour, and straightway communed with Himself. Man was unchanged. God was unchangeable in holiness, but He could righteously deal in grace with him, because of that sacrifice, the sweetness of which rose up in anticipation before Him. Nor was man only concerned in that; for creation, which shares man's fortunes (Romans 8:20-21), was to participate in beneficial results arising out of it. The order of nature and of the seasons was

henceforth to abide unchanged as long as earth should last. An interruption in it, like that occasioned by the flood, should not occur again; nor should every living thing be smitten again as they had been. Each year, then, each season, each day, as they come round, witness to us of the faithfulness of God to His word, and of the benefits secured by that sacrifice of sweet savour. That the seasons return with regularity all acknowledge; but this, which should lead man to own that God is faithful to what He has said, will be used, Peter warns us, when writing of the evil in the last of the days, to make men doubt the fulfilment of the divine predictions respecting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," men will say. (2 Peter 3:4.) Foolish, blind creatures; for the stability of the order of nature in connection with earth only dates from the burnt sacrifice of Noah. Yet the enemy, with that fact distinctly stated in God's word, will induce men, from the unvarying order of things they see around them, to discredit the Lord's faithfulness in fulfilling that which He has foretold. But to return. We read that, besides speaking to Himself, the Lord opened His mouth to let those around the altar learn of His ways in goodness with them all. God blessed Noah and his sons. This was something quite new. He had blessed Adam and Eve when in innocence. He had blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; but never, that we read of, did God bless a sinful creature, till Noah had taken of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and had offered them as burnt-offerings unto the Lord. Then He waited not a moment. What was there to wait for? The ground was laid in type on which He could bless, and He did it. He blessed Noah and his sons with him. Before the flood God spoke to Noah, but never addressed one word to his sons. After the burnt-offering had ascended up to Him He spoke to them all, and recognized them all as having a place before Him. He blessed them all in the fullest way as regards earthly things, and as creatures of earth, sinful though they were, could enjoy His blessing.

One feature should be noticed in the blessing after the flood. Noah was not the head of a race, so God could not speak to him as He did to Adam. Headship of a race belongs to the first man and to the second man. Noah was neither of these. We miss therefore, in the terms of the blessing bestowed on him and his sons, those significant words, "and subdue it," of Genesis 1:28, which were addressed to our first parents. Noah, though the father of all alive upon the earth, did not occupy that place in creation which Adam had filled. But that which God never gave to Adam He bestowed on Noah and on his sons. To Adam there were given for meat every herb bearing seed, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed. (Genesis 1:29.) After the fall God only allowed them to eat of the herb of the field. (Genesis 3:18) But on the acceptance of Noah's burnt-sacrifice, God gave to man everything on earth for food - all that grew, and everything that lived on earth, in the air, and in the sea, blood only excepted. From this God has never withdrawn. This divine blessing has never been revoked. What God then said holds good to this day. The grant is as free as ever. (1 Timothy 4:4-5.) The exception, however, then made remains uncancelled, as the council at Jerusalem reminded the converts from among the Gentiles. (Acts 15:29.) For those under law, and as long as they were under it, there were restrictions as to meats and articles of food; for those not under it, blood only was and is withheld. So as we exercise our freedom as to articles of food, and of flesh especially, we are sharing in the grant the Lord then made on the ground of the sweet savour of the sacrifice. Did the grant depend for its continuance of man's obedience it would have been forfeited long ago. Had it been promised on the ground of any improvement to be made in man's nature, it never could have been enjoyed. But given solely as it was on the acceptableness of the sacrifice, its continuance was not dependent on conditions

which man had to fulfil; and as long as that sacrifice, of which Noah's burnt-offerings were but types, shall abide in acceptance before God, so long, whilst men need such food, can that grant continue. In this we see an illustration of a principle of great importance to us. All depends for man's blessing on this, What is the sacrifice in God's eyes? What ground is this to rest upon! Here God can act according to the dictates of His own heart. Here man, unworthy though he be, can receive richly and unconditionally from God. C. E. Stuart.

S. The Trespass-Offering

The Trespass-Offering. From sins of inadvertence, violations of natural conscience, and those which become sins by statutory enactment, we pass on to another class, which under the law are called a trespass (maal), and had to be met in the manner revealed to Moses.

Trespasses might be committed against God, or against one's neighbour, so two revelations were vouchsafed to Israel respecting them. The first, in Leviticus 5:14-19, treats of trespasses against the Lord; the second, in Leviticus 6:1-7, of trespasses against a neighbour; and both have this feature in common, that besides the sacrifice which had to be brought, a money payment as well was enjoined on the offender as compensation for the harm that he had done. Of course every trespass was a sin, though every sin was not a trespass. A recompense being demanded showed that the rights of the one sinned against were not to be ignored; but a sacrifice being also enjoined, showed that a trespass against one's neighbour was not a matter which could be hushed up, or compromised, without any acknowledgment of the guilt before God. The injured party received back that of which he had been wrongfully deprived, with a fifth part of its value in addition, a fine imposed on the offender by the law of his God. But besides the restitution to the injured party, the death of the appointed victim had to take place to make atonement for the guilty person, that he might be forgiven. The forgiveness of his neighbour was one thing; the forgiveness of God was another thing, and with nothing less than that was the offender to be contented. Thus the Lord would teach His people, that their acts of sin had to be viewed in connection with their responsibility to Him, and not merely as they might affect the one sinned against on earth. Many a man might be defrauded without much personal inconvenience to him flowing from it; but a trespass committed against such an one was a trespass against Jehovah, and could only be atoned for as the law directed. How fully were the rights of property to be respected by those who were privileged to be called the people of the Lord. Are Christians sufficiently alive to that of which the Israelite under the law was constantly reminded? A trespass-offering then supposed the commission of an act by which the Lord or the man's neighbour had been wronged. Of this class of sins we have several examples in the Old Testament. A wife unfaithful to her husband was guilty of a trespass against him; for she defrauded him of his rights. (Numbers 5:12.) Aaron, too, and Moses were guilty of this sin at Meribah-Kadesh, when they did not sanctify the Lord in the midst of the children of Israel. (Deuteronomy 32:51.) Similarly Achan, and after him Saul, were convicted of a trespass when they kept back from the destruction to which God had devoted them - the one some property of the Amorites, the other some of the spoil of the Amalekites. (Joshua 22:20; 1 Chronicles 10:13.) Again, Uzziah was a trespasser in the holy things of the Lord when he presumed to officiate at the altar of incense, a service only lawful for the priests. (2 Chronicles 26:18.) And Ahaz and Manasseh stand out as shameful instances of trespassers; for they turned their backs openly on the worship of God. (2 Chronicles 28:19; 2 Chronicles 28:22; 2 Chronicles 29:19; 2 Chronicles 33:19.) But not only were individuals guilty of such a sin; for the nation was convicted of it, both when they turned to idolatry before the Babylonish captivity, and when the remnant intermarried with the people of the countries around them, after the Lord had in mercy

allowed them to return to their land. (1 Chronicles 5:25; 2 Chronicles 36:14; Ezekiel 20:27-28; Ezra 9:2; Ezra 9:4; Ezra 10:6; Nehemiah 13:27.) Separation to God should have characterized them, but in that they had grievously failed. Lastly, Zedekiah is charged by Ezekiel with this sin (Ezekiel 17:20) when he broke his covenant with the king of Babylon, to which the Lord was made a party, by his swearing in God's name to keep it.

These are instances of trespasses which God could not pass over, and for the most of which the law could provide no sacrifice. The returned remnant did, it is true, offer a trespass-offering for their failure in the matter of the strange wives. (Ezra 10:19.) To Manasseh grace was shown when he repented. But the leprous king and the faithless monarch were monuments, as long as they lived, of the evil of such a sin in God's eyes; whilst Moses and Aaron, Achan, Saul, and Ahaz, experienced God's governmental dealing in being removed by death as a visitation on them for their sin. And Israel, exiles to this day, a people without self-government, and even national existence, are witnesses of the grievous consequences of trespassing against their God. Witnesses, too, are they of the law's inability to meet their case, whilst awaiting the coming of that day when the blessed results of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be applied to them, brought to own their sins, and to turn to the Lord. In all these cases the distinctive feature of a trespass is discerned. God or man was defrauded of their rights by a wrong done to them. In the case off the individuals, where the law could not provide a sacrifice, the temporal consequences of their sin could never be averted, unless God was pleased, as in Manasseh's case, to act in sovereign grace. In the case of the nation, they will learn by-and-by that their trespasses, to atone for which the law could make no provision, have been fully met and, dealt with by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed on the cross. Meanwhile under the law, God did provide a sacrifice, that trespassers, of a certain class might be sheltered from the consequences of their acts, and be assured of divine forgiveness. These are specified in Leviticus 5:14-19; Leviticus 6:1-7. A person might sin through inadvertence in the holy things of the Lord, or he might have sinned ignorantly in such matters; for the sins referred to in Leviticus 5:17, seem to have respect to those mentioned in Leviticus 5:15-16. Inadvertently, or in error, he might have committed a trespass, or he may have acted in ignorance; nevertheless he had sinned, so a trespass-offering he was commanded to bring. Again, if he had lied to his neighbour concerning any matter of trust, or deceived him, or had sworn falsely for the purpose of defrauding him, a trespass-offering was demanded by the law, and that offering was to be a ram of the flock, which when duly dealt with at the altar, the money payment having also been made, the guilty one could go home with the assurance from Jehovah Himself of the forgiveness of his sin. So careful was the Lord to impress that on the offender that three times in these few verses is it stated. (Leviticus 5:16; Leviticus 5:18; Leviticus 6:7.) For whether he had to bring a sin-offering or a trespass-offering, if the appointed sacrifice was brought, and the demands of the law complied with, the guilty one was assured of forgiveness on the part of the Lord. Absolution from the priest was not the question. No priest of Aaron's house could absolve a man from his sins, but he could tell him what Jehovah had promised, and assure him of it on the authority of the written revelation by Moses.

Having seen what constituted a trespass according to the law, we would now trace out some of the distinctive features of the required offering; for in each of the offerings at which we have looked, the ritual prescribed had in it something different from the others. For a burnt-offering, a meat-offering, or a peace-offering, as we have seen, the offender had a choice, though only a

choice within the range prescribed for him by the Lord. For a sin-offering as treated of in Leviticus 4:1-35, God took account, as we have noticed, of the responsibility of the offender. For a sin-offering as enjoined in Leviticus 5:1-19, the Lord took into consideration the ability of the sinner. In the case of a trespass-offering, on the contrary, there was but one sacrifice appointed for every trespass, without any alternative to meet the offender's temporal circumstances. A ram of the flock was the only sacrifice the law appointed, an offering of less pecuniary value than a bullock, but of greater value than that of a lamb; for since the trespass indicated that either God or man had been defrauded of their rights, a ram, which reminds us of consecration, was the fitting offering to be appointed. With the sacrifice a money payment was demanded (this too was peculiar to this offering), depending in amount on the value of the harm done, with a fifth part of the value added to the sum which had to be paid. Was it a trespass in the holy things? In that case the money payment went to the priest. Had any individual been injured? The money due was paid to that person, or if dead to his representative; and if he left no representative, then it was handed to the priest. (Numbers 5:5-8.) What justice was here displayed! No one was to take advantage of another, even though he were his brother; and if he did defraud or wrong him, he committed a trespass against the Lord. (Leviticus 6:2.) The injured party's rights the offender had to acknowledge, and to make amends for the harm done to him. But he had to do with the Lord about that wrong, and his presence at the altar with a ram was a confession of it. Death then could never be pleaded by the guilty one as barring any claim for restitution or the need of confession. Jehovah did not pass away, nor did the priesthood die out; so the Lord's claims had to be acknowledged, and restitution had to be made. Had it been left to man to draw up regulations in cases of trespass, some might have carefully provided for the recognition of the claims of the injured party, and have passed over all consideration of that which was due to God. Others might have stipulated for a sacrifice, and where death had intervened, have released the offender from all claim on him for compensation. With God's law how different. Time would not diminish the gravity of the offence; for it was a trespass against the Eternal One. Circumstances could not lessen the sinner's obligation to make restitution, so He who sat upon the throne, the Righteous One, insisted on that being done, ere atonement could be made for a trespass against a neighbour. The claims then of divine holiness were maintained, and also met in the ram when sacrificed. The demand, too, for a just recompense to be made by the offender was not suffered to remain unsatisfied; yet the guilty one was also cared for in the provision made for his forgiveness. How correct was David in his judgment when he said to the prophet Gad, "Let me now fall into the hands of the Lord; for very great are His mercies." (1 Chronicles 21:13.)

