

WRITINGS OF R BEACON

by R. Beacon

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by R. Beacon, compiled for study and devotional reading.

57 Chapters

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S. 1Jn_1:1-4.

1 John 1:1-4.

It would be impossible in the entire compass of the New Testament to find a passage richer in vital truth, or characterised by greater sublimity than the opening verses of this Epistle. They treat of the very kernel of Christianity. The apostle speaks with equal ardour and reverence of "That which" (we note the extremely abstract way in which he writes — truly with no loss of force, but the contrary), of Him who was so precious to him. None was so fitted to proclaim this central verity as he who had "tarried" so long; into whose heart the truth must have sunk deeper and deeper with the years; who, full of love and the expression of it was nevertheless a stalwart soul, a "son of thunder," resolute to make no terms with heresy, even then budding all around. It is true he says little or nothing directly of the evil doctrines; he does what is infinitely better, and sets forth the truth as to Christ's Person in words most surely of the Holy Ghost's teaching, and this with a fulness and precision of which, I suppose, only that marvellous Greek tongue was capable. And so, from the pen of the latest apostle, we have a statement as accurate and concise as it is wonderful and profound. None can fathom these depths, truly the "deep things of God;" none would less have claimed to do so than the venerable saint whose high privilege it was to record these striking words for the comfort and edification of believers until the end.

"That which was from the beginning" — as one has said, although there is plainly an allusion to that past eternity when the Son of God was, yet both the occasion and the context point to the Incarnation. That assuredly is the "beginning" referred to here. It was the more necessary to enforce this cardinal truth that a serious heresy was afloat fathered by an Alexandrian Jew named Cerinthus, who maintained that the Christ did not descend upon Jesus till His baptism and that He departed from the Saviour before the crucifixion. This was one of the many forms of had doctrine that are summed up under the name of Gnosticism; it was of an intellectual character, whereas magic and even immorality played their dishonourable part in some of the developments of the system. The enemy of souls, then as now, had baits to suit all temperaments. No doubt all the types of error were not equally gross, though all were opposed utterly to the truth, being in fact the result of the working of the philosophic minds invariably furthest astray. And so St. John insists on the great truth that the Christ is Jesus, and that "from the beginning." This is in fact the burden of the Epistle In the Gospel the same essential truth is presented from the converse stand-point. "These (things, signs, etc.) are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ." It is the historic aspect; Jesus when presented to man, is declared to be the Christ, to be Emmanuel, God with us. Here the believer rests, incurious to dissect what must ever baffle human ingenuity. The human and the divine are indissolubly blended. Well might Athanasius say, in reference to this most sublime of mysteries, "So much we know; the cherubim veil the rest with their wings." Yet learned men continue feverishly to analyse and discuss, often with disastrous consequences to themselves and others. Doubtless such laborious effort is not confined to the Scriptures; the serious thing is that such methods should be applied to God's word; for after all, if men deny the existence of Homer, they may be wrong in so doing and probably are — yet the regret is one of

sentiment only. How otherwise with God's revelation! But I want now to call attention to a difference of tense in the original that is lost in the A.V., but which the R.V. (as also J.N.D.'s) gives with as much fidelity to the Greek as English is susceptible of. We must recollect that Greek is a very wonderful language, capable of expressing the most minute variations of meaning. Here, however, the distinction is sufficiently obvious when pointed out. It is this. The apostle says (ver. 1), "which we have heard, which we have seen." Then he adds, "which we looked upon, and our hands handled." Observe the absence of have in these two clauses. It is no idle change. In the 'have' clauses St. John is enforcing results, so to speak. He means that at the time of writing he and his brother apostles heard and saw, because they had heard and seen. Then he is carried back to the past, to those "sinless years," as the poet says, "that breathed beneath the Syrian blue," and he lovingly tells of what he had been privileged to enjoy when his Lord was on earth. That is the force of the different tenses* as every scholar knows. Thus we have first his insistence on that which abides (akekoamen and heorakamen); and then he confirms it all by telling of the past. In short, we have first a statement of doctrine, then one of history.

{*The perfect and the aorist.}

Again, "We have seen with our eyes" (heorakamen) is the sight that results in knowledge; but the words "we looked upon" (etheasametha) imply gazing on with rapt contemplation, as one has said. How perfectly suited each word is to its office must be abundantly clear to the intelligent believer. Talk of the perfection of classical authors! It is nothing compared with that of God's word — at least the incomparably greater importance of the latter throws into stronger relief the nicety of the diction. But there is more. In verse 2 we have a combination of both methods; "for," says the apostle, "the life was manifested" in the historic past (ephanerothe), and then there is more doctrinal insistence, and again he says, "we have seen it." Another interesting distinction is, that the word occurring in vers. 2 and 3, and rendered 'show' and 'declare' in these verses respectively (so fond were the excellent Revisers of King James's day of varying their rendering of the same Greek term, in accordance with H.M.'s suggestion, some say,) is different from the word also rendered 'declare' in verse 5. They are both compounds of the same simple verb. But in verses 2 and 3 the word implies 'declaring on the authority of another.' How admirably chosen the term is, in such a context, is most evident. But the suitability is no less apparent in verse 5 (beyond the scope of these remarks, which were to be limited to verses 1-4), for there solemn asseveration is implied. The first verb is apaggellomen, the second (in ver. 5) is anaggellomen.

Lastly — in verse 3 we have again what I have ventured to call the doctrinal insistence, "we have seen," "we have heard," — the order of ver. 1 being reversed. How striking that the apostle should refer to the abiding knowledge, gained by seeing,* three times in three verses! For three times he says, heorakamen ("we have seen"). Repetition is either idle or momentous, a sign either of a feeble writer, or of colossal strength. If the apostle once only tells of the rapt adoring gaze, his triple insistence on the absoluteness of his knowledge is the more significant. This must suffice for an attempt; to furnish further light to the English reader on one of the most treasured passages in the N.T. If such close scrutiny appeals specially to the scholar, the truth enshrined must delight every simple Christian. R.B.

{*The sight of faith doubtless.}

S. 1Jn_5:20.

1 John 5:20.

It is most interesting to note that the Apostle in this wonderful verse uses two different words for knowing. The first is, as all scholars are aware, allied to the Greek verb for seeing. It therefore implies ("connotes" is the technical term) the latter act, and, in fact, literally and ultimately *oidamen* (the word with which the verse opens) means "we have seen." It is the perfect tense, invariably, however, translated as at present ("we know") which gives the practical force of the expression. It is also the tense so habitually used by St. John, and exactly answers to the intention of the writer who, as guided by the Holy Spirit, loves to present in brief and telling phrase, and with the calm born of divine assurance, the great cardinal verities of our most holy faith. Again and again in his writings, pre-eminently in this Epistle (cf. 1 John 1:1-10), we are struck by this wonderful reiteration. But this "we know," with which the verse opens, becomes even more striking as we read on, and are told of the understanding given to us "that we may know (*gignoskomen*), where we have the growing knowledge that results from growing understanding. This second word means "to get to know." Having had our spiritual vision illuminated (*oidamen*), we go on to know more and more. Our fathers know more than the young men, the young men than the babes, though the little children (*paidia* as distinct from *teknia* which applies to all) know the Father. And here it is incumbent on me to point out that in 1 John 2:13, the apostle uses the second word (*gignosko*) saying to the, little children, "Ye have got to know" (*egnoskate*) — needless to say with perfect propriety. How beautiful to see that, short as had been their spiritual life, the babes had got to know the Father. But this is true on the lower plane of nature, is it not? The little child knows its father's heart. Thus all is divinely perfect. Talk of the precision of Plato or Aristotle. Here is what transcends all. And, blessed be God, it is neither the vain imaginings, beautiful as they often are, of Plato, nor the colder, if intellect-fortifying, logic of Aristotle; but, while based on the soundest, yea, on Divine logic, we have what feeds inexhaustibly the renewed heart and mind. But there are other points to notice, and of weightiest moment. The general reader is naturally unaware that in the opulent tongue in which the New Testament was written there are two words for "true." When the thought is merely of what is true in fact, the word is *alethes* but there is a fuller term, frequently found in the Johannine writings, which, as the late Bishop Westcott lucidly points out, means ideally true, rising up to the highest conception of truth. In scripture, of course, it is a divinely-transfigured word, as far above what the loftiest imagination of the most gifted poets has conceived, as their genius towers above the capacity of the average mind; and a great deal more so. It is the divine ideal we have here. And we note that the same word is used by our Lord of Himself. "I am the true vine" (*he ampelos he alethine*).

And, lastly, let us note the application, within the limits of a single verse, of the term *alethinos* both to the Father and the Son. We are given an understanding that we may get to know Him that is true. Clearly we are to understand this of the Father whom the Son reveals. But immediately after, the apostle writes: "And we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ." I recollect years ago the late Mr. W. Kelly strikingly comparing (though in reference to an earlier passage in this

same Epistle) this marvellous shading off from One Person of the Trinity to another with the baffling and somewhat bewildering nuances, beautiful though they be, of shot silk. Only the illustration must fall infinitely below the thing illustrated, and in the word of God there is no baffling and no bewilderment for him who simply believes. R.B.

S. A Word on Joh_14:23

A Word on John 14:23. The faith of the believer rests on no hypothesis, but on the sure word of God; moreover he "hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). But it has frequently struck one that any thoughtful mind, starting merely with the statement that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, must see how fully and minutely all scripture corresponds with it. Nothing, it would seem, could hinder such a conclusion but the sad fact, of which the Bible also assures us, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. For, assuming the Divine Personality of our Lord, we find every act, every word of His, to be in keeping with His claims. On the one hand there is in Christ a supreme dignity infinitely above man; on the other, a lowliness and accessibility that are the perfection of human nature absolutely free from stain.

Now not the least convincing of these accumulated evidences of our Lord's Divinity are often found in the simplest of His sayings, where the truth as to His Person is not the less palpable because it is implied rather than stated in so many words. Direct statements of His Sonship are numerically overwhelming; but not less weighty are the hidden touches, if we may so call them, as in the verse under consideration. "We will come unto him and make our abode with him." Here the Lord couples Himself with the Father in the most striking way. He does so of course because He could also say, "I and My Father are one"; but, as remarked above, there is in the text in John 14:1-31. the peculiar cogency that attaches to implicit statements. And this is the more noteworthy when we reflect that our Lord Jesus never couples Himself with His disciples when it is a question of approaching God. When He gave Peter instructions for obtaining the stater for the temple service money, He graciously said, "Lest we offend them" (the collectors of the tribute); but after His resurrection, and when the disciples were at the impending outpouring of the Holy Ghost about to enter a higher sphere of blessing, our Lord says, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God" — never, as has been well remarked, "Our God." How could He? The practical truth conveyed in this wonderful verse is well-known to the readers of the Bible Treasury. Undoubtedly the making it good in the soul is another matter. We know the condition, and that in order to it Christ's word must be cherished, not isolated fragments, but His word in all its far-reaching import. But it will be so kept, if and as we love Him. For so the Saviour assures us in this very verse. However the immediate thought of the writer is the implicit doctrine of the incarnation in the word "we." And at which shall we marvel most, the grace that led to such condescension, or the majesty of Him Who uttered these divine words? R. B.

S. An Inspired Prayer

An Inspired Prayer Hebrews 13:20-21

There are many points of profound interest in these well-known verses. In the first place they embody a prayer, and, what is more, an inspired prayer, so that we may take up the words with the fullest confidence, knowing that we are but echoing God's gracious will concerning us. Moreover, in this prayer there are, needless to say, no superfluous words, and every word tells. Sublime and all-important doctrine is linked with gracious supplication. Such is the general scope of the passage. The next thing to note is the character under which God is spoken of. He is called the God of peace. That is how we are directed specially to think of Him in this prayer. We have other epithets elsewhere. God is spoken of as the God of hope (Romans 15:13), the God of love and peace (2 Corinthians 13:11), the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 3:1-18), the God of patience and consolation (Romans 15:5), and again the God of peace (Romans 15:33). Incidentally it may be remarked that God is never called the God of faith. Nor does it demand any special spiritual judgment to see that with. no propriety could such a term be applied to the Infinite, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent. It is different with the other characterisations. For the God who bids us be patient exceeds in patience, the God who bids us love is Himself love, and what can compare with His peace and His joy, yea, with His hope — His gracious expectation, if we may reverently so put it? But faith — ah, that applies to the creature only, who without it cannot please his Creator. But this by the way. Here, in the verses before us, we are directed to think of "the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep" of the peace that that gracious Shepherd made by the blood of His cross.

It is interesting to note the order of the words, and hence of the thought, in the original. "Now the God of peace, who brought again from among [the] dead the Shepherd of the sheep" — that is how it runs. Then the apostle says, "the great One," for there are under shepherds; and finally, after saying "in virtue of [the] blood of an everlasting covenant," he adds "[even] our Lord Jesus" (ver. 20).

Now this collocation of the words plainly shows that the Shepherd character of the blessed Lord is the most prominent thing here. The sweetness of this is too apparent to need any labouring of the point. "The good Shepherd" (for all who have any acquaintance with Greek are aware that the adjective is emphatic by a device that is one of the numerous felicities of that most admirable tongue) gave His life for the sheep; "the great* Shepherd" is brought again from among the dead by the God of peace. Then the apostle tells us that the great Shepherd is, needless in one sense to say, the Lord Jesus. But His lordship is not the most salient feature of the passage. Yet this is a truth of which all genuine believers are rightly most tenacious. "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" (John 13:13), said the Saviour just before He suffered. Even so; but now one aspect of truth, now another is in strong relief in the inspired word, and that according to the manifold (polypoikilos literally, variegated) wisdom of God.

{*The term in the original for "chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4) is not a parallel expression, being a compound word.} The expression "God of peace" naturally suggests the well-known passage in Philippians about the "peace of God." The former, of course, goes further, intimating that, as we have virtually said, peace is so characteristic of God that He can be called the God of peace. But the latter phrase — the "peace of God" — (and how much more is it than a mere phrase, describing, as it does, a blessed reality) is strikingly beautiful. The other day I was reading an article in one of the most outstanding of weekly journals, called "Gentle Bigotries," and some verses were quoted descriptive of the gentle bigotry (or rather what would seem to a careless outsider as bigotry) of one who must have been a saint of God. It spoke of her as living in a small paradise of her own, and so safely housed that "Nor day nor night had power to fright The peace of God that filled her eyes."