Amends then had to be made for the harm done, and where the wrong was one done to a neighbour, the restitution or payment of the fine is spoken of, ere the sacrifice which had to be brought is mentioned. (Leviticus 6:1-7.) This order is not without significance. Where God had been defrauded, the sacrifice which He required, that He might be seen to be righteous in acting in grace toward the offender, is put in the foreground. When anyone injured his neighbour, the Lord taught the trespasser that He could not receive his offering, unless he first provided the proper recompense for the one whom he had wronged. The principle here illustrated abides unchanged. Dispensations may pass away, new regulations for the worship of God may be needed; but the recognition of a neighbour's rights God cannot allow us to forget; nor will He accept the sacrifice of the man who, from whatever cause, would ignore them. (1 Thessalonians 4:6-8; Matthew 5:23-24.) The ram brought to the altar, we learn from the law of this offering how it was to be dealt

with. (Leviticus 7:1-7) As with the sin-offering and peace-offering, its inwards only were burnt on the altar. In common with the sin-offering and meat-offering, it was most holy. Differing from the peace-offering, but in this resembling the sin-offering, the males only of the priesthood could eat of it; and the priest that made atonement therewith was to have it. Lastly, in common with the burnt-offering and peace-offering, its blood was only sprinkled on the altar round about. Thus the regulations respecting each offering are seen to be different. Resembling others in some points, no two were alike in all. Yet all typified one sacrifice, that which has been offered up, and accepted, even Him who is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, whose death therefore will have wide-reaching results, far beyond what any sacrifice under the law could prefigure. They were shadows, but the body is of Christ (Colossians 2:17.) They dealt with man's need; His deals with sin as well as with sins. By His precious blood atonement has been made for sins. By His sacrifice on the cross the sin of the world will be taken away. How suitable was it that the priest who offered the offering should have it, so that the sin which was transferred to the sacrifice should never rise up against the offender. The offering put out of sight, because eaten, the sin could never be remembered. How perfectly has God provided for this! (Hebrews 10:17.)

We have seen what constituted a trespass - maal - and in what manner such a sin could be dealt with. It will not therefore surprise the reader to learn that at no public festival was a trespass-offering - asham - appointed to be offered; yet a leper could not be cleansed without one (Leviticus 14:10-14), nor could a Nazarite, who had defiled the head of his consecration, renew that consecration, till he had brought a he-lamb of the first year for a trespass-offering unto the Lord. (Numbers 6:12.) In both these cases God's rights had really been infringed. The leper teaches us what God's professed people ought to be for God, but had not been; the Nazarite shows us what one specially devoted to God should be to Him. But in neither case was harm done, so we have no money payment insisted upon. For centuries such sacrifices have ceased; for there was only one altar on which they could be offered, that called the altar of burnt-offering. By-and-by that altar will be reared up afresh, and hallowed again for acceptable worship to the Lord. Then trespass-offerings will be brought, as before, to God's altar at Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40:39, Ezekiel 42:13), and the priests will boil what remains of them in the appointed place (Ezekiel 46:20), and eat them as they were commanded of old. (Ezekiel 44:29.) But Christians, living between the time of the cessation of sacrifice on the altar and its renewal, know now what the earthly people will then learn - that propitiation has been already made once for all, and substitution in its fulness and reality is a thing of the past, though never to be forgotten; for Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins, and He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24.) C. E. Stuart.

S. Thoughts on Canticles.

Thoughts on Canticles. Of all the songs of Solomon, amounting to 1,005, there is only one that has come down to our day. Written by the Spirit of God, and inserted in the volume of the book, whilst some inspired communications have perished, this survives, and will, may we not say it, be a comfort and delight to the godly remnant of his people in the latter day, when the circumstances of the spouse, described in this song, will be found to delineate, as the prophetic word of God only can, the condition of the people, whose hearts have been turned to the Lord during the time of Jacob’s trial, and the domination of Antichrist. But, as it gives us the exercises of the heart that seeks after an object which will satisfy it, and the unchanging affection of the one it seeks after, we can read it with profit to ourselves, since, whilst illustrating the changing character of our affection towards the Lord, it brings out the abiding character of His love. To point out the unchanging character of His love as here brought out is the object of the present paper. The words of the spouse commence the book. We hear her voice at the beginning, she breaks the silence as it were; and we hear her voice at the close. She speaks of her beloved, and to him. He speaks to her and her only, and manifests to her his love. She begins by declaring her desire to receive the proof of his affection. She knows what his love is. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." She can say, assigning as a reason, "for thy love is better than wine." It is no stranger that she thus addresses. "The virgins," she continues, "love thee." Under what circumstances there had been previous acquaintance is not related. Nothing of the past is told us about him, but she acquaints us with something of her previous history. She had been in trial. (Song of Solomon 1:5-6.) Her mother’s children were angry with her, and made her keeper of the vineyards. Of him we learn what offices he fills — he is king and shepherd, and Solomon is as such, the representative of the blessed. At the outset of the song she is occupied with two things, her beloved and herself, throughout it, he is occupied with but one object, his loved one. "I am black but comely." "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley," she says. To her companions she said the first, to her beloved she addressed the second. Her description is correct, it is no overstatement; he assures her she is comely (Song of Solomon 1:10), and tells out that as "the lily among the thorns so is my love among the daughters." (Song of Solomon 2:2.) He thus takes up her language about herself. She is all that in his eyes. He sees a comeliness in her though she may have been exposed to the sun’s rays. Why should she think of herself? Fair is she in his eyes, nor is that all; he would have her with him, and she knows it, for she gives us the very words of his invitation. (Song of Solomon 2:8-13.) He will not be satisfied without her, so he invites her to go forth with him. Her countenance too he would see, her voice he would hear. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away," he says. What is her answer "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved: and be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether." (Song of Solomon 2:17.) She would have him with her, but does not respond to the invitation to go forth with him. The ordinary time of day for going out had not arrived, the suited hour she thinks, had not approached. She would judge for herself of the fitness of the time to go forth instead of leaving that, as she ought to have done, to him. She did not go forth as he asked her, so does not find him with her, as she had requested. His absence draws out her heart after him, and she goes out at an unseasonable hour

to seek for him. Her question to the watchmen shows where her heart is, as, full of him she loves, she mentions not to them the name of her beloved. (Song of Solomon 3:3.) She finds him, and constrains him to return with her. In this she shows her love, and in being thus constrained he proves his love to her. She had declined his invitation, he refuses not to go with her. He had been slighted by her, she should not know what it was to be slighted by him.

After this we have a description of his majesty coming out of the wilderness. It attracts; and the daughters of Jerusalem are exhorted to go forth, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the days of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart. All are occupied with him. With what is he occupied? Is he thinking of his majesty? Do his thoughts centre round his crown? He is occupied, but it is with her who is his love, and with nothing else. Of her he thinks, with her beauty and sweetness he is taken up. She had failed, but his love could not fail. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair: thou hast doves' eyes." (Song of Solomon 4:1.) Before he had endorsed what she had said of herself, here, unasked, he expresses what she is. What he had said in Song of Solomon 1:15 he reiterates at the beginning of this chapter. How little could she have expected this after the way she had acted. But he does more than this. At first be had only spoken of her eyes; now he gives a full description of his spouse. Nothing escapes his notice, with every feature he is conversant, and all find favour in his sight. So we read, "Thou art all fair my love; there is no spot in thee." (Song of Solomon 4:7.) Comely and fragrant is she to him. Beautiful objects of nature and art alone could describe her appearance; the most valuable spices that were cultivated must be enumerated and massed together to express her sweetness. What delight he finds in her. How true, how deep must be that love which is thus occupied with such an one as her. To him she is all that is comely, all that is fragrant, and this he tells her himself. She knew his desire for her presence with him; she learns from his lips what she is in his eyes.

Another opportunity is offered her of responding to his invitation; but how does she use it? He calls to her from without, not to go out to him, but to open the door that he might enter the chamber where she was. But a short time before she had taken him into her mother's chamber. He stands without and tells her his condition, his "head filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night." Surely, she will at once open the door to him. She hears his voice, knows what he says, but remains where she is. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" (Song of Solomon 5:3.) Self comes in, and keeps her from opening the door. At first we saw her thinking of her appearance, now she thinks of the trouble it will cost her. Before when he had spoken, she intimated that his invitation is premature, now she would tell him his call was out of season. Need we wonder at her? Have not many practically acted as she did?

Again he withdraws himself, he could not act otherwise, for she must be made sensible of her coldness. Yet he would assure her of the unchanging character of his love. She might change or grow cold, he could not. She opens the door, but he was gone. Was that all she found? In his love he leaves her a token of affection which she well understood. "I rose to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock." Whence came this? "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door." He had anointed the handle of the door with this perfume in token of his unabated affection, even when she was cold towards him. What proof could she give of her love? His withdrawal witnessed of her remissness. What a proof had he left of his as her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with

sweet scented myrrh on the handles of the lock. A second time she seeks him abroad in the streets. Her remissness draws her a second time into a position unsuited for such an one. The watchmen find her without, and put her to shame as they took away her veil. Her companions are made acquainted with her condition, as she sends a message by them to her beloved if they found him. She might have spoken to him face to face, but she would not, and now she is reduced to be uncovered by the keepers of the wall, and to solicit the help of her companions to recover her beloved. To their request about him, she answers at once, giving a full description of his appearance. He had seen beauty in her, she had seen comeliness in him. Suffering as she did for her conduct towards him, she is once more with him (for he was willing to be found of her), and he is proved to be unchanged, for, as before, he speaks first. He waits not to hear what she has to say in extenuation of her fault; he speaks, not to upbraid or condemn, but to assure her of her beauty in his eyes. "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah; comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners." As before, he has but one object of special delight — herself. "There are three-score queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one." How perfect was his love! It had an object at the beginning of the song from which nothing would divert it. Unworthy of it she was, but he could not change. He sought her, he desired her, his dove, his undefiled was but one, there was not another to be compared with her in his eyes. At the close of the song (Song of Solomon 8:12) she avails herself of an opportunity of showing his value in her eyes. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." But is this wilt he cared for? Would the thousand pieces of silver satisfy him? Let us hear his response: "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." Her voice to him was more refreshing than any present of money she could bring. The sound of her voice he desired to hear; nothing short of that would fully please him. What he had said in Song of Solomon 2:14 is what he concludes with here. His last recorded wish is to hearken to her voice. "Cause me to hear it." In him there was — in Him who is really figured here there is — no change. A few words to point out, as far as the original guides us, where the change of speakers takes place, may be of use.

Song of Solomon 1:1, the title; Song of Solomon 1:2-7, the spouse; Song of Solomon 1:8-11, the beloved; Song of Solomon 1:12-14, the spouse; Song of Solomon 1:15, the beloved Song of Solomon 1:16 — Song of Solomon 2:1, the spouse; Song of Solomon 2:2, the beloved; Song of Solomon 2:3 — Song of Solomon 3:5, the spouse; Song of Solomon 3:6-11, the companions probably of the spouse; Song of Solomon 4:1-15, the beloved; Song of Solomon 4:16, the spouse; Song of Solomon 5:1, the beloved; Song of Solomon 5:2-8, the spouse; Song of Solomon 5:9, the companions Song of Solomon 5:10-16, the spouse; Song of Solomon 6:1, the companions; Song of Solomon 6:2-3, the spouse; Song of Solomon 6:4-12, the beloved; Song of Solomon 7:1, the companions say, "Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return that we may look upon thee." The spouse answers, "What will ye see," etc.; Song of Solomon 7:2-9, as far as "best wine," are the words of the beloved. Here the spouse breaks in, "For my beloved," and continues to Song of Solomon 8:4, when the companions ask, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? "The spouse answers, "I raised thee up," etc., and continues to Song of Solomon 8:7-9, the companions or brethren of the spouse according to some; Song of Solomon 8:10-12, the spouse; Song of Solomon 8:13, the beloved; Song of Solomon 8:14, the spouse.

Some regard Song of Solomon 2:7, Song of Solomon 3:5, Song of Solomon 8:4 as the language of the beloved, but probably without sufficient grounds. C. E. Stuart.

S. Thoughts on Ecclesiastes.

Thoughts on Ecclesiastes. From two opposite points of view is life on earth generally regarded by mankind. The one half view it as a prospect opening out before them; the other half take a retrospective survey of all they have passed through. Like the cloudless morning of a long summer’s day does it appear to one just emerging out of childhood, as radiant with hope he starts forth on his journey to realize the dream of his boyhood. Like the gloomy end of a winter’s day does it appear to many a one, who has reached the verge of that span ordinarily allotted to man on earth, as chastened and bowed down, it may be, with the remembrance of failures, the old man travels onward to the tomb. Each has formed an estimate of what life here is, but the one speaks of what he hopes for, the other tells of that which he has found. A man’s idea of a road he has not yet travelled on will often turn out to be wrong; so youth’s estimate of life is generally fallacious. Carl we trust to one who has travelled the road himself to give us a just idea of what life on earth really is? Each one can tell us of what he has found, and may seek to indoctrinate us with his own idea; but the picture will be differently coloured, according to the trials or joys each has met with by the way. It will be but the experience of an individual after all.

Man wants something more. Where shall he find it? The wisdom of the ancients cannot supply it; the researches of those who have lived in our day cannot furnish us with it. It needs one gifted with real wisdom to estimate it; it needs one able to search diligently into the things of earth to discover it. One and one only of the children of Adam has been competent for the task, and he as competent has undertaken to perform it. What David, the man after God’s own heart, could not have accurately delineated, that Solomon his son could and did; and the Book of Ecclesiastes is the utterance of the Preacher, dictated by the Spirit of God, to provide man authoritatively from God, but also experimentally by the wisest of men, with a just estimate of what life here below for a child of Adam really is. Endowed by God with a measure of wisdom surpassing all before him ("for he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol." 1 Kings 4:31), and never equalled by any that have come after him, king in Jerusalem, possessed of wealth beyond any monarch the world has ever seen (" for silver was not anything accounted of in the days of Solomon"), all that wealth could purchase, all that power could command, all that wisdom could search out, he could enjoy and understand. "What," then, "can the man do that cometh after the king?" "Who can eat, or who else can hasten (or enjoy) more than I?" (Ecclesiastes 2:12; Ecclesiastes 2:25.) This was no idle boast. A man of pleasure, a votary of science, the ruler over kings, meting out justice to his subjects, answering all the hard questions of the Queen of Sheba, fertile in invention, diligent in study, rich in all that constituted the wealth of a nomad, pastoral, or settled, and highly civilized people — what source of pleasure was sealed up to him, what field of knowledge on earth was kept from him? Of all the pleasures that man can revel in he had drunk deep, while at the same time he investigated the works of God, and learned those laws by which the life and order of the universe are regulated. And, when we speak of Solomon’s wisdom, we must remember it was not mere genius as people talk of, nor the fruit of matured study and diligent attention; but God gave him wisdom and knowledge, besides riches,

wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings had that had been before him, neither shall any after him have the like. (2 Chronicles 1:12.) Such was the one appointed to depict faithfully what the life on earth of a fallen creature is, and only can be; as One and One alone, who has trod this earth as man, has rightly and fully exhibited what man should be. David's son describes the one; David's Lord has set forth the other. The Book of Ecclesiastes then is of great value, and might profitably be studied by men of the world in our day. Its writer had no reason to bear a grudge against the world: as men would say, it had used him well, conceding him his place, paying him due honour, and rendering full homage to his marvellous wisdom. For "king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year." (2 Chronicles 9:22-24.)

Competent then surely to tell us what life is, what has he to say of it? how does he describe it? "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities: all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:1.) Were these the words of a disappointed man, whose hopes had been cruelly crushed, and himself roughly treated by the way, none could wonder at such a commencement. But these are the words of time most prosperous, humanly speaking, of men the world has ever witnessed. "Vanity of vanities" — a mere breath, a vapour passing over the earth, short-lived in its existence, such is the recorded experience of the son of David, king in Jerusalem, and that not of some things but of all. "All is vanity, saith the Preacher." And here he takes a title not elsewhere met with outside this book — Preacher. He would collect those about him who were desirous to hear, and instruct them, for such is the meaning of the term. So, whilst other portions of Scripture treat of the future, and the path of the righteous on earth, this addresses itself to all whose hearts are in the world, pursuing the occupations of life, and tells them what they really are, as the king's son has discovered by his own experience, and has recorded by the pen of inspiration for the instruction of all who will hearken to him.

"What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" He takes up the diligent, well-occupied man, toiling away; the man who finds plenty to do and is happy in doing it, thoroughly engaged in the business of life. But why this cry of the Preacher, who "sought to find out acceptable words?" (Ecclesiastes 12:10.) And why does he view things so mournfully? The secret comes out. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever." The earth abides, man does not; hence the question that needs no answer, "What profit," etc. And here we are furnished with a view of death, of which it is well for man to be reminded. Death is the wages of sin; but it is not viewed in this aspect in Ecclesiastes. It is not the reason of its entrance into the world that Solomon dilates on, but its presence here as a worm at the root of the tree of pleasure. (Ecclesiastes 2:15; Ecclesiastes 3:19-20; Ecclesiastes 5:15; Ecclesiastes 6:6; Ecclesiastes 9:3.) It mars pleasure, it chills enjoyment; for it cuts off man just when he would sit down after years of toil to reap the fruit of his labour. How different was the prospect of Adam ere he fell! How different will be the experience of saints during the millennium, and of men on the new earth! But now to man, feeling the consequences of the fall, death is the great marplot, blasting all his hopes. What takes place after death is another matter: other scriptures set that forth. This book regards death from this side of the grave, and shows how it effects a severance between man and the fruits of all his labour, which he thinks he is just about to

reap. And the misery of it is just this: man has laboured for years, and looks naturally to enjoy what he, not others, has amassed; but finds death comes in and takes him away, whilst he leaves all the fruits of his labour to be enjoyed by another. "There is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity: yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil." (Ecclesiastes 2:21.)

What a trouble then is death, an unwelcome visitor, which none can keep out of their house. It comes unbidden, it comes at an unseasonable time in man's eyes, and strips its victim of everything; for "as he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" (Ecclesiastes 5:15-16.) And whatever his position on earth, all finally go to one place (Ecclesiastes 6:6), the rich, the poor, the wise, the fool, the righteous, the wicked are found at last with the untimely birth, which has never seen the sun. And death, the great leveller of all ranks, reduces man to a level below himself, even to that of the beasts; "for that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20.) With the thread of man's life thus unrolling before him, at one end of it his exit from the womb, at the other his exit from the world by death, all that is seen being the transient existence of a mortal born to die, we can understand the reason of that cry, "What profit hath a man," etc.

But, if death deprives a man of the enjoyment of the fruits of his toil, his life and all that surrounds him speaks of ceaseless and reiterated labour. The work begun is never perfected. Things in heaven and things on earth proclaim this. "The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down and hasteth to his place where he arose, going toward the south, and turning again to the north" (thus some connect ver. 5, 6). Each day the work is done only to be repeated again the next. Each year, the course it has traversed, is traversed again. "The wind," too, "whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits." The rivers are ever running to the sea, "yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again," or perhaps better, "unto the place where the rivers go, thither they turn to go." "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eve is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." Thus nature would teach him, if he regarded it aright, that here as yet no abiding rest can be enjoyed. Life is a busy scene. What has been will be, and there is nothing new under the sun. And to complete the picture of vanity, "there is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." The obliviousness in Solomon's days of what had gone before was not a feature peculiar to his time. It has, it will characterize man in all ages. What profit then is there in the labour of man? What has been done will be done again, and what has been effected will be forgotten by the generations which may come after. With this as the preface to his book, the Preacher proceeds to show that he writes not from hearsay, nor culls the wisdom of others, but has tried for himself what life under the sun is for one of the human race. (Ecclesiastes 1:12 — 2: 26.)

He set himself resolutely to the task of searching out by wisdom all things that are done under the sun. In this he made good use of that wonderful gift God had bestowed on him. He beheld them all, "and behold," he writes, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Man may see the defects, be

conscious of the want, but he cannot supply it. What a condition to be in! Such is man’s condition on earth as one who has departed from God. He must feel keenly, if he feels at all, how bitter are the results of turning from the living and true God. He sees what is crooked, discerns what is wanting, but cannot put things straight, not supply that which is lacking. "All the foundations of the earth are out of course" are the words of Asaph. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" is the experience of the king’s son. And this, we must remember, is not the experience of the sinner, reaping the fruit of what he has sown, but one of the old creation (though a sinner himself) feeling the ruin and disorder sin has brought on the earth. As originally created by God, man was meant to find unalloyed delight on earth, with a nature capable of enjoyment, a mind capable of instruction and expansion, and a frame capable of exertion; and everything around him would have ministered to his pleasure, or have afforded opportunities for the full development of his faculties. Is that the case now? Let us listen to the words of the Preacher again: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem, yea my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18.) This is human experience, yet not the experience which of necessity a man must have, but the experience of all men, who are still suffering under the consequences of the fall. And however great man may be on earth, whatever be the powers of his mind or the yearnings of his heart, he cannot as a child of Adam get beyond what is here described. Like some fair ruin, with here and there traces of exquisite workmanship still remaining, by which we can contrast the evident design of the architect with the present condition of the building, so we can discern in man’s feelings and powers what he was originally capable of, whilst compelled to own he is but a wreck of that noblest of God’s works first seen on the sixth day of creation. But whence did he acquire that experience which enabled him to pronounce such a verdict on all the pursuits of men under the sun? He tells us: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure; and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine [yet acquainting, or guiding mine heart with wisdom] and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts [or as it might be rendered, and perhaps more correctly, ’a wife and wives,’ 1:e., many wives]. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of "all my labour." (Ecclesiastes 2:1-10.) Such was the wide range of pleasures intellectual and carnal that he explored. Nothing was withheld of any joy; but whilst entering so keenly into all that be describes, he tells us his wisdom remained with him. Fully competent then was he from personal experience, and from the wisdom which never forsook him, to estimate