What more admirable description could be given of a believer in Christ, having "peace with God" (Romans 5:1), letting "the peace of Christ" rule in the heart (Colossians 3:15), and "filled with all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13)? And it struck one that this most desirable end must have been attained because the God of peace was working in her that which was well-pleasing in His sight. But to proceed. We read next of the power in virtue of which our Lord was brought again from the dead. It was "by the blood of an everlasting covenant." Oh, the amazing potency of these words, of whose profound meaning we can, as it were, but touch the fringe! The readers of this magazine, less than most perhaps, need to be reminded of the abiding efficacy of that sacred, that cleansing tide, the precious blood of Christ. But none can fathom the counsels of eternity. There are, as we know, somewhat parallel passages in the New Testament, equally sublime, equally unfathomable. Elsewhere the Saviour is spoken of as "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4), even as "by the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14), where the power of the blood of Christ is strikingly enforced. It purges the conscience; it lays the basis of an eternal covenant of another day, into the antecedent blessings of which we meanwhile are brought who now believe. And in the power of that blood so charged with blessing for man did God raise our Lord from the dead. Undoubtedly, also, the Lord ascended by His own inherent right and power. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). And more than this. The corn of wheat might have abode alone, and never died at all. But then, where had we come in? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). A word on the expression "make [you] perfect." There are various senses, as we know, in which perfection is spoken of in the New Testament. There is perfection of standing, which is absolute, and the same for the humblest believer as for the apostle Paul, there is the sinless perfection that cannot obtain while we are here below, and there is at least one other perfection, that of full growth, which would seem to be alluded to in the passage we are considering. But the term perfect (teleios) or "full-grown," is really not used in our text. "Make perfect" is here but one word, and might be rendered "adjust." For that is the literal force of the word, shading off, as here, to the idea of making complete or perfect. The same word is found in Galatians 6:1, where it is rightly rendered "restore" (see Authorised and Revised Versions, and also J.N.D.'s). There is implied, as one has said, the supplying of whatever has been defective, the repairing of whatever has been decayed. And all this, of course, for the paramount reason that God's will must be accomplished in His children.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the word rendered "working" is not the same as in the familiar passage in Philippians, where we read that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Php 2:13). There God is said to be the One who energises the believer, the Holy Spirit being, of course, the power. Here the word used is that which habitually means to create, and the result, rather than the process, seems to be the leading thought of the apostle. Each word is surely appropriate in its place. And it is well to note also that even here in Hebrews, where, as it appears, results are the chief point, yet the means cannot be left in the background. It is "through Jesus Christ." And so with a due ascription of praise to Him who is Lord of all ("to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen"), the beautiful prayer closes. R.B.

S. At The Feet of Jesus.

At The Feet of Jesus.

Luke 8:35.

There is no other place of repose. It is not necessary to have been the victims of demoniacal possession to realise this; it is sufficient to have known the "plague of our own hearts." Undoubtedly the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to bring any of us to our "right mind," whether the germs of evil, that are innate in fallen humanity, have borne much or little fruit. But the contrast is all the more striking when the sweet and divine peace found at the feet of the Saviour succeeds a state of wildest tumult and unrest, as in the case of the Gad arene demoniac. Singular that those who witnessed this blessed change in his condition should have felt an alarm of which we read nothing in connection with his previous ravings and violence. It is true that a feeble realisation of divine power may very probably have mingled with less worthy feelings; still it stands written that not lawlessness but grace alarmed them most. The two non-apostolic evangelists give a very vivid picture of the incident, Luke being in this case no less graphic than Mark. In Matthew there are two demoniacs mentioned because two was adequate testimony. The story however is more compressed, though each narrator tells of the fear that fell on the people of the place, and how they were so blind as to beseech the divine and beneficent Healer to depart out of their coasts. What a strange thing is the heart of man!

It has been surmised that moral depravity may have left the spiritual being of the unhappy man open to this terrible possession by evil spirits. The weakening of the will, that usually accompanies excess, would make him all the easier prey. There may be analogous cases now, though in a less marked degree. For no doubt when the grace of God was being manifested in an outward sort, such that even the natural mind could appreciate it, the corresponding power of evil would make a more desperate effort. Such Satanic agency was, at least in its more violent exhibitions, of short duration. The heathen oracles also are understood after the incarnation to have sunk into ignoble silence, as if they were compelled to hide abashed from that great and holy Presence. No doubt there had been a mixture of chicanery and deception in it all, and sometimes the priests took refuge in the ambiguities of syntax in framing their replies in order to cover their ignorance. Still it cannot be doubted that there was more involved than human cunning and craftiness. The true Light came to destroy these and all the works of the devil, and the darkness was already passing, as it is still passing — at least from the eyes of those who believe. Alas! in some it seems increasing. This must be where Christianity is rejected, as it characterises the abodes of the heathen. Happily it is also true that there never were so many real Christians probably as are now on this earth.

If it be sadly true that, where Christ works, Satan works, the converse is also blessedly true. In the story of the Gadarene demoniac we have a most striking exemplification of this. The man was seated, who had been wildly rushing to and fro, clothed after being naked, in his right mind after his wretched body had been the tool of a legion of demons. What a change the blessed Lord had

wrought! The devil is always contrasted with the Son, as the world and the flesh with the Father and the Holy Spirit. R. B.

S. Brief Meditation on Mar_9:1-50.

Brief Meditation on Mark 9:1-50. The division of the Bible into chapters and verses, which is said to have been accomplished by the learned editor R. Stephens "inter equitandum," while he was journeying from place to place, may not be ideal, and is certainly unfortunate here and there; but no one can question the felicity of the arrangement that makes Mark 9:1-50 a separate chapter. It is a perfect and majestic whole, peculiarly vivid in this the most graphic of the four Gospels. It has been called a picture of heaven, earth, and hell. It is full of divine dignity and mystery, of attractive beauty and grace too as also of awful solemnity in the closing verses. One only shines out in His unapproachable perfection whether on the Holy Mount or on the troubled plain. Of the rest, those other than the Saviour who come before us, one only wins our Lord's marked approval. It was not one of the twelve. On the contrary they were hasty to resent what they doubtless considered the irregular activity of the man who cast out demons in the Saviour's name. A certain mistaken zeal for their Master very probably mingled with their motives; but they had to learn, as we have, how constantly the flesh is prone to act on the side of exclusiveness or of licence. And who may presume to say which is the graver fault always?

It is interesting to note that here it is John who voices the feeling of the disciples in forbidding the man. Usually, as we know, it is Peter who is spokesman, which may have led some to overlook the energetic character of the former. The truth is that the apostle John, like all who really love much, had a very ardent and strenuous nature. No weakling was he, nor was it in words of gentle irony that our Lord called James and John "Sons of thunder." It was well to be a Boanerges. The Lord, who had endowed them with their several ability, and given them a gift suitable to that ability, sealed it, so to speak, when (see Mark 3:17) he gave them that striking appellation. I was no word of reproach, as a well-known writer (Mark Guy Pearse) suggests. Who could thunder as Christ Himself? He always thundered at the right moment; the disciples, like ourselves, and like John on this occasion, at the wrong time. Had it been a question of the Lord's Person, had the man, instead of casting out demons in Christ's name, ascribed the Lord's expulsion of demons to Beelzebub, this had been another thing. For he that is not with Christ, where His divine glory is assailed, — ay, and His human perfectness likewise — is against Him, and scatters abroad (Matthew 12:30). But here it was no question of disloyalty to Christ, but rather of one, who was true to the light, no doubt the growing light, he had, and who, we may confidently believe, was afterwards brought into a place of greater nearness practically. But mark how no outward connection with Christ or correct ecclesiastical standing in itself conveys intelligence or place, at least until self is judged. Often a less intelligent soul, at least one less enlightened, is the more devoted saint. It should not be so, no doubt; but there is always the danger of being puffed up by knowledge, whereas love builds up. In no wise is a slight intended on the importance of true ecclesiastical position; but it is well not to forget the privilege of owning all that is according to Christ.

Yet this is to dwell perhaps too prominently on a particular point to be in place in a brief meditation on the chapter generally. First, then we have the scene of dazzling glory to which the three chosen

disciples were admitted, which they so feebly apprehended, and which so little influenced them, that not only did they subsequently grievously misapprehend the Lord's mind (ver. 38), but actually disputed one with another who should be greatest — clearly a lower descent still. How great the contrast between the Master and the disciples! The transfigured Lord in His robes of light speaks of His approaching death, of His Exodus (see Luke 9:1-62); the disciples, eager for a little brief authority, discuss who shall be leader, amid the ordinary conditions of their humanity. But we have another picture. The Lord has come down from the mountain, and we note a circumstance recorded by St. Mark alone of the synoptists, "Straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him" (Mark 9:15). It would seem that the glory still lingered about the Lord's face. Not only is this a probable explanation of the eagerness of the crowd to approach our Lord, but it points an exquisite contrast with what occurred of old when the great Lawgiver descended from Mount Sinai. Then Moses had to veil his face. It was law, not grace; and the people, at any rate, could not look upon that searching radiance. Here they are irresistibly attracted; but what a scene for the Saviour after the brief sojourn on the mount! No longer the calm intercourse of the Christ with two chosen witnesses, one of whom His own hand had buried, the other raised without dying, but a scene of dire distress. And the Saviour is graciously at hand to supply the need, typical of what He will do when He ushers in the millennial day. Then His own will haply be less impotent than they showed themselves now. For, while full of their own consequence, they were powerless to heal the sufferer who had been brought to them. But the Lord is there, back again in the scene of sorrow and distress. Let us listen to the gracious words that fell on this occasion from His lips.

Evidently the father of the demoniac comes next to the man who cast out demons in Christ's name. At first it is true he seems not to have been sure if our Lord could heal his son. The case was of long standing (Mark 9:21), and seemed inveterate; but our Lord at once tells him that the real question is, not whether He can heal, but whether the father can believe. That was where the doubtfulness lay. Then the man makes his well-known confession. How grateful to the Lord who had just before deplored the unfaithfulness of that generation! May we not say it must have been more acutely painful to Him as just coming down from the mount of His transfiguration? For, needless to add, He estimated at its true worth the momentary interest of the multitude. He knew what was in man. A word only on the closing verses. The most solemn words as to future punishment are the Saviour's words. The thrice repeated refrain is indeed, as one has said, a "solemn dirge"* What writings of philosopher or sage can compare with these burning sentences! Then we have two verses of the deepest importance, setting forth much vital truth under symbolic terms, the fire which must salt every child of Adam, now or hereafter; the salt that typifies the preserving power of the grace that delivers and saves. R.B.

S. Brief Thoughts on 1Ti_1:15, and 2Ti_4:6-8.

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

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

If we did not know the converting power accompanying the grace that bringeth salvation, we might wonder how he who calls himself the chief of sinners, when he speaks of the beginning of his course, can at the close look forward to a crown. It was not self-confidence; for while the righteousness spoken of in the above scriptures is the practical righteousness of a saint, yet it is the language of one who rejoices in Christ, Who alone gives the assurance of salvation. And that blessed assurance is not because of the saint's own faithfulness, but through faith in Him Who has accomplished eternal redemption, Who thereby delivers the believer from all fear. For His perfect love casts out fear, and sets him free to devote himself with all his energy to the service of the Lord, that when he is arrived at the finishing of his course he may be able to say, I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. This righteousness is not that which every believer is made. Believing in Christ he is made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:1-21), and also his faith is imputed to him for righteousness (Romans 5:1-21). But it is the practical righteousness of a faithful believer. Every believer may rejoice in the perfect righteousness with which he is clothed and in which he stands before God, even the righteousness of faith in Christ; but not every one can say, I have fought the good fight. It is well, by the sustaining and persevering grace of God Who never leaves him, if he may say, I have kept the faith, that is, if grace keeps him in the faith. Paul could say both.

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

Conversion and redemption are indissolubly joined in the grace that brings God's salvation to us; for he who is saved is converted, and he who is converted is also redeemed, and we so speak and

understand. Nevertheless conversion and redemption are two things distinct from each other, inasmuch as redemption is done for us, a work outside of us, on the cross, but the work of the Holy Spirit precedes and follows within us. The Spirit of God works in all believers because the blood of Christ has washed away all their sins, to be moulded and fashioned according to the will and purpose of God. There is no difference in the relative standing of every believer before God, all are redeemed, all forgiven, all made the sons of God through faith in Christ. But in the actual condition, seen even in the sons, what lack of faith! What failure! What worldliness among those who profess separation from the world! But thanks be to God, the blood abides, and in spite of failures and hardness of heart, the Holy Spirit in us works till all is judged morally and we transformed according to the mind of God. To receive the crown is not the special privilege of an apostle. There is a crown laid up for every believer to be given at the appearing. The word of God places it in view now, as an incentive to endurance and perseverance whatever may be the roughness and sorrow in the way between the two termini, and with it as an encircling scroll — let no man take it. For while the Lord Jesus as Saviour gives salvation to the chief of sinners at the beginning of the course, He holds the crown, as the righteous Judge to be given in due time, and this in connection with the saint's responsibility. But the saint, the believer, is converted and redeemed before his new responsibility. There is the responsibility of the unconverted man (a fearful account he will have to render), yet that is not here, but the believer's, now that he is a new creature. For the grace of God appears first bringing salvation to the lost and dead; then when alive again by the quickening voice of the Son of God, that grace teaches the believer to deny all ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in hope and to look for the appearing of His glory (Titus 2:1-15). To deny all ungodliness, to live soberly and righteously, is with many the sum-total of Christianity, reducing it to the level of duty. Not so. For here godliness is added, and no law or commandment ever made a man godly. It might make him apparently righteous (provided that temptation was not too strong) but never godly, and this is joined to the looking for (i.e. waiting) His glorious appearing, that is, the appearing of His glory; when that comes, righteous retribution and judgment also come, There can be no completeness without looking for the appearing. This is not possible but for him who loves it unless as a criminal condemned looks for the execution. To live godly, and in heart to love His appearing is the normal condition of every believer — to love it and live in the light of it. Is this our condition? Are we pressing onward with undeviating step, amidst sorrows and trials, hastening (as Peter says) the coming of the day of God?

1892 137 What a difference between Saul of Tarsus as he left Jerusalem, and the same Saul as he entered Damascus! He left Jerusalem breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, he entered Damascus a blind helpless man, led by his companions, and his physical condition emblematical of his mental, his rage and his purpose completely overthrown. He was a changed — a converted roan, though he might not have had any peace or joy till Ananias came three days after, during which he neither ate nor drank. Not until the scales fell from his eyes could he rejoice in full salvation. Then he arose and washed away his sins, and his baptism was just the symbol of his new standing before God. The Lord Jesus met him on the way and takes him captive, he was the most jealous, and the fiercest, and the leader, of that band of persecutors; such is the one that the Lord takes, and the great enemy cannot prevent it. The chief of sinners, of persecutors, becomes the chief of disciples. The leader of the band, armed with authority to bind and slay all the disciples whom he could seize, becomes the leader of the band that bowed to the Name of Jesus. What an instance of the converting power of the grace of God as manifested in

Christ! The glory of God appearing causes Saul to exclaim, Who art Thou, Lord? The voice out of the glory could be no other than the voice of Jehovah; yet that voice said, Why persecutest thou Me? Saul thought he was doing God service (John 16:2) and is astonished and confounded to find himself fighting against God; he finds himself as a criminal caught red-handed in his crime. He is overcome, fettered hand and foot, henceforth to be the Lord's bondman. The Lord Jesus appeared. Saul saw and heard, and at once says, Lord! Who can tell the thoughts and feelings of Saul who, when cast to the earth, heard the words, "I am Jesus?" What was the visible effect on him? The discovery that he had been fighting against God prevented his taking food for three days. But afterwards the revelation of the Son in him (Galatians 1:16) filled him with zeal and energy to announce the glad tidings, yea, far more than the zeal and energy he had shown in opposition to the disciples; for he had been as he says, exceedingly mad against them. The words, "I am Jesus," and the remembrance of the bright and heavenly vision, were always dominant in Paul's mind; as he said, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; in his Epistle he takes his stand as an apostle upon this ground, a called apostle, by the will of God, not appointed by man. It was the Lord Who appointed him, He Who speaks and calls from heaven (Hebrews 12:25). And it is from heaven that He has sent the Holy Spirit to call and form His church. So that now emphatically every sinner is called by the word of the Son of God, every saint is called to be a member of the church of God, and every servant is called, as it were, by a mandate from heaven, after the pattern of the call of Saul of Tarsus, not by the Lord appearing in the glory of heaven, but by His own voice to the heart. It was a similar display on the day of Pentecost, when the power of the Lord was made manifest in the cloven tongues of fire. Although there be not such visible manifestations now, the power and the reality is essentially the same and ever abides; and He still calls and adds to the church and will until it is complete. The voice of one crying in the wilderness called Israel to repentance. It is the voice of the Son of God from heaven that quickens dead souls and calls them to sit in heavenly places. His voice from the glory Saul heard, and it changed him from a bitter enemy into a devoted and loving servant. If the called ones now are destined for heavenly glory, what more fitting or better way than the calling them out from among Jews and Gentiles by His own voice?