aright what all this was worth. Would not such a one be satisfied with what this life afforded? If others less favoured were disappointed, he at least had his fill of everything he desired. And, having drunk deep of all that could be indulged in, he has left on record what he found it all to be. "Behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." The value of wisdom he discerned; it "excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness;" but to the fool as well as to the wise death comes, and after death the fool and wise are forgotten, yea, the wise man dieth as the fool. Hence he hated life, and be hated all the labour which he had laboured under the sun, because be must leave it to the man that shall be after him; and who knoweth, he mournfully asks, whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? History answers the question, and illustrates forcibly the vanity of all things which he felt so keenly. Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men that had stood before Solomon his father, and lost by his act of folly the allegiance of the ten tribes. He forsook also the Lord after three years of his reign had elapsed, witnessed the invasion of Shishak king of Egypt, and lost the treasures Solomon had amassed. The shields of gold went to swell the coffers of Egypt, and Rehoboam had to substitute shields of brass in their stead. From speaking of himself, Solomon turns to others; and taking a survey of all things done under the sun, declares all is vanity. Of wealth he speaks. It has its use. Money is a defence (Ecclesiastes 7:12), it is God’s gift; yet how often do men feel the vanity of it all. Coveted, toiled after as the one great good, the man acquires wealth, fills his coffers, and yet is unsatisfied. If childless, we may desire offspring, but children are God’s gift, not to be purchased by money. If he loves silver, he will not be satisfied with it. (Ecclesiastes 5:10.) How can things of earth really satisfy an immortal spirit? If he feasts his eyes with his money today, it may vanish away shortly, and he be left with an heir — his own child — born to inherit beggary. (Ver. 13, 14.) Again, if he has been prospered to the last, and his riches have not fled away, he must leave them; for as he entered the world, so must he leave it. Death summons him but not his goods with him. All that he has remains behind him, whilst he, naked as he entered the world, passes out of it by the portal of death. Riches cannot satisfy the soul, they cannot buy off death, nor can their owner insure their retention for the morrow. So Solomon admonishes his fellow-creatures, "What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?"

Again the Preacher speaks and discourses about wisdom. He acknowledged its value, for none were more competent than he was to speak of it. It strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city. It is better than strength, he could say: and better than weapons of war. (Ecclesiastes 7:11-19; Ecclesiastes 9:16; Ecclesiastes 9:18.) But here also the vanity of all things done under the sun made itself felt; for when he applied his heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on the earth, as he turned to behold the works of God, he found a limit to the prosecution of his researches; and as he surveyed the works of men, be was only made more painfully conscious of the wretchedness and ruin brought in by sin. Of the works of creation he had learned a great deal, as is elsewhere recorded; but man is but a finite being, unable to fathom the infinite. This Solomon discovered. "I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, farther, though a wise man think to know it, vet shall he not be able to find it." (Ecclesiastes 8:17.) There are fields of knowledge beyond man’s capacity to explore or even reach. He may, like Solomon, arrive at this point, to learn from all he knows how little he knows; how knowledge acquired is the mother of many a question which the student is unable to answer; and how incompetent he is to understand even all that he sees around him. Such must ever be his

condition here. By the light of revelation we can look onward to a day when we shall, but not down here, "know as we are known."

Turning to investigate the actions of men, he may learn the evils that are done under the sun: the crying injustice, the lawlessness, the frauds, and many acts of oppression that are constantly practised amongst men, to find, whilst he sees them, his powerlessness to hinder them. (Ecclesiastes 3:16 : Ecclesiastes 8:14.) Another arm is alone able to restrain the lawless; another mind than any of Adam's fallen descendants can alone devise the remedy. The day of the Son of man must dawn ere One will be found on earth competent to put things straight. How often is justice now perverted! The righteous suffer, and the guilty go free. Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place. Servants ride on horses, and princes walk as servants on earth. (Ecclesiastes 10:6-7.) And the wise man, courted for his help in time of pressing need, is forgotten when the hour of distress has passed away. (Ecclesiastes 9:1; Ecclesiastes 9:5.) Thus wisdom may disclose to its possessor what is wrong, and make him feel the bitterness of it, sensible all the time of his powerlessness to correct it. To know good and evil was the bait held out by the serpent, to be just like God. The wise man sees clearly the evil, knows what ought to be, but learns he cannot do it. And woman, originally God's provision for man, his suited help, is found to become, when a tool of the enemy, an instrument for his everlasting ruin. (Ecclesiastes 7:26-29.)

After this we may be prepared for the picture presented at the close of the book. Man, created originally in the image of God, not subject to death, is depicted as travelling onwards to the tomb; learning as he goes along, as we have seen, that all around of things done under the sun are vanity; and, at the close of his life, giving in his own death a most convincing proof of the accuracy of the Preacher's statement — "All is vanity." Beautiful is the poetry of the description, but sad are the features of it. Whilst others may love to describe what man might have been, Solomon tells us what he is; but he speaks not of his greatness, his powers of mind or body; he writes of decay. Created to be lord of God's creatures on earth, manifesting the power of mind over matter; a pigmy by the side of the everlasting hills, yet able to accomplish gigantic works, which seem almost to defy the ravages of time; far inferior to many of the animals in brute strength, yet able to subdue them, and to make the forces of nature subservient to his will; what might he not have been had sin not entered the world? A worn out vessel, his strength decayed, his knees tottering, his hands trembling, his sight failing, his ears dull of hearing; all that once charmed him able to charm him no longer; a mere wreck of what he was, awaiting the hour of his departure to his long home: such is he as described by Solomon. Who will wonder that the burden with which he began is the burden with which he ends. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:2; Ecclesiastes 12:8.) But amid all that spoke of vanity there was another subject he touched on, for, being wise, he taught the people. He had spoken at length about man and his works, he speaks briefly about God and what He does. And what he says about God (for the name Jehovah does not occur in the book) only brings out in higher relief the ruined condition of man. Man abideth not, his thoughts perish, his works crumble to dust, his name is forgotten. Created originally not for death, he is now born to die: but God abides. "I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Ecclesiastes 3:14.) Here in the midst of what is transient is something permanent. This he had found and desired to impress on others. (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Ecclesiastes 12:1.) He would tell the creature of the Creator. It is not grace that he is charged to proclaim; it is not salvation he is empowered here

to offer; but to God’s creatures, responsible as such to Him that made them, he would speak. The Creator will take cognizance of, and make judicial inquiry into, the actions of His creatures. This none can escape, and of this all need to be reminded. And now that he has exposed the vanity of all things that are done under the sun, he opens out the only word for man to follow: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13.) The fuller light that we possess confirms all that Solomon said of man, and tells us likewise more about God; but the principle here enunciated is true for all time — the creature should own the authority of God, and yield implicit obedience to all He is pleased to enjoin. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And just where Ecclesiastes ends, Proverbs begins. Ecclesiastes exposes the vanity of all things here; Proverbs tells us of true wisdom. Ecclesiastes lands man as man in decay and death; Proverbs holds out life, and tells us how to walk wisely on earth. In perfect keeping with this are the subjects of their closing chapters. What Ecclesiastes describes has been briefly referred to. What Proverbs speaks of, is man and woman in their respective spheres; the man, king Lemuel, ruling; the woman, the virtuous wife guiding the house wisely and well. We see them each in their work, but we read of no end to it. Death is not introduced as cutting short their career of usefulness, or carrying them away when helpless by old age. They exemplify what Solomon had taught his son would flow from the possession of that wisdom which is to be desired — life. And we close the book, feeling that we leave them, as it were, the one on the throne and the other in the house. We come to the end of the Book of Proverbs, but we leave them still in life and activity. C. E. Stuart.

Chapter 109

S. Thoughts on Sacrifices 10: The One Alternative

Thoughts on Sacrifices 10: The One Alternative When Christianity first claimed man’s attention, and asserted its divine origin, there was another system of religion indisputably of divine appointment, and confessedly of great antiquity.

Before Romulus had laid the foundation of Rome, and the era of Nabonasser of Babylon commenced, and centuries before the Trojan war, a people had been brought out of Egypt to whom God gave a ritual in the Wilderness at Mount Sinai. Miracles, which the Egyptian magicians rightly ascribed to the finger of God, were wrought by Moses, as a witness that Jehovah had sent him to lead forth His people from Egypt. Miracles which the Jews were unable to deny were done by the apostles of the Lord Jesus-proofs of their divine mission. In the presence, then, of these two systems of religion-the one inaugurated in the wilderness, the other in an upper room in Jerusalem, the former claiming attention by its imposing display, and acknowledged antiquity; the latter demanding the obedience of all, men to its teaching as God’s provision or the salvation of. Jew and Gentile which, were men to follow to which were even the Jews to be conformed? He who is wonderful-in counsel, and excellent in working, was pleased to allow both to exist for a time together, that the superiority of Christianity over Judaism might be seen; and what the Mosaic ritual pointed to as man’s requirement, be found supplied in the one sacrifice of which. the first teachers of Christianity had to speak.

Between these two creeds there were truths in common, and characteristics somewhat similar. Repentance from dead works, faith in God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead were acknowledged and taught when the Lord appeared on earth. Both, too, spoke of a sanctuary, a sacrifice, and an high priest. The Jews had a sanctuary on earth, receiving sacrifices, and a priesthood, which by reason of death was transmitted from father to son. The followers of the Lord Jesus spoke of a sanctuary in heaven, of one, and only one sacrifice, which had been offered up on earth, and the unchanging priesthood of the Lord Jesus who ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him. (Hebrews 7:24-25.) Thus the followers of the Mosaic ritual of necessity took the place of expectance. The sacrifices which were offered up year by year, proved by their recurrence never to have made the comers perfect. They told of a want, but confessed they could not meet it. The disciples of the Lord, on the other hand, looked back to His sacrifice as all that was needed, and to which no addition could ever be made. They, too, waited, it is true, but not for an effective sacrifice; they waited only for complete salvation to be fully known when He shall appear the second time. (Hebrews 9:28.) So to turn back from Christianity to Judaism was to take a retrograde step, and in renouncing it, souls were taught that they renounced the only hope of escaping the wrath to come. For men then, when once the truth had reached them, there was really no choice. If they left Judaism, they confessed by their very act that it could not provide what they needed; if they remained in it, they owned by the recurring sacrifices that it had not procured what they wanted. If they left Christianity, what other divine provision was there which could avail them before the throne of God? This the word of God makes very clear. "If we sin willfully, after that we have ’received the knowledge of the truth (and

what is sinning willfully, verse 29 tells us), there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Outside of Christianity, then, there was nothing for the sinner. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins"-a solemn statement, which shuts the door against everything beside the sacrifice of Christ, and tells at the same time what that claimed to effect. How decided is the language, that none should be mistaken as to the future-" no more sacrifice for sins"-then a sacrifice was required. For, why speak of none remaining, if men could get to heaven without one? But, if the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus could not put away sin, nothing else would-the last, the only resource was gone if that had failed. So if men rejected it, they rejected the only sacrifice of divine appointment which ever professed to put away sin, to embrace a future of despair, and the certainty of divine judgment. "There remaineth..... but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." With such an alternative the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, or nothing, to stand between the soul and the outpouring of God's wrath, the question might arise-is it sufficient for this end I In trusting to it do I trust to that which can do what I need? Have I in it an effectual shelter from a future of divine -vengeance? How full, how clear is the answer! "No more sacrifice for sins," is the statement •of God's word, if the atonement made on the cross is rejected. " No more conscience of sins," if that sacrifice be accepted. Without it the worshipper can never be purged; by it he is purged once for all. Imperfection was stamped on the Mosaic ritual; hopeless despair is attached to the final surrender of Christianity, whilst perfection, as to the believers standing, is ensured by the true reception of it. For, as before the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross, none, which could put away sins, had ever been offered up; so, since that sacrifice has been accomplished, none can be substituted for it. And do we not trace the same hand, and discern the same mind, as we read the ritual of Leviticus, and peruse this portion of the epistle to the Hebrews 4:1-16 At the altar of burnt-offering the sinner could know of his forgiveness; and God desired he should be assured of it. Turning to the cross the sinner can rest satisfied of the complete and, everlasting remission of his sins, and the Holy Ghost is a witness of it:," Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin;" no uncertainty, as far as God is concerned, shall cloud the sinner's prospect. The one meditating apostasy is warned; the believer is assured.