Here it is not Jesus saying, I am Jehovah. Impossible for Saul to doubt that it must be Jehovah's voice out of that vision of brightness. But is Jehovah saying, I am Jesus? Both essentially and divinely true; but the latter may be the more emphatic form. Assuredly it was the exact and perfectly suited way to reach the conscience and heart of Saul. It was in this way that the Son was revealed in him, in this way was he prepared for becoming the great apostle of the church. That "God was manifest in flesh," and that Jesus is the Son of the living God, are the two forms of truth as above, that is, Jesus saying, I am Jehovah, and Jehovah saying, I am Jesus. Upon this the church is built. To Israel it was prophesied that to them a child should be born, a son given, and one of His glorious names should be the mighty God. This was their hope and expectation (i.e. of the righteous remnant) in the darkest time. And they spake often one to another, they feared Jehovah, they hoped and expected; and the Mighty God will come and make up His jewels, and these godly ones shall be numbered among them (Malachi 3:16). But Messiah on the earth is the hope of Israel. The hope of the church is to be with the Lord Jesus in the heavenly glory. When the Lord Jesus was here on the earth and presented to the Jew (to Israel) as their promised Messiah, His words and His works constantly asserted and proved that He was the Son foretold by the prophet, and that He was the Mighty God. What greater proof than the healing of the palsied man

(Matthew 9:6)? No greater assertion of divine power, or of His Godhead during His life and ministry. It was the same power that healed the paralytic, as raised the dead Lazarus. His own resurrection is the greatest of all, and is declared by God as that which declares Him to be the Son of God. But this was after the Jew had rejected Him. The proof that He was the mighty God, had been sufficiently given before in His mighty works.

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

For, now, we are not called to know Christ after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:1-21) but as the risen Lord in heaven. In the first three Gospels it is Jesus the Messiah presenting irrefragable proofs by His teaching and by His miracles that He was the promised Son, the Mighty God, Whom the chosen few heard and believed. To Saul and through him to the church, it is the Mighty God saying, I am Jesus. The special point for Israel is to believe their Messiah is God. For the church it is to know that God was in Him, that He Who in the beginning was with God and was God did also become flesh and dwell among men, the First-born of all creation, but yet more, as risen the First-born from the dead to be Head of the Church. The one truth is the converse of the other. Both together, what a Divine reality, both for the glory of God, and for the salvation of man!

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

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

1892 154 In many cases it is harder to suffer than to do; and therefore it may be that endurance is more prominent in New Test. writings than zealous activity; but both patience in suffering, and energy in doing, are characteristic of the faithful disciple. And the sphere for the exercise of faith, hope, and love, is measured by the suffering and the doing appointed by the Lord. This patience, yea pleasure, in suffering for the Lord's sake, this zeal in His service, marked and distinguished Paul all the way from 1 Timothy 1:15 to 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

How soon he felt the reproach of Christ! How soon he was tested as to the reality of the change! His former friends seek his life, and he escapes by being let down in a basket through a window over the city wall. Imagine proud Saul, avoiding his foes in this ignominious manner! But whether from friends (who if they become enemies are generally the most bitter) or from idolatrous mobs in heathen cities, or from fanatical and murderous persecutors in Jerusalem, always and everywhere he was content to bear all things for Christ's sake. None of these moved him. He had seen the Lord, and every thing else was dross. His companions with him had also fallen to the earth and were overpowered by the brightness of the light, and, for the time, could not either hear or see (Acts 9:7, Acts 21:7, Acts 27:14). They all fell, but the men with Saul soon recovered, rose and stood, and heard the sound, but not the words. Saul heard the words, but lay on the ground till the Lord bade him "Rise, and stand upon thy feet" (Acts 26:16). They heard the sound, but could not distinguish the words; it was not intended that they should. Saul both saw and heard (though the effect was to blind him for three days), as he says, "Have I not seen the Lord?" and "last of all He appeared to me also." And when Ananias came, he says, "the Lord that appeared to thee." Such was the effect of the heavenly vision that, not giving heed to any caution, the result of human prudence, he went straightway into the synagogues in that city, the very centre and stronghold of Jewish enmity and pride, and there he preached that Christ is the Son of God — this to the Jew, and to the Gentile — that God was manifest in flesh, and has brought salvation for all. As an apostle he was a prominent object for the shafts of the enemy; and tells Timothy in this same epistle, wherein he rejoices beholding the crown, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra." But song these may be discerned some of those sufferings, yea, and graces too, which are or maybe the common lot of all. There are patience and longsuffering for any with more or less of persecution in some shape. But there were trials and sufferings special to him as an apostle, and by which to the Corinthians he proves his call to the apostleship, that his doings and sufferings were so great that he came not a whit behind the very chief of them, that he was in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. He was nothing behind them in all these things. Then he adds to the list of sufferings, for he particularises, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned [Acts 14:1-28 : The three towns, Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, have a prominence among Gentile cities in the persecutions of Paul], thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep, in journeyings of ten, in perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

All these things were the result of his having seen the heavenly vision on the road to Damascus. The word "I am Jesus" so filled his heart that to him to live was Christ; it not only dominated but eclipsed every other thought, The power of Rome made him think of Christ the power of God, the philosophising Greek turned him to Christ the wisdom of God. The furious persecutors among his "own countrymen" only made Christ the more precious to him; for if they threatened his, life it was his to say not only to live is Christ, but to die is gain. How could death turn him aside? Whether as a believer simply, or as an apostle, it mattered not what obstruction lay in his course, he pressed onward to the mark set before him. There was the crown in view. It mattered not by what means he might attain the prize, "if by any means": not that he was not assured of it, but that he was content to suffer now, certain of the crown in that day. Whether as an apostle, or as an ordinary Christian, the devoted bondman spending and being spent, or like a humble, unknown disciple, he pressed on toward the mark. Let the pressure from without be what it might, there was the endurance of faith and confidence. If there were no visible way of escape, he knew that he was not entirely shut up; he might be perplexed but not destroyed; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed. Nay, he was more than a conqueror, and was anticipating the overcomer's crown. But if our pathway between the two termini is not so prominent as his, nor so rough and stony, our fight not so valiant, yet we set out from the same starting point, and each on to the end to receive the crown appointed for us. Such as Paul can say that the crown is laid up for him, and to such as him, the Lord will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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

Yet the looking forward is not to the saints' appearing, but His; because when He will take His kingdom and reign, every enemy will be his footstool, the groans of creation will cease, all be delivered from the bondage of evil and corruption, wickedness no longer triumph, Satan no more enthrall, and from all the redeemed creation the shout will arise "Alleluia, for the Lord God

omnipotent reigneth." Surely the true believer in Christ loves to look forward to the day of His triumph and of glory. The crowning of the saint is not when he departs this life; then he is present with the Lord, and truly far better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord; nor is it when the Lord comes and gathers up all that are alive and remain, but when He appears. This appearance is for the world, when we also shall be the trophies of the Lord, the victor over Satan, sin, and the world. Then is the time of judging the quick (not the great white throne judgment, but as in Matthew 25:1-46 ;, Acts 17:31, etc.) When the Lord was here, the world crucified Him and put Him into a grave; the world never saw Him come out. When next they see Him, it will be when He appears to take vengeance on His murderers, and His appearance will be as the lightning which shines from the east to the west. That is, all shall see Him then. Before that day comes, the Lord will descend and we shall ascend to meet Him in the air; so that when He appears, He will bring us with him. This is what we wait for. The world did not see Him come out of the grave, but the testimony of it was given. It was the joy of the disciples, the utter discomfiture of the enemy, who to cover his defeat led the priests to tell the soldiers to say, "His disciples stole his body while we slept." The world will see Him come out of heaven. Then will be its judgment, then the saints' crowning to His glory, fruit of that complete salvation of which the apostle speaks, when he says that it is nearer than when we believed (Romans 13:11). R. B.

S. Brief Words on Gen_22:1-14

Brief Words on Genesis 22:1-14. The well-known saying of the famous Bishop of Hippo, that in the O.T. the New is latent, while in the N.T. the Old is patent, has no more striking justification than in this familiar chapter, which has an interest far beyond what attaches to the personal exercises of Abraham. Not but what the trial of the patriarch's faith is both most important in its place and most valuable for our instruction. But, as every believer knows, we have here a divinely drawn picture of the Atonement. What does it matter that the incident took place some two thousand years before Christ, but that it enhances the overwhelming proof that the writer was inspired by the Spirit of God? But before attempting to look at the story in its typical aspect, let us try to note a few points in the narrative itself. God tried Abraham, as He ever does those who are truly sons (Hebrews 12:8). And mark that God graciously tested His servant in such a way as to make prominent the very characteristic with which he was best equipped. He was very strong in faith; and God puts him to a supreme test. So I suppose that if any be marked by love, or grace, or wisdom, etc., the Lord will sometimes give such the opportunity of sealing, so to speak, their possession of such "fruit of the Spirit" by some special exhibition of them in circumstances naturally calculated to make manifest our human limitations. At any rate here we see Abraham strengthened to surrender even his well-beloved son at the call of God.

Next note how responsive Abraham is. God calls, and at once comes the reply, "Here am I." Then consider how all that would make the demand still more terrible to nature is emphasised, not minimised: "Thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest." Such minute traces have we of the Divine knowledge, and the Divine interest. Nor is anything left to Abraham's choice in the matter of locality. The sacrifice was to be on one of the mountains that God would tell him of. So must it ever be. In the service of the Lord all must be ordered by Himself, and in accordance with His will. Accordingly Abraham goes to the place of which God had told him. He did not, like Jonah, go west when told to go east, though the task laid upon him, being so personal, must have been far harder. Nor was it a brief trial — a matter of moments or even minutes. It was not till the third day that Abraham saw the place afar off. Imagine the deep exercise of the father's spirit during those solemn days. Yet we note the serene confidence with which he answers Isaac, who naturally wondered where the lamb for the sacrifice was to come from, and won the response, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering" — prophetic words indeed, and that doubly so, with far off pathetic promise of Calvary. How much Abraham saw of hidden meaning in his own words we know not — perhaps nothing — but it is surely there, even if he thought only of an immediate succour. And now Isaac's eyes must have been opened to the imminence of the offering, when, the last initiatory rites having been performed, he lay bound upon the altar. We know how in the dread moment God appeared, and arrested that obedient hand. We know too how the father's faith was crowned, and the living Isaac unbound. Thus was Abraham bidden to spare his son by Him who spared not His own Son. No ram was found in the thicket in the stead of the blessed Lord. No Barabbas might take the place of the true Son of the Father. And now let us briefly note one or two more details that clearly point to the great mystery (I use the word in the

scriptural sense of revelation) of redemption. We read that "they went both of them together," and this statement, twice recorded, most significantly suggests that wondrous understanding between the Father and the Son in the blessed Trinity, between both of whom was the counsel of peace, as we read in Zechariah (Zechariah 6:13). Again in the words "I and the lad," as we read in an earlier verse, it is not fanciful to see another indication of the perfect accord between the Father and the Son. It is a picture truly; but when the light of the N.T. is thrown upon it, how luminous it stands out in every detail as pointing to the work of our Lord, even, as we have seen, emphasising the common purpose that actuated the three Persons of the Godhead. Our great poet Milton recognised this in the words he puts into the mouth of God the Father in reply to the pleadings of the Son, ("All Thy request was My decree"); and, though it is possible to read into these words an Arian twist, at least if we are aware of the poet's doctrinal proclivities, yet it shows us how all thoughtful believers must recognise the immense share that God the Father takes in the salvation of mankind. It was the Father who sent the Son, (what must it have cost Him to deliver Him up for us all?) and if Abraham felt so keenly in the case of his son, who yet, he had confidence would be restored to him, what, we may reverently say, must it have been to God not to spare His only Son? We cannot make too much of the Saviour; His indeed was the humiliation and the suffering, if we do need to be reminded of the love of God the Father. Truly we do not honour the Father least when we honour the Son; but the Father seeketh worshippers, and sometimes He only gets our prayers.

Thus briefly and inadequately has it been attempted to say a few words on this peculiarly interesting chapter. The chapter was brought more immediately to the mind by recently reading that it is among those portions of the Bible that a Canon of the Church of England, who is starting an unhallowed Index Expurgatorius, would exclude from the "lessons"! How true it is that, when we pronounce a judgment, we virtually are judged. Could blindness and daring go farther? And what would this blind leader say of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which Abraham's wonderful faith is singled out for emphatic eulogy? May such unholy handling of God's word give pause to some who are ready to go a certain way with the destructive critics. Happily there are many thousands in his communion to whom the Canon's words will have given deep pain. R.B.

S. Christ's Witness Not Alone, but if Alone, Divine.

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John 5:31, and John 8:14. The hasty reader might think there was a contradiction between these two statements, and the pious reader might be perplexed; for they seem at the first blush to contradict one another. In John 5:1-47 the Lord disclaims bearing witness of Himself; in John 8:1-59. He insists on His divine right to do so. Indeed the language, in both passages, is the strongest possible. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true," says our Lord in John 5:1-47 "Though I bear witness of myself, yet is my witness true": thus run the words in chap. 8. "Record" in the A.V. of the latter passage is really the same Greek word in the original, changed from "witness," possibly to suit the whim of a pedant. For, as is generally known, King James desired the translators to vary their English rendering of Greek words!

Now one can imagine cavillers objecting: at least if the two statements were found in two different Gospels, they might say that such contradiction was natural, and to be expected from conflicting minds. But not so. Both statements are found in the fourth Gospel. Needless to say, they are both profoundly true. Clearly also forgers would not require excessive caution to avoid such an apparent discrepancy; for they naturally fear an exposure of their subterfuge. And the truth! — what has it to fear? Nay, ours should be the care to heed that word which is indeed as much God's as if orally heard from heaven.

Writing on "No one knoweth the Son but the Father," I was proceeding to say that this statement was made by the Lord concerning Himself, and that His witness was true, though He bore witness of Himself. But, on turning to John 5:31 for verification, my eye met the seeming opposite of what one wanted to enforce. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." Had memory played me false? Was my doctrine unsound? A pause and a re-perusal of John 8:1-59. convinced me that it might be profitable to call attention to these two sayings of our Lord. Other pens may unfold at greater length the deep and far-reaching meaning of both the lessons to be learned from these two, not conflicting or antagonistic, but, if I may so call them, complementary truths.

What then is the solution of the seeming discrepancy? It seems this: — in John 5:1-47 He speaks not only as Son but as become flesh, and doeth nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing. Our Lord's argument is that if He was the only one to bear witness of Himself, His witness would not be true. He thus graciously though searchingly meets the contention of the Jews that if a man bare witness of himself, his witness could not be true. Two witnesses there must be, three were better, more than adequate, according to Jewish law. So Christ says, "If I (alone) bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." It could not be that His should be the solitary testimony concerning Himself. He had first John the Baptist bearing Him witness; next, the testimony of the works given Him to do; and thirdly that of the Father's voice. It was superabundant. If only on their one technical ground the Jews were bound to heed it.

Nay, there were the scriptures likewise. Such is the force of the passage in John 5:1-47 He is the perfect and dependent Man, Who referred His adversaries to the fourfold witness of John His herald, His own works, the Father's witness, and the scriptures. Yet is He "Light of the world," "the Truth", "the Son," the "I Am" (John 8:1-59). So, far from there being discrepancy in the statements of one and the same Evangelist, there is the most absolute agreement between him who wrote mainly for the Jews (S. Matthew), and the "disciple whom Jesus loved." He who said "I am the Light of the world" could also say, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." Such a One only could be so great a light. A mere man would becomingly shrink from bearing testimony concerning himself. He, Who when Thomas addressed Him as "My Lord and my God," accepted the homage, might indeed say, "Though I bear record of myself, yet is My record true." Even here he adds "I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent me. And in your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that beareth witness concerning myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness concerning me." If two men were to be believed, how much more the witness of the Son and of the Father? So it is with all scripture. What seems at first a difficulty, a discrepancy, to our imperfect vision, is ever found to be fraught with some blessed meaning that had hitherto escaped us. The Holy Spirit alone can illuminate; but He does teach those who are subject to the written word, surely not apart from it. R. B.

S. Discipleship.

Discipleship.

Disciple is learner, follower: the Lord Jesus is both Saviour and Master, Lord and Master of all men, of those whom He bought with His blood. Only believers are true disciples. To be a disciple of Christ while He was here below involved the loss of all that men value (Luke 14:26 etc.). Not by being deprived of all as by force, for then the affections might still be engrossed with them; but a deliberate and willing separation from all that would interfere with following Him. Faith is the first step in the path, the only true beginning. A false start, that is, a pretended following, when all else is not forsaken, frequently if not invariably leads to greater hardness of heart, and to infidelity. The sure natural result is hatred of the truth. The Lord warns the multitude of what is needed to be a true disciple, "if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Had they ears to hear? Anyone attempting to be a disciple in his own strength, by the working of his own will, would be like a man beginning to build a tower without counting the cost, or like a king going to war with ten thousand against another king with, twenty thousand. The cost of being a disciple is beyond the resources of man.

Some have given up father and mother for the sake of worldly advantage; others to gain the applause of quasi-religious men, which is but another phase of the same world. There is only one case in which the Lord shows the necessity of forsaking father and mother, and that is when the child is commanded to forsake Christ; in every other it is sin against Him who said of old, "Honour thy father and thy mother," and also by the apostle, "Children, obey your parents." When father or mother, yea, or wife or life, comes in competition with Christ, then all must be "hated" the disciple must bear the cross and follow Him. If any of these stand in the way of confessing Christ as Saviour, it is better to be driven from home and disowned by parents, than to be Christless. When Christ was here, the world was against Him. A few were gathered to Him in true-hearted love. Great multitudes were attracted by His gracious words; they would be disciples, but had not counted the cost; they had not reckoned on the opposing forces of nature and the world. It was only natural feeling which moved them: how could they oppose nature? What a proof this necessity of denying nature affords of the havoc sin has made with the affections implanted by the Creator, and therefore excellent as given by God, that when it is a question of following Christ, the affections are all found perverted and become hindrances, insomuch that the Lord says the dearest objects must be hated. "Hate" in this scripture is not to be understood in its common acceptation of intense dislike; the true disciple does not at all dislike his unconverted relatives, but he seeks their blessing. He may be intensely disliked by them, for he cannot join in their worldly pleasures, and his joys are beyond their apprehension. They are outside and opposed to all that he loves and follows. Hence to the world he has the appearance of hating them. This is a trial to the disciple who longs to see them brought to God, but he will not cease to follow Christ. The separation on the disciples' part and the hatred on the world's part had a very acute form when the

Lord was here. To break away from every thing, to be in open separation from all that had hitherto been accounted of God and highly esteemed, and as a consequence to be scorned by the religious of that day, was what the disciples of Christ had then to endure. Nor has the world changed from its hatred of true and faithful disciples. Our Lord and Master, the first who trod the path of utter rejection and world's hatred, is now on the Father's throne; but the path remains the same. The world has tried to take away the offence of the cross, to make a pleasant way for nature. It has made a bye-path, and very easy walking it is to nature; but the real old path of true discipleship is as rough as ever; the truth has not changed. In the world's religious path no need to count any cost; there is nothing to endure, or give up, or hate, for His name's sake. Those who walk therein know not the meaning of "disciple." The world will accept any counterfeit, but hates the real. Though it knows not the true, its instincts at once recognise the counterfeit as part of itself, and its antagonism to Christ is not less seen in its welcome to the false, than in its hatred of the true. Therefore to bear the name of "disciple" and not to separate from the world, is like salt that has lost its savour, which is such a useless thing that it is unfit for land, unfit even for the dunghill. The man who bears the name of professor, and follows the world, dishonours Christ, and is despised by men.

Discipleship and salvation do not run in parallel lines. The Lord in Luke does not say, Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be saved; though only the true disciple knows the full joy of salvation. There may be those who are just under the cross but who can hardly be called followers and hearers of the Lord Jesus; on the other hand John 6:1-71 : shows that there were disciples who were not saved: "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him" (ver. 66). They for a time followed Him and had apparently forsaken all; what was it that tested these pretended disciples, who being unreal turned again to the world which in truth they had never left? They had seen miracles, had eaten the bread miraculously provided, were willing to be fed by the Lord as regards mere bread, but would not receive Him as the true bread from heaven, Christ the life-giving bread in contrast with the manna once given to the fathers. To many of His disciples this was a hard saying. They murmured. But if they doubted Christ as having come down from heaven, what if they should see Him, the Son of man, go up there again where He was before? In this the Lord asserts His God-manhood, but they could not receive it. They had no life, and flesh profits nothing. It is the Spirit that quickens; and so the Lord says, No one can come to me except the Father who has sent Me draw him. The two truths which here test discipleship are Christ's Person and man's profitlessness. A man may seem to give up all for Christ, but the receiving of these fundamental truths is out of the region of the flesh altogether. There must be the quickening power of the Spirit.

Christ as God-man became the source of life to man; hence He is "that bread which came down from heaven." But in bread simply, there is no idea of blood. Therefore the true bread must be in that form which meets the need of the guilty. For a creature unstained with sin there is no need of blood, and after a soul is cleansed no need for further application of the blood. The redeemed feed upon the bread as such. So Israel after their redemption from Egypt (type of ours) were fed with manna. God rained down manna upon them to eat. He gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food (Psalms 78:24-25). But the point in John 6:1-71 : is not the sustaining of life so much as the giving life to a sinner. "The bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world." Christ by death became the bread of life. The striving of the Jews brings out a more

explicit statement, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood ye have no life in you." — Christ bearing the judgment of sin, and the sinner owning the judgment as due to himself. But there is more than substitution: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." It is identification with the death of Christ in all its moral force (in its atoning character He is necessarily alone) — a truth developed in Romans 6:7 : Christ could only be bread for man by dying; and in and by His death He has become the source of life. But His death is proof that man was condemned. Man is naturally offended when he hears that he could only live by Another's death. "Many . . . disciples went back and walked no more with Him." It was a test which only those who were given to Him could bear. The true disciple who knows his own ruin and death through sin receives with joy life through the Saviour's death; and cleaves the more to Him. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The pretended disciple turns his back upon the Lord; the true disciple acknowledges these very words which offended others to be the words of eternal life. But more is added, not only the words but the Person of Christ, which is life. "And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Holy One of God (for so it should be)." The truth that offends the false soul brings out praise from the real. In John 8:31 we have another trait of true discipleship, "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." In the former chapter the disciple is marked as one given to Christ by the Father, and receiving life from Him; in this (viii.) he is known by continuing in the word. This is the disciples' responsibility, through the pure and unsolicited grace of the Father; the word in which the disciples are to continue is in connection with Christ being "lifted up" — an expression which had no doubtful meaning to the Jew. It meant a shameful death, the cross, the death of a malefactor. They should know who He was when they lifted Him up; but would those who then believed on Him continue in His word, as the One who only spoke and did in obedience to the Father? Would they so continue when He would be condemned and crucified between two thieves? His discipleship involved this. When that hour came even the true-hearted failed, the sheep were scattered but the risen Lord gathered them again. Abiding in the word is more than knowing the truth intellectually: the essential point is obedience to the truth, a life conformed by the truth and marked by the holiness which grace demands. For knowledge of the truth may be separated from obedience to it. A man may be orthodox in doctrine and lax in practice, or outwardly unimpeachable in life but unsound in fundamental truth. In neither case is there a true disciple.

"And He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things which please Him." This is the truth that by grace wins the heart, it is the Person of the Lord, but Son and Servant in wondrous union. As Son, He is conqueror of sin, as Servant victim for sin. "As He spake these words, many believed on Him." This is the word, the foundation truth, continuance in which marks the disciple indeed.

Chapter 6: equally declared the truth that life to a sinner could only be communicated through the death of Christ; but there is displayed the natural heart which cannot receive this truth — many are offended. Chapter 8: shows the grace of God in connection with the same truth; and more, for here we have the shame of the cross. The Son of man would be lifted up — the shame of a public execution between two thieves. But here grace works and MANY BELIEVE.

Continuance in the word of Christ is a sure sign of true discipleship. The followers of Christ were then assailed, slandered, and evilly spoken of. At this present day disciples have to bear the same. Perhaps no former time gave greater opportunities for the true disciple to show faithfulness to

Christ. The faggot and scaffold do not require more power of faith than constant misrepresentation and untruthful accusation need its sustaining energy. Patient abiding in the word, amid the contentions of party and the breaking up of old and cherished ties, is the mark of a meek and quiet spirit. The truth makes us free from strife and self will. And this leads on to a further mark of true discipleship, John 13:35, "By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Men were unable to appreciate the previous marks given. A disciple giving up all to follow Christ would be esteemed a fool. To confess that flesh is profitless, that it is only by the operation of the Spirit of God that a soul receives life, without whose power all man's strength is vain, seems fanaticism. To part company with the respectable religious world, to be numbered with the despised, seems bigotry, or at least as having strange notions unsuited to this enlightened age! But if we have Christ to fill the eye and the heart, all these things are proofs of being disciples, of discipleship before God. In chap. 13: the Lord gives a mark which the natural man can recognise; it might create wonder, but there would be an evident testimony of a power superior to the selfishness of nature. The Lord gave the pattern of this love, "As I have loved you, that ye love one another." The Lord loved the young man who would not forsake his possessions and follow Christ. The youth had an amiable nature; at least it was interesting to see him running to the Lord, and kneeling to ask the very important question, what he must do to inherit eternal life. But this is not the love of the Lord to His disciples. Nor is it the love of God in giving His only begotten Son as in John 3:1-36 : The Lord's love to His disciples is a love that found in its objects something above nature and lovable in itself. If above nature, it must be something that grace had imparted. And so we have two things; that this love is heavenly both in its source and in its objects; of divine origin but having its seat in a human heart, displayed by human words and in ways suited to grace and the holiness of God. And its object is that which grace had produced. The Lord loved His disciples with such a love as this, but His was a perfect human heart, and perfectly pleasing to the Father in its special manifestations, as when John leaned upon His breast at supper, and in His love for the family at Bethany. But the Lord loved them all. "As I have loved you." Their love to each other was to be of the same character, and to grow in intensity; though it can never reach the purity and strength of His love to them. Not even their love to Him is a measure large enough for the love which they are commanded to have for each other. Surely they all did love Him, but not perfectly. When James and John sought the highest places in the kingdom, they raised the indignation of the others, thereby proving that all had self as an object, not the Lord alone. It was their glory that occupied their minds. Peter loved the Master, came behind none in fervour, but fear made him deny his Master. The Lord's love to them was pure, patient, untiring, persevering; it never flagged. Nothing on their part could turn it aside. Nothing less than this is the pattern of their mutual love. The Lord does not say, Love me as I have loved you, it is, Love each other as I have loved you. Such power of love in them could only be the result of grace, of the power of the Spirit in their heart, she wing its reality in acts of human kindness, as well as in caring for each other's spiritual welfare. It is heavenly love in a human heart and manifested through a human medium! How greatly the Lord desired the mutual happiness of His disciples! What a divine preventive of strife and of the workings of a selfish nature! Had the church given heed to the loving Lord's injunction, disciples would have been one body in visible manifestation before men. In no mark of discipleship has the church failed more than in this. The varied and numerous names under which true believers range themselves afford sad proof. All the parties and divisions which now deface the church owe their origin for the most part, not to zeal for the truth, but to lack of love. Love does not

seek occasion for separation, nor will it separate save upon scriptural ground; and when compelled by obedience to the word, always in sorrow and hoping for re-union. It is such a solemn thing, that the Lord has not left it to His disciples to decide when a man that is called a brother ought to be put away, or when an assembly is to be left. 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 is plain for all immoral cases, and the Second Epistle of John decides with equal precision for the doctrinal. The touch-stone is the doctrine of Christ, the truth of His Person, His essential Deity and His manhood. Any one not bringing this doctrine was not to be received even into one's own house, much less at the Lord's table. The word being so explicit forbids us by implication to separate from any other cause. Upon any other ground separation is sin. False doctrine may arise in the church from which, according to the word, separation is imperative. But separation upon unscriptural ground is the place where evil doctrine finds a genial soil and a rapid growth. Divisions are not only the effect of false doctrine but the cause and occasion too. So we get a sorrowful sequence. Want of love works divisions, and divisions work departure from the truth, which in its turn opens the door to every kind of evil doctrine. Obedience to the word, "love one another," would have prevented the shame of such a scene; the Lord would not have been so dishonoured as we see.

Even when fidelity to the Lord demands separation from others, zeal for the truth has often degenerated into zeal for victory. Thus while truth has been assailed by the one, grace, love, and meekness have been forgotten by the other, and the true witness of discipleship seen in neither. A little more patient love might have nipped the bud of evil. Alas! the pride of seeming right when others are wrong is a great hindrance to brotherly love. So sweeping are the consequences of having forgotten the Lord's word that, if loving one another were the only mark of disciples they would be nearly if not altogether undistinguishable from the world. The trees of the world are bound up in many bundles, the saints of God should be manifested as one bundle of life. There are nearly as many divisions among disciples as bundles of trees in the world.

What a sad aspect the whole church at this present time bears to the eye of Him who prayed "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also might be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." How responsible the whole church is for the unbelief of the world! What a proof of sovereign grace to know that though the visible unity is a lost thing here. yet will the church be manifested in glory to the world as one, and then the world will know what now perhaps they would believe had the church been diligent to present this trait to them. At all events the world would have had this additional testimony: it was the Lord's mind that they should have it. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples. if ye have love one for another."

If we love Him that beget, we shall also love them that are begotten of Him. Impossible to love the Father and hate the brethren. I do not say impossible to be saved; but he who loves not his brother gives no proof that he believes the Father, no proof to the world that he is a disciple of Christ. Where this true love of the brethren is not found, there is frequently Pharisaic pride, more hateful than the common pride of the world. Indulging the thought of one's own greater spirituality and faithfulness leads to the despising of others, and is of the same spirit that made some of old say, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou" (Isa. lxv). It is but one step more to say — the temple of the Lord are we, and heathen all beside. These high-minded ones, miscalling their spiritual pride by the name of faithfulness, disown all but those who follow them, and, like Jehu of old whose heart was not right with God, say, "Come and see my zeal for

Jehovah." Zeal without obedience is Jehu-like (2 Kings 10:31). Insubjection to the word soon takes the form of sneering at those who seek in scripture a reason for what they do; then of denying the all-sufficiency of the word, saying, that scripture does not provide for every case. Nothing can more show where men are fallen. Whatever their pretension, they are off the ground of true testimony, and fail in that test of discipleship which has peculiar reference to the world. They are a false witness as regards what the church of God ought to be.