How secure is the basis on which all now rests! The sacrificial ritual in which man could take part could never purge the conscience. The one sacrifice, in the offering of which man could take no part, is the only one which can. The priests, offered, and that rightly, many sacrifices-the Lord Jesus offered up Himself. And now statements are made concerning believers which were never made before. Sanctified by God's will through the offering of the body of Jesus once, by that same offering they are perfected for a continuance, and find a way new and living into the holy of holies, which He has consecrated for us by His blood through the veil-that is through His flesh, All is ascribed to His sacrifice and work, who is the One in whom the Father is well pleased. All is done for us by a man it is true, but it is the Man Christ Jesus. Sanctified, perfected, forgiven, with boldness, to enter the holiest-such is the order traced out. Sanctified, set apart for God; perfected, so complete in standing before Him; forgiven, so at rest about sins; what could follow but the free right of entry into the innermost chamber of the sanctuary?

How the spirit delights to dwell on the perfectness of the sacrifice? Of the sacrifices according to the law, and of the priests that offered them, we learn the hopelessness of trusting to the one or of looking to the other. " Can never" is spoken of them; "once for all" and "forever" is spoken of the

sacrifices of Christ. To him who turns from this sacrifice there remained no more offering for sins, for him who accepts it really there can be no more remembrance of his iniquities. What need, then, is there of any other? It has done all we want, yet we stop not there. It has done far more than we could have thought of, and procures all that the creature can forever take in and enjoy.

Abel outside the garden offered up the lambs, and received witness that he was righteous, yet never re-entered paradise. Outside the gate Jesus died, and the holiest is in consequence-opened to the believer forever. Aaron entered the holiest on earth and found it an unpeopled place, for none could remain in the presence of the Divine Majesty. Believers enter by faith the holiest in heaven; and know it is their- place for evermore. At Sinai, when God appeared in majesty, the people retreated from the place assigned them, and stood afar off (Exodus 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 5:5-27). Now we read different language. Bounds were set round the mount, which they were not to overstep, lest death should overtake, them. We are invited to draw near with true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. And, as. the words of the exhortation remind us of what we are in ourselves, they disclose to us what that one offering has done for us who believe. Where man never was before, there we can be, and what he never could have done for himself that we are made through the work of the Lord Jesus once for all on the cross. From Abel to the cross the' different aspects of a sacrifice; such as the sinner needs, have been traced out in the Word of God; but whilst each fresh sacrifice told of the want, by none were the requirements of God's justice and man's need met, till once in the end of the ages God's well-beloved Son appeared to put away sin. Then each offering found its anti-type in the sacrifice of Himself, and offering a sacrifice for sin ceased, not because the case was hopeless, and nothing could be found to meet the sinner's need; but because the full atonement had been made, and the value of that sacrifice then offered up remains ever the same in the presence of His Father and our God. C. E. S.

Chapter 110

S. Thoughts on Sacrifices 4: The Sin Offering

Thoughts on Sacrifices 4: The Sin Offering As we trace out different aspects of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, typified in the offerings of old, we discover different features and phases, which unfold themselves to the heart subject to God’s word, like the different features of the landscape, which open out as we pass through beautiful scenery. At every turn something fresh strikes the eye, but each point, as it discovers itself to the diligent observer of the scene, is found to be in harmony with the rest, and really needful to make the whole complete. Without it we should feel there was a want, when all the salient points of the landscape had passed before us in due order. And as the great Architect of the universe has arranged the whole in beautiful order, which His creatures, the more they search into it the more they admire and find delight in it, so He, who knows the end from the beginning, alone knew beforehand how He would glorify Himself through the death of His Son, and therefore could alone by the Spirit so direct the saints of old in their worship as to bring out at different epochs, yet in perfect order, the varying features of that one perfect sacrifice " Which taketh away the sin of the world."

These remarks are suggested by noticing the difference in the manner of presenting the sacrifices in the book of Exodus and in the book of Leviticus. In Exodus these are mentioned which concern, directly or indirectly, the congregation of Israel as a whole. The Passover, the ratification of the covenant at Sinai, the daily burnt offerings, had to do directly with all Israel; whilst the sacrifices offered up at the consecration of Aaron and his sons on their individual behalf, indirectly concerned the whole congregation, because needful ere the people could avail themselves of a divinely appointed and duly consecrated priesthood. In Leviticus we have something else, for there we read how the Lord provided for the wishes and wants of individuals. Gracious surely was this. God thought of individuals whilst He charged Himself with the welfare and daily sustenance of the whole congregation in the wilderness. Was any man’s heart filled with a sense of God’s goodness 9-He provided the way by which he might give vent to it. Was any one bowed down under a sense of sin 9--God revealed the plan by which he might be delivered from it. He would have His redeemed people to be at ease before Him. None need be straitened from an overwhelming sense of His favors-none need be overcome by the weight of his guilt, Joy of heart could be expressed, as the offerer approached the brazen altar with his burnt offering or peace offering; and there, at the same altar, the sinner could find relief as he witnessed the priest busied with his sin-offering or trespass-offering, " It shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him," was God’s mind about the burnt offering; " It shall be forgiven him" was Jehovah’s gracious declaration annexed to the law of the sin-offering and trespass-offering. Not that the blood of bulls, or of goats, could take away sins, or lay the ground on which man could have communion with his Creator; but this blood spake to God (however ignorant the offerer may have been of it) of that precious blood, the blood of His own Son, to be shed on the cross for the glorifying of the Father and the forgiveness and the justification of the sinner.

Redeemed by blood in Egypt, the people learn at Sinai that no sin could be passed over by Jehovah, God of Hosts. Holy and righteous He was, and must ever act in accordance with His

nature. What man might have been inclined to pass over or excuse, that He must take notice of. But whilst all would acknowledge that a glaring trespass could not be passed over in silence, God would teach the people that sins done in ignorance, when remembered, must be noticed, and the appointed sacrifice offered up. Where then was the need, if so inclined, to palliate or pass over as of no moment, an act of sin for which Jehovah had provided for the offender's forgiveness? How could they, if they had any just conception of God's omniscience or holiness, suppose He had not seen• it, or imagined it needed no atonement? But a consciousness of sin, and its deserts, without any knowledge of the sacrifice must only drive a soul to despair; whilst a knowledge of the way of forgiveness or the necessity of a sacrifice, would maintain in the soul a sense of God's holiness, and impart to the sinner a knowledge of His grace. For a trespass offering the animal to be brought was the same for all (5:14-6:7.) For one class of sin offerings the Lord took knowledge of the ability of the offerer (5: 1-13), and for another class the measure of his responsibility (4). If the offender was unable to bring anything out of the flock, he might draw near with two turtle doves or two young pigeons. If unable to meet the expense of the birds he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of flour. Where the sin consisted in doing anything through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord which ought not to be done, for the anointed priest, if he sinned according to the sin of the people, and for the whole congregation, a young bullock was to be offered up; for a ruler, a kid of the goats, a male was the appointed sacrifice; whilst for any of the common people, a female, a kid of the goats, or a lamb of the flock was the animal prescribed. None could select for himself what he would bring. God decided what was the suited offering, and each must conform to what He had enjoined. How could it be otherwise? The sin was against Him; the creature had acted contrary to the command of the Creator, to God therefore alone belonged the right of saying what should be offered up for the sinner to have the sense of forgiveness. But though for different classes different sacrifices were enjoined, in each case death must come in and the blood be poured out in all. Nothing less than this could do-" The wages of sin is death." The death of the Substitute must, then, take place, whether the sinner had offended through ignorance or not. Without shedding of blood is no remission; so the blood was shed, and placed where the offerer had his standing. How clearly this speaks of the sacrifice of Christ, needed for each and all, whilst it tells us of the difference of standing of the anointed priests and the ruler or common person dispensationally before God (4: 7, 17, 18, 25, 30). The proper victim selected, unblemished in person, the sinner drew near to the appointed place and killed it;, then the priest dealt with its blood, and burnt the fat and the kidneys on the altar of burnt-offering. Till death had taken place the priestly service could not begin-for the priest's work had to do with thy altar and the blood. The animal slain, the priest took of the blood, and sprinkled it before the Lord-before the wail of the sanctuary, putting some of it on the horns of the altar of sweet incense within the tabernacle, or on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, and in both cases poured out the rest at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering. What sacrifice this prefigured all may understand. As the burnt-offering and peace-offering, the other offerings in which death took place, typified the Lord Jesus who died on the cross, so did the victims offered up as sin-offerings or trespass-offerings. Those typified the Lord as He was in Himself, these latter what He was made for us. And in these sin-offerings we have a double aspect of the sacrifice-viz., the intrinsic holiness' and fragrance of the true Victim, and God's judgment on sin; for besides the death and the blood we have mention of the fat of the inwards, and the ultimate disposal of the carcass. In common with the peace-offering, the fat of the inwards was burnt on the