Scripture does provide for every case of evil demanding separation. To deny this is to deceive God's saints, and what is of far greater moment, it dishonours the Lord in denying the completeness of His truth. It may be said that there are evils so insidious that only the spiritual can discern them. Granted that the more spiritual may be first and best detect them; but I deny that any evil for which the word authorises separation, when brought before the conscience of the youngest believer in any assembly of God, will not be judged by him in the light and power of the word of God. If the conscience be darkened by human influence, the judgment will so far be false. And what can influence more than threats of cutting off, loss of friends etc.? But does not he who thus influences the conscience of weaker brethren fall under the judgment pronounced against those who offend the little ones of Christ? (Luke 17:2.) To pervert the weak, to turn away the eyes of the little ones from the word of God, is the blind leading the blind; the leader blinded by pride, the led (and by far the less guilty) by looking to man and not to God. But even the "led" are responsible, for they have the capacity for knowing. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things" (1 John 2:20). This is said to babes, not merely to fathers. If babes have a capacity for knowing "all things," remaining in ignorance is to grieve the Spirit of God, who is come to lead us into all truth. As to the leaders, to talk of evil, to fail in proof, and then to separate, is scattering the sheep of Christ it is undoing as far as it can what God in grace is doing, building the church together for His habitation by the Spirit. Loving one another after the divine pattern, "As I have loved you" would have prevented the divisions which grieve the hearts of true disciples.

Another mark of discipleship is given in John 15:8. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit so shall ye be my disciples." The emphasis is not the bearing much fruit, but the glorifying of the Father. Much fruit-bearing is the means, the Father's glory is the end. It was what we see the Lord Himself always doing, and it is the highest mark of discipleship. It contains in itself every other mark. "Hating" all for Christ's sake without a lingering look of regret towards the Sodom we have been delivered from, or a looking back if only to bid farewell to those at home (Luke 9:62), this is the blossom which in maturity is much fruit, as it ripens, manifesting every other trait of discipleship until in full fruition the Father is glorified. Abiding in the word, obedience, loving one another as Christ has loved us, is the much fruit that glorifies the Father. Mark the place the glory of the Father has in the heart of the Lord Jesus. As it was His meat (He says) to do the Father's will, and thus glorify Him, so any who glorified the Father should be His disciples. It is the latest mark given, the one the Lord most prized. As branches in the vine — for thus we are looked at, and the good works of faith by the Spirit in us are the fruit — much purging is needed. The Father Himself is the Husbandman; it is His untiring watchfulness that makes the fruit-bearing branch to produce more fruit. In His care what patient perseverance of love, what wisdom or skill of husbandry is seen! He has grafted us in Christ, the only true Vine, where we as branches could bear fruit. There was no other life but His which could be communicated to us; but abiding in Him and He in us, we bring forth much fruit. His word abiding in us is the evidence of our abiding in

Him. Abiding in Him is faith characterised by dependence and confidence, and this is only where love draws out the heart, in communion with Him, and so dependence upon Him becomes the confirmed habit of the soul. His word abiding in us is the obedience of the heart, manifested so that our life becomes a testimony to all. This is to be a living branch in the vine. Such the Husbandman purges and produces more fruit. "Abiding in Him" does not refer to our "standing" as Romans 8:1. There is no "if" in Romans. Here in John it is "If ye abide in me," and if not, cast forth as a branch. That is, the Lord speaks of responsibility. It is the glory of the Father that is in question. God is glorified when a soul is saved; it is His sovereign grace which quickens, forgives, and puts the pardoned soul in a new position, with a new life and the relationship of children. When it is a question of the child's behaviour, or as in John 15:1-27 : of fruit-bearing branches, then it is the Father's glory. It is grace all through meeting the need of the soul, but in conversion it is grace meeting a dead soul and giving life; in our life it is grace meeting a living soul and giving power to meet his responsibilities. It is the glory of the Father. See also Matthew 5:16.

Only those born of God can abide in Christ, but the responsibility of bearing fruit rests upon every one professing to be a branch. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch," and is cast into the fire. A solemn word, which makes the real diligent and watchful, as it tests and demonstrates the false. The Father as Husbandman in purging strengthens and confirms the fruit-bearing branch, and He is glorified. The Lord could say at the end of His life here, "Father, I have glorified Thee." He had made God known in a way never known before, and He would have His disciples bear testimony to the truth that God was now become Father to all who believe. In this way the Son had glorified the Father. He glorified God when His soul was made an offering for sin. But here in John 15:1-27 : as in the former scriptures, we are looked at as disciples, not as children. The Lord says, "Herein is my (not, "your") Father glorified." And He would have His disciples to be very fruitful, that His Father might be glorified. What more than this could show the Lord's supreme desire to glorify the Father? If He delighted in those who "hated" all for His sake, who believed in Him as the true bread from heaven, who loved each other with the same kind of love, if not with the same measure, as He loved them, who abiding in Him and His words in them were bringing forth much fruit, it was because His Father was glorified. And they who did so were His disciples. It is the crowning mark of discipleship, and implies every other, and the Lord puts His seal upon it, "So shall ye be my disciples." There is an emphasis on these words, not found connected with any previous mark of discipleship. "So" in that manner, and "my," truly My own disciple. It was His work while here, and He honours every follower in the same path. But that path was impossible to man before the cross. An ignorant man might say, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," not knowing what was involved. To be worse off than foxes and birds was more than that man could bear. Yet this was not the great test. The disciples followed the Lord in His path up to the moment when death appeared. Then they all fled. It was only after the Lord had gone through that path, that any disciple could follow. I speak not of atonement, but of condemnation and death from man. Now, many have followed, and the Lord Jesus has gathered to Himself a noble army of martyrs.

Bearing much fruit is glorifying to the Father. But no fruit is borne save as we abide in Christ, as branches in the vine. That is, Christ is the Centre around whom we gather, the Source of our life, the One Object to fill the eye of every believer. This is the present purpose of God. No other name is given by which men are saved. No other name is to be the gathering point for all saints. Any

other name, however honoured, is an offence to God. Nor can a doctrine, still less a discipline, be God's centre of unity. The unity of the body, though a truth of capital importance in doctrine and for practical life clearly asserted in the word, is not what God gathers His saints to. It is a blessed fact which we learn when gathered to His name. To make it His object, to say we are gathered to the unity of the body, is making the church, — blessed as it is — of equal moment with Christ, the body equal to the Head! It dishonours our divine Master, the Head, even Christ; it is defrauding Him of His due, putting something in His place. And what is this but idolatry? Whether it be the Virgin, or saints (so called), or the church — changed by some for the phrase "unity of the body," it is the same in superstitious essence as in the mind of a papist. Whatever it be that is put in the place of Christ is idolatry. It was said of old 1 "Thou shalt have no other gods but me." And now there is no other point of gathering, any more than Saviour, save the name of Jesus. It is equally displeasing to God and dishonouring to the Lord to join any thing to His name as a centre; to say we are gathered to Christ AND to the unity of the body is making the church of co-equal importance, which ere long makes the grace and authority of the Lord a secondary thing. It is making another tabernacle to the "unity of the body" in disobedience to the voice from the cloud of excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son: hear Him."

Gathered to the unity of the body is the first step to Romanism; gathered to the Table is a great step beyond. The error begins with making the body equal to Christ, and then puts it above Him. It is what the church of Rome has done dogmatically and practically. No marvel if we see incipient tendencies here, and full blown Romish practices there. Is it not true that this unholy doctrine underlies old and recent papers in a periodical known to many? At first whispered among the initiated, it is now openly taught; and the simple are beguiled. It is in effect the fresh test of membership, the Shibboleth of a new but unscriptural lump, not wanting the Laodicean boast of being rich and increased in goods.

Those who teach this doctrine are not faithful disciples of Christ, but propagandists of a doctrine which in the minds of the poor and simple soon becomes a vague abstraction, or a gross superstition. The Person of Christ being in the background, love grows cold: they do not abide in Him, and His words do not abide in them. Much fruit cannot be borne, nor is the Father glorified by those who teach or receive to Christ's dishonour such clouds of error. The Lord does not say of such "So shall ye be my disciples." R. Beacon.

S. Giving Thanks to the Father

Giving Thanks to the Father.

Colossians 1:12.

It is impossible to make too much of the Lord Jesus. He, Who as a babe received the homage of the wise men from the East (men, who, it has been finely said, though accustomed to instruct youthful princes, could only worship that little Prince), He, equally with the Father, is worthy of the fullest and most exalted honour. When Thomas addressed Him as "My Lord and my God," our Saviour accepted the homage. In the Epistles the Father and the Son are habitually coupled in a way that would be inconceivable if Jesus were not God. All this is beyond dispute. But because through grace we are free from the ruinous error of Arianism, Unitarianism, etc., we must not slip into another error, less common no doubt (for it is not a question of denying the Deity of a Person in the Godhead), but still very grievous; we must not practically exclude the Father from our adoration.

We "give thanks unto the Father." Does this mean at the prayer or the open meeting only? Nay, it is a grave and deplorable omission when the Lord Jesus only is addressed at the breaking of the bread. It all springs of course from the one-sidedness that is inseparable from trusting the human mind; and believers are by no means exempt from this snare. Perhaps such are more liable to this infirmity for the simple reason that the truth, even partial truth, when received from God, claims and produces the devoted allegiance of the soul. And there is the deepest claim on our affections in the humiliation and sufferings of the Lord Jesus. He, and He only, suffered for our sins; He loved and gave Himself for me. What believer's heart could be dead or dull to such an appeal as this? But in fact both the Father and the Son are to be worshipped now; as in the Revelation we see them both the joint object of heaven's adoration; and the Holy Spirit using the word as the standard is the only safe guide as to where and when. Undoubtedly when we worship God as God, we include Father and Son — and Holy Spirit. There is room and place for all. The writer is aware that some think that the worship of the Father is on a higher plane than thanksgiving to the Son in the breaking of bread. And beyond doubt it calls for more maturity in the truth, and more spiritual power in the worshipper. But in reality can anything be higher than the adoration of the blessed Lord, once the holy sufferer, now the risen Head and exalted Saviour? Everything should lead up to that supreme act of thanksgiving at the holy Supper. Yet even there the Spirit of God might guide, not to separate the Persons of the Godhead, but to join them in praise, and so to direct address of the Father, though there is doubtless a peculiar fitness in addressing the Lord Jesus at His table. But who is entitled to dictate or exclude, since scripture shows us the contrary? Let us abide simple and subject to God's word.

There is indeed to be no bondage to human thought or will or fancy, but contrariwise holy liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Only let us remember that it was the Father that sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, the Father that spared not His Son, but delivered Him up freely for us all, that the Father of lights begets believers by the word of truth and of His own

will, and, last but not least, that He seeks worshippers and that the true worshippers worship the Father in Spirit and truth. This is the testimony of our Lord Himself.

It is the Father Who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. None more jealous than He for His Father's glory, unless it be the Father for the Son's. As scripture abundantly proves we should thus exalt both in our praises. Let us beware of any unauthorised regulations, and of setting one against the other in any way.

Enough has been said to enforce a most important truth that seems in danger of being disregarded. Let us heed it and worship both the Father and the Son; and let us recollect too the claims of God as God. "For God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth." Indeed all the names and titles of the Godhead have an inexhaustible fulness, not least surely the name of Father. "I have declared unto them thy Name" said our Lord the name of Father. What infinite love is wrapped up in it! Elevate the human conception of fatherhood to the highest degree, and we fail to touch the fringe of that divine relationship. "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." It is paidia too, not teknia, which latter term embraces all. And to know Him leads to the worship of Him, to giving Him thanks now and for ever.
R. B.

S. Glorify God in your body."

"Glorify God in your body."

1 Corinthians 6:20.

Nothing is more resented by the natural man than to assert that he is the slave of sin; and yet the Christian knows that nothing is more evidently true. For man is born a captive to Satan, who exercises the power of a conqueror. Only by the redemption that is in Christ can he be freed from his captivity. Naturally fallen man is the slave of Satan; to hide this fact is Satan's aim, though within certain limits man is free in choice of sin. As Joshua said to Israel, they might choose between the gods of their ancestors on the other side of the flood and those of the land in which they dwelt (see Joshua 24:15); but they could not choose between the worship of Jehovah or that of false gods. How can that which is inherently vile choose what is really good? The fact is that man is circumscribed by sin; he is like an animal tethered to one spot of ground with no more freedom than the length of his chain. Sinful man's freedom is illusory, and the derision of Satan. The Christian is delivered from the thralldom of Satan, and yields himself to Him Who has bought him with a price, not only the highest but incalculable.

Human words are not found to express its greatness: so if it is called a "price," we cannot compute it. The Holy Ghost once says "precious blood"; and once we read, "God so loved the world." If we can measure the love of God as expressed in the word "so," then we may estimate the price; and, if we can estimate the price, we can measure the "so"; but both are infinite and immeasurable. The intrinsic worth of what is purchased sometimes determines the price; or, it may be, the desire of the purchaser to possess it at all cost. We do read in the parable of a man who gave up all that he had to buy the field for the treasure in it. We do know Him, Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. The fact that it was all the buyer had is what gives a relative value to man — not to the soul only, but to the body also; though there is an intrinsic worth besides, for the Lord asks, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And He says of the body (John 6:1-71 :), "I will raise it up at the last day." The fact of resurrection is proof that the body is bought; the out-resurrection proves that salvation includes the body. Hence the word, "Glorify God in your bodies." Else where were the need of resurrection? And if no resurrection, then is Christ not raised; and if Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins, and there is no salvation. The body, though formed of the dust of the earth, becomes part of the man, and has its value: especially as will be seen in the believer when glorified. But how is this value increased by the inestimable price paid! It was a price which God alone knew. The price is infinitely beyond the intrinsic worth of body or soul; yet nothing less was sufficient in His eyes; for the price is not measured by the value of man, but according to the righteousness of God, and the precious blood is the ransom (1 Peter 1:18-19). Thereby is propitiation and redemption. It is because of this inestimable price that the apostle says, "Wherefore glorify God in your body." How are we to glorify God? Not merely by words of praise and thanksgiving, which are due and necessarily accompany, but alas! too often inadequately felt by the heart. How sad to sing words which express the deepest devotion without

entering into the spirit of the words we sing!

Glorifying God is by the Holy Spirit in the new man subjecting the whole body to Him and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Romans 6:12). The body is commonly but not exclusively (see 2 Corinthians 7:1) the channel of temptation, which yielded to, though it appear ever so small, brings the whole man under the power of sin. It was by means of the body chiefly that Eve fell; the woman saw that the tree was good and pleasant. Our Lord, in enforcing the principle which dealt with the externals of religion before the innate depravity of the heart was laid bare, figuratively takes up the physical members of the body; we are to pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand or foot, if they offend (Matthew 5:29-30; Mark 9:43-48). Again, alluding to sin entering by one member, the Lord tells us the consequence is to bring the whole body under its power; if the eye be single, the whole body is full of light; but if evil, the whole body is full of darkness (see Luke 11:34). James gives as a principle of law, that to offend in one point is to break all. So with the Christian; to admit sin by any one of the members is to bring the whole body under bondage to sin, — "he that committeth sin is servant (or slave) of sin" (John 8:34). The Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Colossians takes up the reality of sin in the members which are on the earth; not mere members of the body, but members on the earth. Blessed be God, we shall not have these earthly members in heaven, either in the separate or in the risen state. We were baptised to Christ's death. But if we are not watchful to glorify God with our bodies, they may be the means of sin. Therefore "mortify," or put to death," your members which are upon the earth." Satan is ever watching for an opportunity to inject sin, and that by means of the "members" which under law were symbolised by the eye, foot, or hand. But now that the true light is come, we perceive sin to be a much deeper thing (see Colossians 3:1-25 :); it is the old fallen self, all that is outside Christ our life, which the apostle calls our members on the earth. Nor are we ever told to die to it, but (as having life in Christ) to mortify or put it to death. Not the old man, but the natural body is raised again at the last day. Do Christians think now that the frightful list of these members on the earth is truly applied to the heathen then, and is correctly given of what they were and are, but that none can be applied to themselves now? Let us remember that the apostle applies it to those who are said to be risen with Christ, to those who had died to sin, and were crucified to the world; to those who had put off the old man and put on the new. The constituent parts of our old nature are all condemned in the cross; and we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Glorifying God is not mere avoidance of the sin which gave occasion to apostolic rebuke and exhortation; it is the obligation of all that name the name of the Lord. If these "members" were only like the thistles that grow on uncultured ground, there would be room for the opinion of some, that by appropriate training and culture the thistles would be removed and good plants take their place. These men forget or deny that the soil is evil, and so evil that a good plant will not take root. Such is the fond expectation of the world, which thinks to educate men to be Christians, and in time to inaugurate the millennium — one of their own making. Their idea of Christianity is the development of what is good in man! But what is developed? Nature is dominated by sin, and the culture of nature as it is is but the culture of sin. Stringent laws may repress crime, but will never cause a thistle to produce figs. How can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? The scripture says not, Pluck off the evil fruit, but "put to death" the members, the constituents. How is this to be done? He, who has never realised (by submission to the righteousness of God) his victory in Christ over sin in his

members, feels but his weakness and the strength of sin; when he would do good, evil is present, and he cries out, "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death"? (Romans 7:1-25 :) Blessed be God, faith in Him who shed His precious blood, by which we have forgiveness of sins, also gives us dominion over sin, so that it shall not reign over our mortal bodies. For as on the one hand the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus liberated me from the law of sin and death; so on the other hand God, sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh and as a sacrifice for sin, that the righteous import of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, condemned sin in the flesh, and by faith in Him we are free. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." In Him we have redemption from the guilt and power of sin. In Him we have put off the old man and have put on the new. For us sin is already judged.

Why then are we exhorted to mortify the "members" since we have put off the "old man"? This we have as regards our standing before God. But the Christian is viewed in two aspects — his standing and his practical condition. Before God we are "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10), "risen in Him" (Colossians 3:1-25 :), "perfected" (Hebrews 10:1-39); and Christ, Who has finished the work of redemption, now sits in witness thereof at the right hand of God. This is our standing. It is by and in Him that we are perfected for ever (eis to dienekes), without a break. Our Redeemer and representative is on the throne of God. Our Forerunner is already within the veil. In Ephesians 4:25-32, etc., on the other hand, it is our condition or state that is looked at. It is the same in Colossians 3:5-8, "Mortify, etc." In both it supposes the standing of grace that we had put off the old man and put on the new. But our condition, while yet on the earth, with all these "members," must be brought into consistency with our standing. So that to glorify God in our body cannot be without mortifying these members, all which are opposed to Him. It is only by faith in Christ in dependence and self-judgment that we are enabled to do this. We have the standing to begin with; and as we wait for Christ and His manifestation when we too shall be manifested with Him in glory, we meanwhile mortify our members which are on earth. These three go together. In Christ we are a new creation: all things are become new; yet we groan in a mortal body; and we long for our absolute change at Christ's coming. We buffet the body, but yet are perfected in Christ. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ Who knew no sin and was made sin for us! What wonders of grace and truth!

Now to glorify God in our body, we must bring it into subjection to Him. Thus Paul felt the need of keeping his body under. Failure there is, and Christ on high is Advocate and Priest for us. But "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;" it is part (and what a blessed part!) of our standing. And we are in Him. As He is, so are we in this world — the unchanging portion of all His own. Therefore through Him let us present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. What a wondrous salvation we have! A living sacrifice is in contrast with those slain on Jewish altars. We are to be as those that presented, not an act now and then but, the whole life: so the apostle beseeches us for our practice. And where sin does not reign, where the members are mortified, holiness of obedience, in separation from man's pride or indifference and the world's evil, is acceptable, which the things of the first covenant were not (Hebrews 8:8; Hebrews 8:13). The spirit of such a sacrifice did Abraham offer when he preferred the obedience of faith to the promise which he, as it were, surrendered to the keeping of the faithful God. So Job, when he, spite of a body covered with sore boils, yielded himself to God, and confessed himself vile. So

Paul, when he rejoiced in his infirmities (not sins), and gloried in the thorn for which he had three times previously prayed that it "might be removed: the grace and strength of Christ were exalted and rested on him. To glorify God in our body is not so much activity in service as subjection to His will. This may mean to suffer the utter subversion of our plans and the deprivation of all; but in every case it is heart-obedience to God. That we are enabled thus to glorify God unfolds the greatness of our redemption and the price paid. How this teaches us to bear our light momentary affliction, and to weigh everything connected with the body in the light of grace and truth! If the body is carefully adorned with the things of this world, if we indulge the desires of the flesh or the mind, how can we glorify God thus? Let us ever remember that we are bought with a price. "Wherefore glorify God in your body." R. B.

S. Great joy.

"Great joy."

Luke 2:10.

Joy is as characteristic of God's people, as its absence is marked in human systems. Oriental reveries, platonic dialogues, and in short all philosophies, ancient or modern, know nothing of this coveted emotion. Yet moderns know less of it than ancients. This would be but natural, seeing that now there is a turning away from the One True Light; whereas of old there was but the warning of conscience, and that often dimmed. Vain then to turn to ancient literature for holy overflowing joy, although much of sweet and pathetic is to be found, clad too with a perfection of form that few moderns have attained, and none have surpassed. So likewise may there not be somewhat of sweetness to be found in literature of our day, such as hovers on the border-land of night and day, beautiful twilight lines, when it is open to the weavers of these fancies to emerge into the clear light of Christian truth? But, however it be as to this, by positive statement as to scripture, as by negative inference from non-Christian writers, there is abundant ground for saying that joy is a distinctive mark of Christianity, as it will be of restored Israel. Do we not often forget this?

"Great joy!" — How fittingly these words are found thus early in this most delightful Gospel wherein the thoughts of so many hearts stand revealed, thoughts gladdened and renewed by holy joy. How different the experience of Anna and Simeon, of the woman that was a sinner, of the prodigal (though doubtless the joy of the father "exceeded"), of the converted robber on the cross, of the two favoured ones, with whom the Lord companied on the wonderful journey to Emmaus — how different the experience of each and all of these from the sad misgivings and perplexities and confessions of heathen sages! I speak with some little knowledge, and am bold to say nothing any of them ever said could comfort the heart, let alone give such joy. How could they? For divine comfort and joy we must go to the word of God, to the Psalms of David pre-eminently in the O.T., to the N.T. generally. Nor anywhere in the later oracles shall we find more gladness than in this exquisite Evangel, which a brilliant writer of the last century, but an apostate from the Faith, called "the most beautiful book in existence."* Are we not too much afraid of joy? There is much to sadden in life, our failures as believers, the state of the world, the confusion of the church, the comparative fewness of believers, the myriads who are indifferent — all this should be deeply felt. Then there is the necessary solemnity when we dwell on the sufferings of the Saviour, and seek to form, however inadequately, as it cannot but be, some conception of what it must have been to a Being of infinite holiness to be "made sin," and to bear the wrath of God against our own sins: all this is not only becoming but indispensable. Still the angel's words abide and proclaim "great joy to all the people." Let Christians more blessed not begrudge it, for here it is the joy of the Messiah for the Jewish people. "For unto you is born this day." In truth what satisfies the heart must of necessity be fraught with joy. Such is Christ and Christianity. Everything else now is a mere will-of-the-wisp, be it coarse or refined. But the believer joins even here, along with faith and hope and love, the peace of God; he joys or boasts in God; and if the joy be too fitful here, it is lasting

beyond the veil. R.B.

S. Heb_1:3

Hebrews 1:3. A word suggests itself on a portion of this striking and familiar verse, "The brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." So our Lord is described. Now in the first place it may be noted that the Revised Version rightly does not put the first "his" in italics, as does the Authorised Version, but in ordinary type, and for the very sufficient reason that though not actually in the original, it is virtually there. In this respect at any rate the Revisers' practice has been sounder than that of the most estimable men who gave us the admirable version we still use and reverently cherish. For it need not be said that what is virtually in the text should be preserved in its counterpart.

Next, we have the word rendered "brightness" in the Authorised Version, undoubtedly a just translation. Yet it falls short of the original, not only because of its extensive application to common life, but more particularly because it fails to give an important shade of meaning, a nuance may I say, that the Revised Version again, as also J.N.D., gives more adequately by the term "effulgence." It is really a "shining off from." The force is of beams of light radiating from a luminous surface. Thus the word is most picturesque, full of active energy, if I may so call it. There is probably no single English word that renders the original Greek (*apaugasma*) so well as "effulgence." As one has said, it is "light from light." How admirably the doctrine here accords with the Johannine statement, "the Word was with God," may here be profitably recalled. "With God," literally, "towards God." It is like face answering to face in a perfect mirror. It is not too fanciful, I think, to speak of the original (*apaugasma*) as a word of delicate bloom. But this is not all. We have the blessed Lord further declared to be "the express image of his (God's) person." Now, first of all, it is interesting to note that in the Greek there is only one word for the twofold English term "express image." And it is a most forcible one. It has been bodily transferred to English in the well-known word "character," which is pure and unaltered Greek, and means (see Liddell and Scott), strictly, an instrument for graving, and then that which is cut in or stamped. To use a homely illustration, one may perhaps think of that which has taken the form of a mould in which it has been cast in liquid shape, and then solidifying. Thus the third stage of meaning is much the same as our word "character," which is now so English, and yet, as already stated, is unchanged Greek. The English reader, of course, would naturally suppose there were two words in the Greek as in the English, as seen both in the Authorised Version "express image," or the more precise and literal rendering ("exact impress") of the Speaker's Commentary. J.N.D.'s rendering, "exact expression," is also more to the point perhaps than the Authorised Version. Thus we see that "image" is not in the original, though giving a very fair idea of its force. It is otherwise in Colossians 1:15, where our Lord is said to be the "image of the invisible God," an all-important declaration, introduced, after the apostle's wont, apparently as if he were going off at a tangent, but really in vital connection with his previous statements. Here then, in Colossians, the word image (*eikon*) is emphatic, as it is not in Hebrews. For the point in the former epistle is to enforce the representative functions of the Lord Jesus. As Man He represents God on earth, and that in perfect moral beauty and holiness. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," as He Himself

says. We carefully note that Christ is not said to be the "likeness" of God. Things are like that are not identical. But who shall divide between the Father and the Son? Nay, the renewed mind rejoices in the sacred mystery of the Son's inscrutable person. But this by way of digression. These brief remarks are rather intended, however imperfectly, to call attention to the striking characterisation of the Saviour in this wonderful verse in Hebrews 1:1-14.

Lastly, we may observe, what students of J. N. D's version, as well as others, well know, that "substance" is a more correct rendering of the Greek hypostasis than the word "person," which has such wide ramifications of meaning, though rightly enough employed in defining the truth as to the blessed Trinity. To say more would be foreign to one's purpose, and more suited to a philological treatise. Here direct spiritual profit is one's aim. R.B.

S. I am the way, and the truth, and the life

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"

(John 14:6) The words of Holy Scripture may be weighed with their context, often best so, but they can sometimes be profitably considered from the point of view of their own intrinsic fulness. Especially is this the case with many of the words of our Lord, peculiarly so, perhaps, with those that are recorded in the Fourth Gospel. It need hardly be said that such isolated contemplation makes no assumption of exhausting the meaning of the Saviour's briefest sayings. Rather the contrary. For the more His words are dwelt on, the fuller they seem to grow, and they prove their divinity by a perennial freshness, constantly striking the thoughtful Christian reader with new wonder as he recurs to them, and sometimes almost startling him with some, to him, novel aspect of the truth unrealised before. They are indeed "words of profound illumination" (Dean Wace); always solemn, they arrest now by their strength and majesty, now by their tenderness and sweetness, again by their sternness and severity — such severity as could not be absent from the words of the All-Holy. An interesting living writer who has said many true, many beautiful things anent the "common salvation," sadly fails, however, in speaking, in one of his more recent books, of the "essential sweetness of Christ's character." How one-sided is this, and how forgetful that He who is in question is no mere man! So might one speak of some amiable human character, who would necessarily have what the French happily call *les défauts de ses qualités*, in other words, that want of balance that marks more or less even the most Christian of mankind. Not so with our Lord. His was the perfect evenness that is symbolised in the meal offering. Nay, singular to say, an unbeliever, the brilliant Frenchman whose "Vie de Jesus" made such a stir a generation or so ago, was far nearer the truth, when he summed up the comprehensive character of our Lord's utterances in a striking phrase, saying of them that they were marked by "a flashing brightness, at once sweet and terrible" (*une clarté, étincelante, a la fois douce et terrible*). Yes, they must be terrible to such as turn away wilfully from them.

Here, however, they are wholly sweet, though pervaded by the inalienable atmosphere of solemnity. The divine dignity of the Speaker impresses the hearer, and also the thought of what the consequences must be of rejecting His words. Clearly they are intolerant of all other claims, being definite, authoritative, and final. And first let us notice the implicit assertion that He who speaks is no less than Jehovah. "I am," runs the sentence, and the mind at once recalls the sublime words of the Old Testament, "I am hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). "I am that I am" (*ibid*). It is God's sovereign and eternal Name. It is not fanciful to recognise this, occurring as it does so many times in this Gospel. I am the Bread of Life, the Door, the True Vine, the Good Shepherd.

Next let us mark the perfection of the order that characterises our verse. It is not haphazard; of that we may be sure. For the way leads to the truth, and the truth leads to life. Doubtless the Christian life is spoken of in the New Testament (see Acts 19:9; Acts 19:23) as a way, but here, of course, with some difference in the application of the metaphor. Yet truly the two uses shade off

into one another, for Christ is the way all along, even as He is the beginning and the end — "Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ," as one has sung. "I am the way." The desponding Thomas (and here it is desirable to look for a moment at the context) had been deploring that he and his brother disciples knew of no way by which they might rejoin their beloved Master and Lord. So He declares to them that He is Himself the Way, that everything is summed up in Him, the truth and the life as well, that He is "Christus Consummator." We may also notice, incidentally, that here, as so often, we have a trinity, marking divine completeness — the way, the truth, and the life. In the presence of such claims how paltry are all reason's solutions of human destiny, as is likewise all sublunary grandeur! Where else is there a way in this dark and distracted world? Naturally we brush aside its ephemeral and turbulent politics, its vain pleasures, its equally vain ambitions. But what about its poets and philosophers? Is there any hope for us here? Surely not, though the poets do sometimes give us partial truths. As the late editor of the Bible Treasury used to say, "the poets are occasionally right, the philosophers always wrong." Doubtless some may think this a harsh judgment. But how can they fail to go wrong who start from false assumptions, to wit, the competency of the human mind to deal finally with moral and spiritual problems, the right of sick men to discuss the methods of their physician "As an acute modern writer (Dr. Illingworth) has pointed out, "Men assume that their intellect will act as impartially upon spiritual problems as upon mathematics, and this is not, and never can be the case. A sinner criticising God is like a patient criticising his physician at a time when his mind is clouded by disease." And earlier in his remarks, ad hoc, this writer had forcibly said that the successes of the human mind in secular learning and in science had emboldened men to deal with equal confidence with spiritual matters, such as "the being and nature of God, and His relations to man." "Here," says he, "we are moving in a region that sin profoundly affects," and where the unaided mind is bound to err. So we go back with renewed delight to the gracious words of Him who spoke as never man spoke, who alone had, and has, "words of eternal life"; and rejoice to know that that way leads us to the truth, and the truth leads to the life; and that is "life indeed." R.B.