altar of burnt-offering (4: 31); but, differing from the ordinance of the peace-offering, the carcass was wholly consumed by the priests, independent of the offerer. The blood spoke of the life of the great sacrifice poured out to make atonement for sinners; the fat of the inwards spoke of the will, which in man's case, as evidenced by the offering, had not been subject to God; but in His case, whom we have here presented in type, was always subject to His Father. "I. do always those things which please Him" was His word when on earth. This, then, which typified His will wholly surrendered to the Father, was burnt on the altar for a sweet savor unto the Lord (4:31); for whatever spoke of Christ as He was in Himself must have been a sweet savor to the Father. But that which spoke of Him as made sin for us was differently treated, being either burnt without the camp or 'consumed by the ministering priest and the males of the priesthood. The victim, then, identified with the sinner by the laying of his hands on its head was never seen by him again. If he had sought for it he could not have found it, nor could the question of that particular sin have been re-opened; for the death of the animal had taken place, and its blood been duly dealt with. How carefully did God thus provide that the sinner's conscience should be at rest about the sin. This is God's way, and He would signify to the soul what can be effected by sacrifice. By the burning of the carcass by fire, God's judgment on sin was expressed, the fire of Ris wrath having fallen on it; but burnt outside the camp, it also typified Him who, " that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Hebrews 13:12) So, when sacrifices shall again be offered up with acceptance on God's altar at Jerusalem, the carcass of the sin-offering will be "burnt in the appointed place outside the sanctuary." Outside the camp, outside the gate, outside the sanctuary, speak of the heinousness of sin in God's eyes; but the holy character of the flesh (for it was most holy) tells of the untarnishable holiness of the sin-offering; and as God showed what sin was before Him, He also manifested, by the injunctions about the flesh, the holy nature of the antitype. If the flesh was eaten it could only be eaten in the holy place, or, as Numbers 18:10, expresses it, in the most holy place-" Whosoever touch eth the flesh thereof shall be holy;" "All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it is most holy." And none but the males of the priests could eat of it, for it was the work of a priest alone to put away forever out of sight the sin now identified with the victim. The sacrifice rightly offered up, the sinner could turn away from the altar' and retrace his steps to his tent. But how did he return? With his heart full of hopes of forgiveness, or buoyed up with the consciousness that he had done all he could to make amends? Would that satisfy the conscience? His conscience told him he had offended against God; nothing short, then, of God's assurance of forgiveness could satisfy him, and meet the requirements of the case. But that the offerer had, yet mark how he got it: not from man, not even from the priest, but from God Himself. He could leave the altar with the words, "It shall be forgiven him," sounding in his ears, and awakening a response of thanksgiving from his heart; for they were the words of Jehovah Himself on behalf of this poor sinful creature. The priest could not make more sure what Jehovah had promised; Fall that he could do was to reiterate the words as God's revelation, "it shall be forgiven him." Thus the sinner was brought to the Word of God, and thereon was to rest on a rock, which nothing could shake. He had not to wait till the morrow to know it, for it depended on the offering up of the sacrifice; yet these gracious words were not forthcoming till the blood had been rightly dealt with, and the fat of the inwards, with the two kidneys, had been burnt at the altar for a sweet savor. Had it been otherwise, it might have been assumed that forgiveness was based on something connected with 'the offerer. But the words were recorded only after all had been spoken of that was to be done, that the sinner might learn his forgiveness was based on atonement by

blood, and on that only. As soon as all had been done according to the law, these words could be taken by the sinner as Jehovah’s declaration to the burdened heart. He who formed the heart knew what it wanted, and would meet that want as soon as He righteously, could. This is always God’s way; and never do we read. of man being authorized to absolve another from his sins as before God. When it is a question of acceptance before God, or restoration of soul, He speaks by His word to the sinner, and bestows forgiveness as from Himself. A fellow-creature might tell him of it, and minister to his need, but could not bestow forgiveness, or absolve him from his sins. As priests we can intercede for one another (1 John 5:16; James 5:16), that the hand of God in government may be removed from the offender. The assembly in any one place, or those (if only two or three, Matthew 18:19-20,) acting as becomes the assembly, can forgive the sin which has called for discipline, and receive the sinner back to the table (2 Corinthians 10:1-18); but the question between the soul and God He reserves to Himself-" Who can forgive sins but God only?" stand good still. Thus the Lord appeared to Peter after He rose from the dead, but alone; afterward He publicly commissioned him to feed His sheep. This distinction between discipline on earth and the soul’s restoration to communion with God not being observed, much confusion has in consequence arisen, and men have arrogated to themselves, and assumed the power of transmitting to others an authority which no priest under the Mosaic economy ever exercised, nor the apostles in the New Testament ever claimed. There is the outward dealing with an individual in the exercise or remission of discipline, and there is the inward dealing of God with the heart. This last must always come first, if the assembly are to act in accordance with God’s mind; and what they do is to be ratified in heaven. God deals with the heart, and imparts the sense of forgiveness, consequent on confession of the sin; the assembly deals in discipline, consequent on the failure of the individual to judge himself (Matthew 18:1-35), and the remission of discipline, if rightly done, only takes place when preceded by restoration of the soul to communion with God. • In the sin-offering we have the latter brought out-God’s assurance to the sinner of forgiveness. In the cleansing of the leper we have an instance of the former; the reception, again, to the enjoyment of all rights on earth of the redeemed people, when the individual has been cleansed from that which deified. This has the character of discipline remitted-the former of sins forgiven.-C. E. S.

Chapter 111

S. Thoughts on Sacrifices: the Offerings of Cain and Abel

Thoughts on Sacrifices: the Offerings of Cain and Abel

THERE are two points of view from which we may study the lives of men, according as we place ourselves with the spectators, or with the actors. With the former we may scrutinize the conduct, and mark the consequences which flow from it; with the latter we become cognizant of the motives, and trace upwards to their source the otherwise hidden springs of action. The history of Cain and Abel afford us an illustration of this. In reading the account handed down by Moses we are placed in the position of spectators; in reading the brief notice of the history in the epistle to the Hebrews we understand the position of Abel, and learn the guiding principles of the two brothers. No antediluvian record, if any such existed, survived the flood; to revelation, therefore, we are wholly indebted for what we do possess. Fifteen centuries elapsed between the date of the writing of Genesis and that of the epistle to the Hebrews, during which the outward history (1: e. what a spectator might have recorded) of their sacrifices, was all that God had been pleased to disclose. But, when in the fulfillment of His counsels, ordained before the foundation of the world, the message of His grace went forth to all men; and the seed of Jacob had to renounce the earthly promises made to their fathers, if they would receive God’s salvation; the secret history of that day’s offerings was revealed. God unfolds truth in season. Till then its application would not have been understood, for it Concerns not Israel merely, but all men, as it speaks in language clear and loud of a sinner’s acceptance before his God. " 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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Hebrews 11:4.)

What a value God has put on this history! "By it he being dead yet speaketh." A voice then comes to us from the other side of the flood to which man would do well to give ear: and as we listen to it we can be at no loss how to understand its purport, or how to translate its language; for God the Holy Ghost has given us His divine comment on that history. So, whilst we read in Genesis of the awful wickedness to which a child of Adam can stoop, we learn in Hebrews the principle on which one born in sin can be held righteous before God. Of the sacrifices of Adam and Eve we have no record. They were created in innocence, and fell through positive transgression. Their example, then, as to sacrifices, men might plead, did not meet their case. Adam and Eve were directly answerable for their fallen condition, but we enter the world sinners from our birth. Hence the sacrifices of Cain and Abel just meet our case. For like us they were children of Adam, born in sin, inheriting by birth an evil nature. Their position is ours as children of the same father; the ground of their acceptance is the ground of ours likewise, as they possessed by natural generation, in common With us, a nature at enmity with God. Hence, on the first occasion that could arise, this question of a sinner’s acceptance before God, so intimately connected with the everlasting welfare of man was clearly raised, and the controversy definitely and plainly set at rest, as "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his Offering, but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." (Genesis 4:4-5.) A look from the Lord settled the question between them, and has taught us that the question was then settled for us.

" By faith Abel offered," &c.-Then with Abel it was obedience to a revelation from God, but how communicated it has not pleased Him to record-nor does it concern us. It is the fact of a revelation having been vouchsafed, and not the manner of its communication, we require, to throw light on Abel's actions. With him, then, what he should offer was no question of choice; he learned what God required, and brought it. Thus, at the outside of the garden of Eden, in the wilderness. of Sinai, and at Mount Calvary, we behold how in all ages God has declared what that sacrifice is which He can accept. Before the flood, as well as after it, souls to be accepted had to learn this. Yet with all the light of revelation, the accumulated knowledge of ages, and the boasted enlightenment of this nineteenth century, are not many souls even in this country in as thick darkness about the teaching of Cain's and Abel's offerings, as if that history had never been written, or God's word they had never heard of? Few there are, probably, who have never heard of Cain and Abel; but how many are there among that large class who, acquainted with the statements of Moses, have understood the meaning of that voice, which though he is dead, yet speaketh? Are we strangers in our day to language such as this-" That men may be saved in different ways, if only they are earnest and upright?" The narrowness of past generations must be overcome; the bigotry of those who refuse to divorce salvation from the atonement can no longer be endured! Are such voices from the altar of Abel or are they echoes from the offerings of Cain?

Turning to the Mosaic account we learn that on one point both the brothers were agreed; they owned that it was right for a creature to bring an offering to his God. Cain seemed as ready as Abel to yield up to the Lord something of what he possessed. There did not appear any backwardness on his part in bringing an offering to the Lord. The ground had yielded increase to reward his toil, and he was willing to present part of it to Him by whose power and goodness the earth was fruitful at all. The occasion on which they thus approached God is not mentioned. Sufficient for us is it to remark that Cain, by his offering, though he acted wrongly, condemns many a one in this day who receives favors from God, enjoys them, learns the value of them, and looks for a renewal of them each morning, without once stopping to think of the Giver, or inquiring in what way He can be approached and worshipped.

" Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof." The amount of Cain's offering has not been revealed, nor the number of Abel's sheep, but both, doubtless, drew nigh with no niggard hand: and now these two sons of Adam, born in sin, stand with their respective offerings before the Lord. Cain, doubtless, brought of the choicest of his harvest, the fattest of the fruits of the ground-beautiful sight, we may believe, for the outward eye to admire; whilst Abel, doubtless, stood with the finest of the firstlings of his flock, with their fat. Observe, there is no mention of the blood. This is in perfect keeping with the character of their service that day. Throughout the book of Genesis, it may be remarked, there is no mention of blood in connection with sacrifice to God. It is not till the redemption of the people of Israel was to be consummated, and the law to be given, " added because of transgressions," \ that its efficacy is brought out, or the blood mentioned at all. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" is a truth never to be forgotten; but on that day it was not, it would appear, a question Of sins to be forgiven, for we read not before this of a single thing that they had done wrong. The question raised was about the acceptance of a sinner, not about the remission of sins. This is an important distinction, and gives great weight to this history of Abel. It was the nature, and not the acts of that nature, that Abel's sacrifice bring into prominence. The

blood makes atonement for sins, but a nature can only cease to exist by death. Death) therefore must come in ere a nature can be put away. So `we have here the death of the firstlings, and the offering with them of their fat, without the mention of the blood. The death of the animals foreshadowed the death of the substitute; their fat, as we learn from the Levitical ritual, the perfect obedience to the will of God of the Substitute, in the inmost recesses of His nature. For, observe, it is not fat lambs that we read of but the firstlings, with their fat. Doubtless the firstlings were the best of their kind, the fattest of the flock, but that explanation will not satisfy the term "and the fat thereof." "All the fat is the Lord's," we read in Leviticus 3:16, and with the inwards, formed "the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savor." How expressive must the mention of the fat with Abel's offerings have been to the children of Israel, hearing that history for the first time probably, just when they had learned at Sinai the value of the fat in God's eyes. The mention then of the fat has a voice, and the offering of Abel a meaning which we can interpret. Cain acted in self-will in the offering he brought, Abel approached as a sinner, put the death of the substitute between him and God, and offered with the animals their fat, thus prefiguring the perfect answer within of the true victim to the will of God; as it is written of Him, " My reins also instruct me in the night seasons." (Psalms 16:7.) Abel then drew near acknowledging his need of the death of a substitute. Cain approached as a righteous man who had already a' standing before God. He ignored his condition by the fall, so was rejected; Abel owned it, offered accordingly, and was accepted. The fruits of the ground were witnesses against Cain of the fall, for the ground was cursed for Adam's sake; the dead victims likewise testified of it, for death entered the world by sin; but they spoke also of the divinely appointed way of putting away sin by the sacrifice of God's own Son. Hence " the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Neither of them drew nigh without offerings which spoke of the fall (whatever they offered must have done that); but Cain thought to set himself right with God without the death of a substitute, whilst Abel acknowledged the need of another's death ere he could stand in acceptance before God. Abel thus confessed that as far as man was concerned his condition vas irremediable, for he was a sinner; Cain manifested a disposition by his fruits to make good his standing, and miserably failed, as all must who act in the spirit in which he acted, and refuse to accept the atonement made by the Lord Jesus. Abel took the place of a sinner-a lost sinner; Cain of a soul able to maintain its ground before a holy God. Was this thought confined to the days before the flood? Is it not largely entertained still?

But, it may be asked, why were the fruits of the ground an offering God could not accept from Cain; when He afterward commanded the children of Israel to offer of their first fruits unto Him? The answer is plain. Their cases were very different. Israel, as a nation, were already redeemed, and had a standing before Him; with Cain it was the question of an unredeemed sinner's acceptance. Cain should have learned that the only ground of his standing before God was through the death of another. With Israel this had been already settled by the blood of the paschal lamb, and manifested by their passage through the Red Sea. Do we not discern the difference of these conditions in the language addressed in the New Testament to sinners and to saints? To sinners the message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." To saints the word comes, "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. (Acts 16:31. Romans 12:1.) As redeemed by blood, God looks for that from His people, which it would be presumptuous for the unsaved soul to offer.

Now the identification between the offering and the offerer comes out,-" The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Could He have accepted Abel without his offering? Impossible. Could He have accepted the offering without the offerer? Impossible. For by faith Abel offered. He manifested the obedience of faith, and so received the sure consequence-acceptance before his God. "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." He bad no need to ask his father or his mother (if they were present) whether he had been accepted, the Lord would have him learn it direct from Himself, so he could leave the place of sacrifice with his mind at rest about it. Abel knew all about it, Cain did likewise. To both was it made plain, that the one was owned as righteous that day, who had taken the place of a lost sinner, needing the death of a substitute; and Cain's conduct comes out to us in all its enormity and presumption, when we learn what Abel's firstlings foreshadowed. But how graciously did the Lord deal with Cain, when He manifested displeasure at his rejection. Was the Lord unrighteous in His dealings with the two brothers? "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?" Or, as the margin reads, " have the excellency." But to do well was to own, like Abel, what one born in sin needed. How little do men understand this? Yet, what higher or truer ground could Abel take, than simply to confess what he was? It was in this Cain had failed. Yet the Lord would not for that finally cast him off, so He added, " If thou doest not well, sin," or as is more commonly understood, a sin offering "lieth at the door:" and, if offered, his sin would be forgiven, and his position as first-born would still remain to him-" unto thee shall be his desire (1:e. Abel?) and thou shalt rule over him." Here we have the first mention of an offering. God told him what to do, but he refused to obey, and instead of the sacrifice, as pointed out, he took his brother's life. Was he desirous to secure the rights of the first-born, and so slew his brother, as others afterward could say, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him; and the inheritance shall be ours "? It may have been so, but Scripture is silent about it. One thing, however, is clear, the way of acceptance, even after he had sinned, was pointed out to him, so he was left without excuse, when he turned from the place of sacrifice, without having brought the sin offering. The Lord Would not allow him to be ignorant of what he should do, any more than Abel of the results of what he had done. Multitudes have fallen into Cain's mistake, but what the Lord told Cain He tells them. For Cain and for them a sacrifice must be offered up. But in Cain's case it was the offering up of one from the flock; in the sinner's case now, it is trusting wholly to the sacrifice of God's Lamb on the cross. How clearly then is the whole question of a sinner's acceptance shadowed forth in this brief history. How has this history spoken to the heart of the readers of these lines? If hitherto it has been read simply as the record of a by-gone age, with which we are not concerned, now may. its voice penetrate to the depths of the heart, and it be found speaking directly to each soul. We read here what Cain and Abel respectively offered; but we read in it also what men are doing in these days, and how each one should act, if desirous to be found on the same side as "righteous Abel." From that day the paths of the two brothers outwardly diverged. Abel's body was shortly afterward laid in the grave, and Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and builded a city, and called it after his son, Enoch. His posterity became famous as inventors of instruments of music, and workers in brass and iron. The flood came and obliterated all trace of his city, if it existed till then, and all trace, too, of Abel's grave; and the strains of music Cain's family had first evoked, were hushed forever into silence as the waters overflowed the earth. But there is a voice which Cain's malice could not silence, nor the overflowing waters drown; and, whilst all of Cain's race, with their arts and works, perished in the deluge, this voice still speaks to sinners, telling what they need, as Abel found, who by faith

offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, and by it, though dead, yet speaketh!-C. E. S.

Chapter 112

S. Thoughts on the Raising of Lazarus

Thoughts on the Raising of Lazarus THE history of man by nature begins with his birth, and ends with his death. Joy and festivity flow from his birth; amid the tears of his friends his history closes here. The history of Lazarus, as presented in this chapter, is the reverse of all this. Commencing with his sickness and death it ends with his life in resurrection. At the beginning of the chapter his sisters are distressed at his sickness, and weep for his death, at the close he is with them alive from the dead, and the cause of their sorrow removed. A picture then we have of resurrection. Death, the end of man s existence here, is not the end of man. That door which no mere human power can open, and which, when once it closes on its victim, seems to enclose him within its portals forever, can be pushed back, and man be set free from the grasp of death. There is a power superior to death, there is a voice which can be heard in the grave. The child of God can look forward to life beyond death, resurrection from the dead, and the closest personal communion with his Lord. Lazarus died and was buried, but he came forth from the grave, and sat at meat with Jesus in his own house, So will the sleeping saints one day rise and drink with their. Lord the wine new in the Father’s Kingdom. But, whilst we trace in the history of Lazarus the outlines of resurrection, we must remember the great difference between that of Lazarus and the hope of the sleeping saints. He came back from the grave, they will rise from it. He returned to earth, they will ascend to Heaven. He died again, they will live to die no more. So, whilst an illustration of resurrection from the dead, as living again on earth, we may see here pictured the future resurrection of the people of Israel. They will be called nationally out of their graves, the dead bones be united bone to his bone, and the nation be resuscitated at the word of the Lord. But more is met with than all this, for this history is intended in harmony with the rest of the Gospel to teach us what the Lord Jesus is, and can be, to His own; that whilst He is absent from us, we should be able to reckon on Him for all that we need. His person, His heart, His power are all three exhibited in this chapter, that His people may learn to confide in Him as one who has gauged the f (11 measure of their sorrows, and is not only able but willing to enter into them.

Perfect Man, as well as Son of God He is. The perfection of His manhood He manifested to the disciples beyond Jordan, the reality of His Godhead He announced to Martha outside the village of Bethany. The messages of the sisters moved Him not to go to Bethany, because He thought first of God’s glory; the death of Lazarus decided Him to go there, because the time for God’s glory to be displayed had drawn near. "This sickness is not unto death (1:e., death is not the ultimate object of it) but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This was a new view of death, which He, who is the resurrection, first brought for-*Ward. In death, the consequence of man’s sin, the enemy seemed to have triumphed completely. Through death, the act of God in Government towards His sinful creatures, His Son should be glorified. What an answer at once to the oft put question, Why did God allow sin to enter the world? He might have prevented it, and so manifested His power; He allowed it to enter that He might display His glory. But how? Would He triumph over the creature He had made, who is crushed before the moth? He will be glorified, not by consigning man to the grave, but by displaying to all the universe that He

can righteously raise up His saints from it

What glory will surely accrue to Him on the resurrection morning when all His saints who have died-the evidences of the devil's successful machinations against Adam and Eve-shall arise from the grave to die no more-the witnesses to all creation of the perfection of the work of His Son! To be faithful to His Word, death must be the lot of man as such; to be faithful to His Son, resurrection must be the everlasting portion of His saints. It was to all appearance a great achievement on the part of Satan to make God pronounce sentence on those he had drawn into sin; but the glory of God was displayed, when resurrection from the dead could be righteously proclaimed as the sure expectation of those who were subject to death. To set this forth the Lord re-entered Judea, and advanced to the confines of Bethany.

Met by Martha outside the village, He stands to proclaim the reality of His Godhead. Knowing something of Him, but not fully confiding in Him, she expresses confidence as to the result of His prayers. Had she really trusted Him, she would have left Him to act as He would without indicating a line to be pursued. He teaches her, and by her us also, who and what He is. True it is that whatever He asked He would receive. But she has to learn that in Himself, as He stood before her, was all Lazarus wanted. He was, He is the resurrection and the life, the resurrection for all believers who die, the life for all saints who shall be living on the earth when He comes. " I am the resurrection and the life." Martha looked for the resurrection at the last day. He who stood before her was it. Where He was present there was the resurrection. It was not a period of time that needed to elapse ere the dead could rise again,- His power, His prescence were the requisites; and, when He returns and puts forth His power, this will be gloriously exemplified. But He spoke of something new. He intimated what till then had not been the hope of God's saints-resurrection from the dead. For He here speaks only of what concerns God's children, whilst' Martha spoke of what is common to all. "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." To Satan was it permitted to wield the power of death. To the Son of God belongs the power of recovery and preservation from it, but only for those who believe on Him. By Martha all this though heard was not understood. Each time the Lord spoke to her she fell short of the truth, He would teach her; and at last she called her sister Mary, saying, "The teacher is come, and calleth for thee." Did she think that Mary would enter more fully into his meaning? That she had not penetrated it was clear, for at the grave she almost remonstrated with Him for commanding the stone to be removed. "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." What mattered corruption of the body in the presence of Him who could raise it, for of the body, not of the salvation of the soul, does He in this history speak. With Mary we have something further about the Lord unfolded. She, like Martha, accosted Him with the words, " Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But unlike Martha she fell down at His feet, and added no more. Surrounded by Jews who had come from Jerusalem to comfort them, Mary, as Martha had done, left them all for Jesus. They could condole with her, but they could not help her. What a picture is this of the emptiness of mere human consolation. Something more is wanted which Jesus only can supply. She turned, therefore, from the whole company of the Jews to the One who was still outside the village. He could comfort, and He could help; and He could show it. Man, in the folly of his heart, thinks it unmanly to weep. He who is Son of God would show He could weep with those who weep. " Jesus wept." He wept, but not because Lazarus was dead, for He was about to raise him up. He wept,

surely, as He witnessed the sorrow sin bad brought into the world. " He wept." The Jews beheld it, and said, "See how He loved him." He wept really for the living who sorrowed, and not for the dead who rested; and all present were permitted to see Him weeping, that when absent from earth, as He shortly would Le, His people *should count on His sympathy when in circumstances of bereavement like these two sisters. But He did more. What no human ear could hear, that God heard, and the pen of inspiration has recorded it, He groaned in spirit. He manifested before men how fully He could sympathize with His people in sorrow; but He entered into all its depths, and bore it on His heart before God. Not sin, that He bore on the cross; not anticipation of His approaching death, that He went through in Gethsemane; but the full sense of the sorrows sin had caused, and entailed on the children of Adam. Entering into them all, as none before Him could, He Wept before the Jews, and groaned in spirit before God. Upholding all things by the word of His power, He could yet he occupied the sorrows of two of His people, and so enter into them as to bear the whole weight of them before God. Many around them were weeping, but surely the tears He shed consoled Mary and Martha more richly than all the attention and sorrow, however real, of their friends.* The Jews and the sisters bewailed their loss. Jesus shed tears, and so manifested how really He felt for them. His heart was discovered to the sisters that day. And blessed be His name, with Him is no change. What He was He is still- "Who, in each sorrow, bears a part Which none can bear below."