S. Idolatry

Idolatry

R. Beacon.

Man is religious by nature, and the only creature of all that lives upon the earth that was originally created with sentiments and faculties needed for religion, that is, a creature capable of apprehending a Supreme Being, and with a feeling or sentiment of veneration for Him. Man has many faculties in common with the animal creation, as seeing, hearing, and others wherein the lower animal excels man. In the mental faculties the attempt to compare the brute with man is idle. The most sagacious animal is separated from man by an impassible gulf. Scripture declares this difference, and also that to know the spirit of the beast that goeth downward is as much beyond the reach of man as to know the spirit of man that goeth upward. What we do learn from Ecclesiastes 3:21 is that the spirit of man is immortal, and comparing it with Ecclesiastes 12:7, that it is capable of worshipping God. Man was formed to be such. All creation is to the praise of the Creator, but man's praise is the homage of his will. But this capacity to offer intelligent praise is necessarily accompanied by responsibility; and we know that in the case of the first man his sense of responsibility was not a mere vague impression, but was made tangible to his mind by the prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: a commandment with the penalty of death attached. This one test was given, and by it is proof of man's capacity to apprehend God, 1:e., One to whom he owed obedience, but also his inability to abide in innocency. The tree was the visible means of paying homage to God, the witness of his subjection to the authority of his Maker. Obedience would secure to him all the blessings of Eden, it was the link which bound him to God. That link is the obedience of the will. Being disobedient, he lost his status before God, lost his happiness and was turned out of the garden. The original link was broken, it could never be reformed. If man was ever to be again in relationship with God, it must be on entirely new ground. Into that garden he could never re-enter. It was a garden of delights for innocence alone. And guilt once incurred makes a return to it impossible. There may be forgiveness, there may be purgation from guilt — and blessed be God both are of grace — but the fact of guilt in the past is as true as the fact of forgiveness. God has provided a new garden where the guilty may be restored to more than the pleasures of Eden. That new garden is anticipated by faith, and there is found forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christians.

Disobedience and expulsion from Eden did not bring man down to the evil of the irresponsible creature; God had breathed into him the breath of life. This breath of life is not an emanation of the Deity, as some phrase it, meaning thereby that man is a part of God, which not only denies the personality of God but leaves no room even for the idea of sin. For if man be a part of God, all that he does must be the doing of God, and all that he is must be the expression of God. Therefore since all is "God," sin is impossible, or God is contrary to Himself. This is blasphemy. There is no form of infidelity so absurd as this; for even Atheism does not make the deeds of sinners to be the acts of God which must be if the soul be a part of the Deity. This is the germ of Pantheism. The

breath of life is not a partaking of the nature of God, but the gift of immortality; sin did not destroy this gift. Man was still as he was before, namely, immortal as to his soul, religious as to his nature. It is this religiousness of nature which makes his fall to be his ruin. The consciousness, not acquired but innate, of a Power above himself who in some measure influences if not absolutely controls his condition and shapes his destiny, together with a somewhat vague idea of his accountability, which is only the complement of immortality, are doubtless in man the springs of idolatry. That is, the faculties with which the Creator endowed man that he might be a worshipper of God, make him through the fall an idolater. When was idolatry developed? Not before the flood. Some think that a comparison of Genesis 6:5 with Romans 1:23 gives ground to believe that idolatry, as we now accept the term, existed before the flood. But the silence of Scripture as to idolatry, and its express statement that violence and corruption at that time filled the whole earth does not afford solid ground for that opinion. It is not that nature was less fallen then, but it is evidence of the kind of slavery in which Satan held the antediluvian race. In a thralldom which needed not false gods to rivet their chains, they were led on by Satan to the objects which nature presented, things to be seen and handled, not to deify them but to make them subservient to themselves and for their gratification. Satan in the garden said "Ye shall be as gods," and man was truly led on by him to the possession of power over the material things around him. We find among the antediluvians the cultivation of those arts which are said to ameliorate the condition of man. They builded cities, were artificers in brass and iron, and learned to handle the harp and organ. Modern civilization is gauged by progress in these and their cognate subjects. We can scarcely suppose that the city built by Cain was a mere assemblage of rude huts. And it is certain that some scientific knowledge was necessary to produce brass [? copper] and iron from the ore, and mechanical skill to be artificers. See the fine arts too, for the harp and the organ seldom stand alone in a community. Proficiency in all is surely not to be looked for in the same individual; but in cities where one of the fine arts flourishes, there also will be found men who excel in others. Among the antediluvians was the genius that invented instruments of music, as well as the knowledge that dug in the earth for ore, and planned a city. And in the origination, the discovery or invention, of these and other things, the men before the flood had as much intelligence and material wisdom as any after the flood. There is not the slightest reason to infer that the antediluvian organ was rude and ill made as compared with the modern instrument of the same name. If any inference can be made from their circumstances, it might be shown without any strain that there is sufficient ground for saying that their instruments might be superior to those we know spite of modern improvement, and that those who lived before the flood excelled in all that which the world has ever boasted since. There were giants in those days. Is that a mere reference to physical strength and immense form? Is it not quite as much and perhaps specially to mental and intellectual greatness? Giant-intellect is no uncommon expression now. But the Bible calls attention to the rapid and immense progress of the antediluvian race in the arts of civilization. "There were giants in the earth in those days," and among the inventors were Jubal and Tubal-cain long before. But their advance in those things that herald civilization, or follow in its wake, did not prevent the earth being filled with violence and corruption; and putting their evil side by side with their knowledge, what a meaning is found in Ecclesiastes 7:29 "God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions;" that is, the things that now make this world pleasant to man, which refine his manners, which extend his power over nature, are not incompatible with the reign of sin and death. No doubt God has overruled the inventions and

discoveries familiar to us to meet the need of man; He has permitted human knowledge and power to increase wonderfully, and He is wise and good in permitting it. But we do not forget that man was a sinner when he discovered and invented.

It is not improbable that all the knowledge of the antediluvians perished with them in the flood, unless we can suppose that Noah and his sons had acquired the whole Encyclopedia and so carried it on to the next generation. But if so, why did nine centuries elapse before we read of instruments of music when Miriam and the women of Israel took timbrels to sing unto Jehovah? It is far more probable — all previous knowledge lost — that this length of time was clue to the fact of man having to begin the world's history over again. His life was reduced to a tithe of what it had been, with less energy, and less skill, either acquired by use or imparted by supernatural agency; he neither multiplied so fast nor subdued the earth so rapidly. And it may be that post-diluvians have only partially re-discovered and re-invented what had been lost in the flood. This was a loss which man could to some extent remedy; but there was a loss which no effort of his could supply, the true knowledge of God. Man did not like to retain the knowledge of God; therefore he was given up to the evil resulting from his ignorance. Before the flood there was no direct interposition. God had His witnesses, but confined to the thin line of Abel, Enoch, and Noah which reached to the deluge. Their faith and righteousness was the sole testimony, and there being no public revelation (if we may so say), the power of Satan was not seen in denying it, or opposing it by idolatry. The word in Genesis 4:26, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," does not necessarily mean that they were righteous; it may simply mean that the idea of God was not wholly lost. For Adam was yet alive. But after that judgment the earth being overflowed with water perished; which would not fail to impress the next generation with the power of God. The religious element of man's nature was developed, and being ignorant of God he became the dupe of Satan, and a worshipper of idols. And idolatry soon became universal. To stem its evil and to recall to the true knowledge of Himself, God separated Abram from his kindred and his country. He was called out from idolatry. His family in common with other families of the country were idolaters. His separation from the family did not separate the family from idolatry, for we find it with Laban long after. The knowledge of God being lost, man turned to the resources of his own mind to fill the void. It was soon filled with an object that never attracted love, though it raised fear. The homage paid was the price for averting its wrath. In fact the object took its character from that of its votaries. The debased Egyptian adored an ox, reptiles, leeks; the cruel Canaanite, and the Israelite after him, burnt his children in honour of Moloch; the sensual Greek and Roman gave qualities to their gods unfit to name. Going farther East we find idolatry perhaps less cruel and equally sensual, but their idols horrid and monstrous in form.

There is, however many the differences arising from climate, country and character, one feature found in all the forms of idolatry: all contain the idea of propitiation whether by fruits of the earth, or by blood of animals, or human sacrifices. The god must be appeased. As both the idol and the homage given are products of fallen nature, which is both sinful and cruel, no marvel if the offering of human blood was reckoned the most acceptable. But whatever the form or the victim, propitiation implies a feeling, and a previous idea, however ill defined, of having become obnoxious to the wrath of the idol. Does not this show that a sense of sin — doubtless very vague — and therefore of dread is innate? And seeing this universal dread of wrath, what so likely, or so calculated, to produce it as the traditional accounts of the deluge, of which in dim and misty lines

every nation has the record? For let Atheists deny God as they may, the feeling of being obnoxious to His wrath is found more or less in all, and the worldwide history of idolatry gives evidence of it. Nor are instances wanting of defiant infidels confessing it in moments of fear. Conscience may be lulled for a time, but, when not seared as with a hot iron, sometimes speaks in words of utter despair.

Man must have his god, otherwise he would not be man. Nor can the object of homage be always a mere abstraction — as Brahm in India. That abstraction of eternal sleep developed itself into the triad of Brahma, Kishnu, and Siva (a parody upon the revelation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and these soon had their representatives in unnatural forms. From the mental image formed in a corrupt mind it is but a short step to the golden or wooden idol in the temple. Every shape and form had its prototype in the imagination, which to the philosopher was supplemented by the material things of nature; but to the vulgar, surrounding objects were the basis upon which the superstructure of idolatry rested. Through the senses their imagination was fed by the things seen and felt; and though these be not the sole source of idolatry, they greatly modify its form and multiplied its gods. For the mountain and the valley, the river, the grove, the heavens above and the waters beneath had their divinities, and everywhere that which in nature most impressed man soon took rank as a god. Nor let us forget the greatest factor which produced this confused mass of superstition and credulity. Not only did man not like to retain the knowledge of God and thus become the dupe of his senses, but over all was the delusive power of Satan who held man in captivity through his fear and lusts. The loss of the knowledge of the true God, to a creature endowed with religious faculties, must result in subjective idolizing. Satan, the God of this world, presented himself in a tangible form and made it objective.

1883 218 The religious element in man's nature was not eradicated by sin, but while every faculty of his mind and every instinct of his nature is debased and perverted, man's complete ruin and his greatest guilt are seen in the degradation of those same faculties originally given as the means for worshipping God. The endowments which placed him above all other creatures now sink him beneath them.

After the flood idolatry spread rapidly. For there was a void in man's breast which nothing that he had in common with the lower animals could meet. It was a religious want, and anything that pretended to satisfy it was adopted. Religious practices make one half the history of mankind. The ancient records as given by man are so full of fable that we turn at once to the Bible, where alone we get truth. Not that we shall find there a detailed history of idolatry as is given of faith, but facts here and there which prove its dominancy and universal spread. The first mention of idolatry is with Laban, whose images Rachel had stolen. That they were objects of worship is plain from his words "wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" Nor was Jacob's household free from them till but a short time before the death of Rachel. Evidently Laban and his family were idolaters. But it also appears that they had some superstitious knowledge of God — no doubt by tradition. There was a mingling of what they had received from earlier times with the image-worship growing around them. And in such a case even to pay homage to the true God is only superstition. The name of God was not unknown, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia pretended to revere it, but they joined idols with it. We might ask whether they made a difference in the degree of homage given to Him who was to them "the unknown God," and homage paid to idols? Was there such distinction practised then as we find now expressed by the words *latreia* and *dulia*? a distinction which where

it is conceived only deceives the id dater of the present day with the thought that he is a christian. For as we see that one feature of ancient idolatry was not the denial of the name of God, but joining it with idols, so the "dulia," of the present day is joining virgin and saints, yea, preferring them, to Christ. It is idolatry. The next fact is in connection with Egypt, and we find an organised system and that the inhabitants had made some advance in national life. Idolatry had become a state religion. Egypt was a kingdom when Abram was leading a pastoral life, and the title of Pharaoh was given to their kings as afterwards that of Caesar was given to the Roman Emperors; and we may reasonably infer that some progress was made both in political and religious cultivation. And later on Egypt is found in commercial relation with other people. Merchants from Gilead, Ishmaelites, were going thither for trading purposes when they bought Joseph to sell there as a slave. There was a market for spicery, balm, and myrrh; and their readiness to purchase Joseph seems to say that he was not the first youth carried thither and sold into slavery. A slave market as well as one for spicery was held in Egypt. But the kingdom was not then so compact as when through the administration of Joseph the Egyptians were no longer proprietors of the soil, but mere tenants "in capite" and servants of the king, paying a fifth of the produce of the land as tribute to him. But if the individual lost his independence, the nation as a body politic gained power. Authority was centralised, one mind and one will were supreme. There could be no clashing of divergent opinions in cabinet councils, for the ministers had only to carry out the monarch's behests. When the king is wise and good, no form of government is more conducive to national prosperity, and individual happiness. And when the Lord Jesus takes the kingdom of this world, it will be seen in infinite perfection. For it is God's purpose to give peace to the world by One Man, the Man of His right hand. The dream of this age is of universal peace through the predominancy of the popular element; its motto is *Vox populi vox Dei*. It would be nearer the truth to say *Vox populi vox diaboli*. But when God's King is seated on His own throne, it will be divinely and blessedly true to say. *Vox Regis vox Dei*. But the world must wait for His reign. No doubt idolatry was as prevalent before the king's authority established it as afterwards. But it is only authority that can organise it, and form it into a system. And thus it was when Joseph was in Egypt; for the priesthood were a separate class, and Potipherah had the position of chief among them, his name bearing the signification of prince. And there were also magicians and wise men whom Pharaoh called to interpret his dreams. These are a class of men always found among idolaters. The cunning magician is the complement of the common idolater. Where the latter is, there will be found the "wise" man who fattens upon the ignorance of the common crowd. But superstition does not prevent secular order. Indeed in a kingdom which is not a mere aggregation of savages, an organised system of religion, and of internal police regulations is always found. Potiphar was apparently chief in secular matters as Potipherah in the religious. There were other official dignities, though not so high in rank, as the chief butler and the chief baker. And so we are not surprised to find wealth and luxury where such as these exist. Joseph had his silver cup, and his chariot before which runners were to shout, "Bow the knee." These are sure evidences of material progress, and a measure of refinement. But there is with it, or had been up to the time of Joseph's advent to power, a corresponding advance in idolatry. And this is the point before us, that material prosperity aids the development of idolatry. And in Egypt, as in most countries since, the power of the State is used to enforce the religion of the State. From Genesis 47:22 we learn that the priesthood was a distinct class, and maintained by the State; that is, a revenue was established and set apart for them. But when Joseph was appointed chief administrator of the kingdom, can