(* Of the sisters and their friends we read, κλα■οντας, of the Lord ■δ■κρυσεν. Once do we read of Jesus ■κλαυσεν, when He bewailed the fate of Jerusalem. Luke 19:41.) From the entrance of the village to the grave of Lazarus they all proceeded, and there He took His place at the grave's mouth as God. Weeping as man, He could command as God. At His Word they removed the stone, hut Lazarus stirred not. All outward impediments to His leaving the grave were rolled away, yet he remained within. Man had done all he could, but Lazarus needed something more. He needed what none but the Lord could do for him-impart life to the dead body: and here something fresh meets us. The stone rolled away, language of thanksgiving was heard as they stood round the grave's mouth. This was surely something 'new in the world's history. How often, however, since has thanksgiving been mingled with weeping at the funeral of a believer. The Lord gave thanks that weeping had been heard of the Father, for the consequence would he the immediate resurrection of Lazarus. We give thanks in the knowledge of resurrection from the dead, and for the revelation of the condition till then of all the saints who sleep through Jesus. But, how fitting was it that from Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, by whose atoning work His people will be raised up from the grave, such language should first proceed.

Sleeping still in the cave, though the stone was rolled away, Jesus cried with a loud voice, " Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin." Till Jesus cried Lazarus was dead. When He cried life returned, and no impediment could hinder its full action, for with.his grave-clothes still around him he came out of the cave, and took his place once more among the living. It was no vision. They saw him, they could handle him, they all saw him free from the garments of the tomb. The power of the Lord was exerted, and he was free. For the living and for the dead the Lord was needed. The sisters could learn what He was to them in their sorrow. Lazarus proved what He could be to him who was dead. And this history meets our condition likewise. We may see what in bereavement He can be, or, if entering into death, what He will do. Whilst living His sympathies we

may often want, if we die His power we shall need to prove. He will not fail His people in sorrow, He cannot leave any of His members one moment longer than the. appointed time in the grave. -C. E. S.

S. Written Revelation

Written Revelation.

Epistolary communications are a marked feature of New Testament revelation. In the Old Testament there was comprised, under the threefold division of the law, the prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44), the whole of that portion of God's written word. By the law was meant the Pentateuch. Under the prophets the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings were classed with the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets. Under the Psalms the rest of the books forming the canon of Old Testament revelation were ranged; this portion being so called, probably, since the book of Psalms stood first in the third great division of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Old Testament we have related the history of man from the creation to the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, as far as God has been pleased to make it known, when for the first time there existed upon earth, and was seen, a people which the Lord Jehovah owned, and would have others to know were His peculiar people. To them the law was given, God's revelation of that which was suited to man in the flesh (Romans 7:5), and which was holy, just, and good. What response there was to that revelation on the part of the people of Israel, or rather how they failed to respond to it, the historical books are chiefly concerned in narrating. The failure after the death of Joshua, and of the elders which outlived Joshua, was great and general. (Judges 2:7.) The solemn warnings of Moses recounted in Deuteronomy, the earnest entreaties of Joshua a little time before his death (Joshua 23:1-16; Joshua 24:1-33), as well as the predictions of judgments, including captivity, if they continued obdurate, and which were written in the law; all these failed to make any lasting or deep impression on them.

Hence arose a new kind of ministry, called prophetic, the purpose of which was to act on the consciences of the people, to recall them to their allegiance to the Lord their God. This ministry was instituted by God, who provides the means of communicating with His people when and how He pleases. So when priesthood had failed in Israel in the person and house of Eli, the Lord commences to open up communications with Israel by prophets, at the head of whom stands Samuel (Psalms 99:6), he being the instrument especially chosen by which to communicate the divine mind to the people, after judgment had been pronounced on the house of Eli. (1 Samuel 3:20-21.) The grace of this was manifest. The failure on the high priest's part, the representative before God of the people, was not to hinder communications from God as often as occasion might call for them, whether unsought by the people, or as answers to their requests. For the prophet was not one who merely foretold the future. Rather he was one who had the mind of God, whether for that which was wanted for the present, or to reveal things future.

Both grace and sovereignty were displayed in the institution of prophets. Grace was seen, inasmuch as by such the Lord had a channel of His own selecting, by which He could still address the people, even if they should apostatise from the faith, as was the case with Israel during the prophetic ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Sovereignty, too, was displayed, since the prophetic office was not hereditary like the priesthood or the monarchy. It did not descend from father to son,

though the Lord of course was free to make use of both a parent and his child in this service if it pleased Him. An instance of this we have in the case of Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer, who reproved Jehoshaphat, as Hanani, his father, had reproved Asa. (2 Chronicles 16:7; 2 Chronicles 19:2.) But such cases, as far as we know, were rare. The office, then, not being hereditary, the Lord exercised His sovereignty each time that a prophet appeared amongst the people, a token that Jehovah had not forgotten them, nor was indifferent to their welfare, however indifferent they were to Him. Of the earlier prophets, no prophetic writings, as that term is commonly understood, have come down to us. We say, as that term is commonly understood; for certainly some of the historical books which are classed in the Hebrew canon amongst the prophets were written by men of that school. (1 Chronicles 29:29.) Yet some of them did commit revelations to writing; witness Elijah, whose message to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, is incorporated into the sacred history (2 Chronicles 21:12-15); and the prophecy of Ahijah, and the visions of Iddo the seer. (2 Chronicles 9:29.) These last, however, did not form part of the canon of Scripture, nor were intended for our instruction; for all that a prophet uttered was not always committed to writing for preservation to a future day. Of this Jonah is an example; for we learn elsewhere (2 Kings 14:25) that we have not in the work that bears his name all that he predicted, though doubtless we do possess all that the Lord saw fit to preserve to later ages.

Hence, studying their writings, we learn in what manner the prophets carried on their work, and we can trace the forbearance and goodness of God as displayed in them. For attempting to arouse the people to a sense of their failure, and of that which became them if they would avert the threatened outpourings of divine displeasure, we see how the Lord was willing, if they had responded, to have turned away His anger from the nation. How often indeed did He do that, as the psalmist has placed upon record. (Psalms 78:38.) But a time came when there was no remedy. Israel would not hear, God’s people would have none of His reproofs. As that drew near the prophetic communications were multiplied, warning the people of the coming judgments, but telling them also of the future and final blessing.

Commencing according to the common chronology with Joel, who lived in the reign of Uzziah, and going on to Jeremiah, who witnessed the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord appealed by various servants to His people; but all in vain. Hence deportations from their land had to take place. Yet even then Jehovah did not forsake them. And Ezekiel, with the captives at Chebar; and Daniel at Babylon and Shushan, were proofs that God still cared for His people, and would minister by His servants the prophets to impress on them their sins, or to sustain the heart of any that were repentant, when tasting in the bitter way that they were called to do it the consequences of their guilt and of the national unfaithfulness. After the captivity the same kind of ministry was continued in the persons of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; and the New Testament opens with prophecy bursting forth afresh from the lips of Zacharias, the father of John. (Luke 1:67.) But a new manner of dealing with the people was now to be attempted. By the ministry of John, than whom among the prophets none was greater, hearts were prepared to welcome the advent of the long-promised Messiah, the teacher for whom they had been taught to look, and to wait. (Luke 3:15; John 4:25.) At length He came, and taught the people, journeying through cities and villages, and teaching in the temple, till the time arrived for His death on the cross to take place. This leads to a consideration of the character of New Testament written revelation. The Old began with the Pentateuch, commonly called the law; the New begins with the four gospels,

describing, each in its own characteristic way, the life on earth and the death of Him in whose heart the law of God was hidden. (Psalms 40:8.) By the law God traced out what man ought to be. In the gospels we see what a perfect man is, dependant and obedient; for there was but One who has fully exemplified it. Following the gospels, comes the historical book of the New Testament, the Acts, detailing the progress of the work, in the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome, as far as God has been pleased to recount it, that book being chiefly occupied with Peter's early labours in Judea, and with Paul's missionary work among the Gentiles.

After this come the epistles, embracing those of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, the whole volume closing with the one prophetical book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, which treats of the judgment on the professing churches in apostate Christendom, and on the impenitent dead raised up for that purpose (John 5:29), and carries us on in thought to the commencement of the eternal state. (Revelation 21:1-3.) The Old Testament closed with the hope of the Lord's coming to reign, and the need of preparing hearts to receive Him, lest He should come and smite the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:6.) The New Testament carries us on to millennial blessing, when there shall be no more curse (Revelation 22:3), and to the eternal state, when there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain on earth, for the former things will have passed away. (Revelation 21:4.)

Now the character of the instruction vouchsafed us in the New Testament is very different from that which we meet with in the Old, but it is in perfect harmony with the opening books of this part of the sacred volume. God is not now making a claim on man, and telling him what he ought to do, and to be, as a creature sharing in divine mercy and goodness; but is now presenting to his eye a perfect Man, and to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ God is ministering of Christ to them. The Old Testament prophets reminded the people of the law, and endeavoured to recall them to the observance of it. The New Testament ministry is the presentation of Christ in various lights just as it was needed. And addressing, as the sacred penmen did, saints, in whose midst they were not at the moment, the written revelation of this part of the volume took the form of epistles, letters addresed to assemblies, as those at Thessalonica and Corinth; to companies of saints, as the Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians; or to individuals, and in one instance to God's ancient people. With the Lord Jesus Christ delineated in the gospels, the example for God's saints (Matthew 11:29; John 13:15; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 John 2:6), the characteristic feature of apostolic ministry is the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and truth about Him, as occasion called for it, whether arising from failure on the part of God's saints, or their lack of intelligence in the truth, or from their condition being such that the Holy Ghost could freely minister of the things of Christ for their profit and spiritual growth. The epistles to the Galatians, the Hebrews, and the Ephesians, may be cited as illustrations of these different conditions of the saints in the days of Paul. By the preaching of the gospel God was sending out a message of grace to men in the world; by the epistles God was addressing those who professedly were His people, gathered out by the gospel from all around as believers on His Son. The only exception to this is the epistle of James, addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. But the principle is in measure the same with reference to it as to all the others, in that God was addressing by it those who had a recognized position before Him as His people, once owned as such, though now for a time treated as 'Lo-Ammi,' and 'Lo-Ruhamah.' James wrote to God's earthly people; Paul, Peter, John, and Jude to those professedly Christians, described by

the apostle of the Gentiles as saints in Christ Jesus. (Php 4:21.) To saints in general John and Jude wrote; to those gathered out from the Jews Peter addressed himself; to assemblies, chiefly composed of those once Gentiles, Paul wrote, besides addressing Christian saints as such, and certain individuals as well. In this last line John alone followed him. Paul wrote letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon; John to the elect lady, or Cyria, and to his well-beloved Gaius. In all these writings God’s desires for His children come out to us. He is teaching them, whether by correcting evils which had manifested themselves amongst His saints, or by exhorting them to be faithful and patient, or by unfolding His purposes to them, and those counsels by which they were being worked out; for we are "predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." (Ephesians 1:11.) This passage explains the difference between God’s purpose and His counsels.

What grace to and interest in the saints does this character of ministry illustrate. In the Old Testament, with sinful man before Him, God gave Israel a law to show what man ought to be. In the New Testament, with the perfect man before Him, God ministers Christ to us as that which, since He is our life, we are to manifest before God, His saints, and the world. In short, it is the ministry of a Person, and not the promulgation of a code, useful, and needful to us, as that code was, and is still. (1 Timothy 1:8-10.) C. E. Stuart.

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