we conceive him enforcing idolatry by law? No. Nor on the other hand would he deprive the priests of sustenance. Thus while they received state pay their public-worship of idols would be prohibited. Joseph mounted at one step from the prison to the highest power. Only in the throne was Pharaoh greater than he. Inspired by God he had interpreted the king's double dream, and God had given to the king and to all with him the conviction that the interpretation was a prophetic intimation of coming events. Insomuch that the king said the Spirit of God was in him, and therefore the fittest man to carry out the sage counsel he had given to the king. All submitted at once to the immense influence with which the manifest wisdom of God had clothed him. What then more probable than that Joseph was able to set aside the public observance of idolatry, and to bring the Egyptians at least outwardly to acknowledge the God of Joseph? The fact of his marriage with Asenath the daughter of the prince-priest of On seems to corroborate this. For "On," a word meaning the sun, which had the highest place in their mythology, shows Potipherah to be the high priest of their system. Is it not difficult to imagine — if idolatry continued as before — that the daughter of the highest priest would be given to one who denied their gods, or Joseph could still be next to the king in authority? Possibly Potipherah and his daughter were true converts to the faith of One God, while the majority of priests restrained and forbidden to observe their idolatrous rites would be bitter enemies to Joseph and all his kindred. The priests naturally would seek to uphold the system which gave them importance and to retain their influence over the people. Indeed we find that the Egyptians did keep up a distinction between themselves and Joseph's brethren; they would not eat with them a presumptive if not a direct proof that in heart they clung to their old gods. While his influence lasted, and while the same dynasty occupied the throne, Joseph's laws and ordinances would be in force. But when about two centuries after a new king arose who knew not Joseph, a not unwilling people went back to their idolatry, and then the Israelites were subjected to a cruel tyranny. The words "new king" seem to express more than merely a successor, and point to a new dynasty. Does not Romans 9:17 agree with this — "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up from amongst men:" Possibly the whole dynasty clung to the tradition of Joseph, and were driven front the throne through the adherents of the old religion gaining the ascendancy, and a new king — first of a new dynasty — who annulled all the decrees of Joseph was placed on the throne. But all this I merely submit to the judgment of others, and do not at all affirm as certain. The Israelites were contemned as being shepherds, an avocation which the Egyptians despised, and hence the kings who protected them were probably called the shepherd kings, and shared the same detestation, execrated as having impiously shut the doors of the temples, and thus bringing upon the nation the anger of the gods. Such was the record of an historian who, ages after, ascribed to idols the judgments that fell upon this Pharaoh. The cunning of the Devil, the blindness of man are here most plain; for the judgments of God were against the idols. Satan makes man believe the "gods" did it as a punishment for shutting up their temples. This historian (Diodorus Siculus) says that a plague broke out in Egypt through the anger of the gods, because there were many foreigners there who practised unknown rites in their worship, and in consequence the ancient religion was neglected. The Egyptians feared that they would never be able to appease their gods unless they expelled all the strangers from their country. He mentions Danaus and Cadmus, but the greater number of the expelled was under the conduct of Moses, a wise and brave man, who led his followers into Judea and there built Jerusalem and the temple, and who pretended to be inspired by Jaoh. This was written twelve centuries after the event, and through all that time this tradition which gave the glory of God to

idols was received as the truth. Thus it is that Satan has always turned the truth of God into a lie. God's sore judgments were against idolatry; Satan persuades man that these judgments support it. It may be mentioned that chronologists assert that Danaus and Cadmus with their followers did arrive in Greece about the same time that Moses and the Israelites departed from Egypt.

1883 232 The next mention of idolatry is in connection with the chosen people. They made a calf, no doubt in imitation of the Egyptian Apis. The image of the calf brought to mind the accustomed rites of its worship: "the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." Israel in nature were as much idolaters as the Egyptians, and seeing their persistency in idolatry notwithstanding the ways and means of God to keep them from it, no proof is greater of man being an idolater according to the principle of fallen nature. The same thing is seen at the end when they come to the borders of Moab. They went to the sacrifices of Moab's gods. "The people did eat and bowed down to their gods." It is not only that the Gentiles were wholly given to it, but Israel, to whom is the adoption and the glory, and the covenant and the law-giving, and the services, and the promises. Even the judgments of God did not overcome their love of idols.

We have seen how the name of God was mixed up with their false worship. Laban could speak of God; Pharaoh, that the Spirit of God was in Joseph; and the idolatrous revelry of the Israelites at the foot of Sinai was called a feast to Jehovah. So in Micah's mother is another instance of this blasphemous mingling of the name of Jehovah with the image of silver she made. The silver was dedicated to Jehovah, and the manner of dedication was to make it into an idol and then worship it. The man Micah himself had a house of gods. And the ephod which God had provided for His own priest was used for idolatry. When Solomon was in the zenith of his power, his many wives led him to build high places for their gods. Indeed idolatry was the besetting sin up to the time of the Babylonish captivity. Something of it was learnt in Jacob's family; his beloved Rachel had her images; it was better learnt in Egypt; and never did the Israelites cease to be idolaters until removed from the land — perhaps not until the remnant were brought back to Jerusalem. Both Joshua and Stephen are witnesses that they were not free from it even in the journey through the wilderness. For Joshua bid them "put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt." They had brought idols from Egypt and had retained them up to that time. And Stephen lays it to their charge in words which throw further light upon God's ways with them in the wilderness. They made a calf in those days, and worshipped it. Then God turned and gave them up. That sin of the calf was the primary cause of their captivity beyond Babylon. But the point I would specially notice now is that Stephen charges them with idol worship while in the wilderness: "Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made." (See Acts 7:41-43.)

Idolatry has one invariable — effect, it degrades the moral part or the soul. The writings of men who were idolaters, which treat of metaphysics or science, show no want of intellectual power, nor does the literature of that age fail to command the respect of the present, when morality and its obligations are not the theme. And no marvel, for true morality can only be learnt from the Bible. Ancient philosophy discourses grandly about it, but never was it observed for its own sake. For the sake of renown great things were done; for the sake of praise a man would be honest and truthful; but to love and follow whatsoever was of good report; honest, true, etc., for their own sake (and this is true morality) is ascribing to human nature a quality which it cannot possess. Nor have I introduced heart-reference to God, without which no thing is right in heart or practice. Idolatry

cannot instill the love of what is pure and lovely and of good report, on the contrary it engenders and strengthens the feelings and sentiments of all that is hateful and impure. And as we know in many instances, it has crushed the strongest instincts of nature, for parents have burnt their own children in honour of an idol. At other times the devotees are seized with a sort of frenzy or madness as the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:1-46 :), who cried out and after their manner cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out. Nothing here surely is of good report. Nor were such things of exceptional occurrence; that and the licentiousness and drunkenness seen, perhaps not less in classic Greece and Rome than among the Canaanitish worshippers of Ashtaroth, all these form the ritual of idolatry. The voices of the prophets declare that Israel had sunk into all these depths of corruption and cruelty, that, while pretending to the knowledge of God, they equalled, if not even excelled, the heathen in the practice of all those abominations. To keep them from this horrible wickedness God put a hedge around Israel. They were a walled vineyard, with a tower and its winepress in it. — His power to protect and his goodness to cheer; also a social hedge, for they were not to intermarry with the nations outside, all intercourse being forbidden, except as individual Gentiles should break away from their own kindred and become proselytes to the faith of one God. A moral hedge was then put round them, which had special reference and bearing upon the idols of Egypt. Such was the law and the ordinances given to them. The great need of a wall of separation, if it were possible to keep thorn from idolatry, was seen at the very moment that God was providing the means for it; for then it was, remembering Egypt's idols, they made one like it. The first commandment struck at the root of idolatry. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There were many "other gods" in Egypt, likenesses of things in heaven above and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, the Sun and the Moon, Osiris and Isis. Animals also were the objects of superstitious homage, as the ox, the dog, the cat, the hawk, the crocodile and others. Nor did they limit their reverence to animals, but even deified the vegetables that grew in their gardens. Leeks and onions were invoked as gods. Had we not unimpeachable evidence of such amazing debasement, it would be incredible. It is the derision of one who was himself an idolater. "You enter," says Lucian, "into a magnificent temple, every part of which glitters with gold and silver. You there look attentively for a god, and are cheated with a stork, an ape, or a cat," and he adds "a just emblem of too many palaces, the masters of which are far from being the brightest ornaments of them." The doctrine of the Metempsychosis — which is said to have originated with the Egyptians — was a natural outcome of such a system of idolatry. For the soul to pass into the body of one of the sacred animals must by them have been esteemed a great honour. Modern apologists of idolatry (for what else can they be?) have said that worship was not paid to the animals, but to the gods of whom they were the symbols. So exactly said the philosophic heathen of old. But the vulgar saw only the animal, and though the philosopher might despise, he had to hide his contempt. Paul at Ephesus was in danger of his life because by his preaching many were turned away from the worship of Diana and from the image which fell down from Jupiter. The intellectual at Ephesus might think of "Diana," but the common people only saw the "image" which they were told fell down from heaven. The rude block or sculptured stone, the little images that Rachel hid in the camel's furniture, or the great image of gold in the plain of Dura, even the lowest animal, or the common leek filled the eye of the ignorant masses, and nothing beyond.

Another commandment was, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain." To take His name in vain is not merely uttering it in vulgar oaths, but what is equally, if not more offensive

to God, the associating it with idols. This was done in Egypt. One or more of the Divine attributes was applied to the sun, to the moon, and to each of their idols. Nay, the incommunicable name of self-existence was found, as Plutarch records, as an inscription in one of their temples. "I am all that has been, is, and ever shall be." Where did the Egyptians get the idea of self-existence? There was evidence of the Creator's eternal power and Godhead in the things that He had made; but man lost sight of Him, and fixed his eye upon the creature, and looking only there ignored its evidence. And his mind, outside the testimony of creation, was incapable of conceiving it. Where else could the Egyptians have had this absolute, and to man incomprehensible, yet necessary expression of the One Supreme Being, than from Moses, who said "I am" had sent him? What more likely than when the Egyptian priests had witnessed the power of "I am" by the hand of Moses they transferred that name to their god? Is not this the most offensive feature in idolatry, the giving the glory of God to another, and His praise to graven images? (See Isaiah 42:8). But this gives evidence that whatever notion the heathen had of One God, it came first from a source opposed to idolatry. Afterwards fable being mixed with truth, the name of the Absolute was given to idols, and the truth which condemns the worship of idols was used to maintain it. No deeper dishonour can be to the Creator God.

1883 242 Again, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work." The Egyptians dedicated each day of the week to one of their gods. Processions and obscene mirth characterised the homage paid to them. Jehovah commanded the Israelites to keep holy the Sabbath day, and the divine reason for the consecration of this day is that God after the six days' work of creation rested on the seventh day. After the work of six days the command was imperative to rest on the seventh. It is not a bare permission but a command, and in effect the prohibition of idolatrous feasts. Working six days and resting the seventh cut off all opportunity for the riotous feasts of idolatry, and the special guard of the law against it is plain. Moreover we see that idolatry interferes with God's arrangements for the social order of everyday life. Among the heathen, starting from Egypt every day of the week was consecrated to some idol. The same signification of name for each of the seven days is found in the East, in the barbarous North, and in Rome when it was the great centre of civilization and of the world's power. The same names used by Pagans are retained by Christendom — names in honour of some god, and a proof how widespread that form and aspect is, that had its development if not its origin in idolatrous Egypt. In our own land the Quakers made a vain attempt against these pagan names by adopting the terms, First day, Second day, etc.; but they were too deeply implanted to be uprooted by such an isolated body. What is in a name? Nothing per se. But the fact of identity of names proves that the stream of idolatry which issued from Egypt has washed the shores of other countries in Asia and in Europe. When the Lord Jesus was here on the earth He condensed the whole law into two commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii). If the first and great commandment strikes at the root of idolatry, the second no less denounces the fruits of it. The sins forbidden in the second table of the law are the fruits of the flesh truly, but they flow direct from idolatry; and when the Lord Jesus said "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," He summed up in a word the whole second table of the law. Idolatry forbids none, permits all, sanctions some; for the feasts observed in praise of their idols were the occasions for excess of riot, and debauchery was the incense offered to them. The morality of idolaters is on a par with their worship. Their moral sense was governed by

superstition; this led them to vice that allowed no check.

Honour to parents is the first thing in the second table. The Egyptians, like the Spartans afterwards, paid respect to old age; but this might be paid where there was no honour rendered to parents such as the law enjoined, and of which obedience is the essence. Whether this commandment was commonly observed by the youth of Egypt, or not, we know that filial obedience forms no part of the code of idolatry, nor does it forbid anything that the law of God forbids. On the contrary the two next prohibitions are sanctioned. The Egyptians annually sacrificed a girl, and some affirm a boy and a girl to the Nile. In cities called Typhonian at certain seasons men were immolated. Theft and false witness were venial. Not the perpetration of the crime, but the discovery of it was considered shameful.

Such was the condition into which idolatry plunged mankind. Nor is this the worst aspect of it. It was far worse, and so displayed in Israel and Judah that the images of the gods whose worship sanctioned such abominations were placed in the temple of Jehovah. It was lowering the true God to the level of their idols. As with the Gentile so with the Israelite, their gods were not only the deifying the worst passions of man, but the blinded and perverse mind fastened upon the objects around it, and clothed them with supernatural power. All that was grand or fearful, all that inspired awe or admiration, was deemed the dwelling-place of a god. Day and night, the winds, the sea were presided over by an imaginary deity. A god was found on the mountain top, and in the gloomy cavern. The smiling cornfield and the dark recesses of the forest, rivers, fountains, each had its tutelary divinity. Gradually, near the sacred places, temples were raised, and a symbol of the god placed therein; then homage paid to it until at last even the imaginary deity had to give place to the material idol. If amid all this darkness there was with some the faintest idea of a sole Power or Being above all, as with the Athenians (Acts 17:1-34 :), it was only that he was too high and too great to be concerned with man. A god unknown must have his shrine; but the true God was unknown, for He is so much concerned with man that in His love He gave His only-begotten Son to die for him, that believing he might not perish but have everlasting life.

If we turn for a moment to secular writers we find that this notion of an otiose god largely obtained in the East, in India. Among the Hindus, their "Supreme" was so wrapped up in his own perfections as to commit the charge of this world to inferior deities, and therefore in his relation to men and things above in eternal sleep. This was their "Brahm" who in his primary state is a being without qualities or attributes, without intellect, without consciousness, without intelligence! A being without these is an impossibility. The Supreme is, The absolute NOTHING!! But Brahm awakes to consciousness, (how such a nonentity could be a marvel), and then he becomes omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and exclaims "I am!!!" And this is where the vaunted intellect of man leads us when it prys into the regions above mere matter. Western philosophy does not travel by the same route, but its last stage is not less absurd. For if the Hindu, in his mythological journey back to the Original Cause of all, arrives at eternal sleep; confusion, or chaos, with the eternity of matter is the Ultima Thule of the Pagan west, where was found no other solution of the problem of good and evil as seen in the present condition of creation, than that each is eternal and was ever in conflict.

Historians say that idolatry as a system was carried from Egypt to India after the age of Joseph, or about the year B.C. 1635, or a little later. That afterwards the same organised system spread from

the north east of Asia to the north west of Europe, and prevailed throughout this region before B.C. 542. The Hindu doctrine of Brahm seems to confirm this. God's assertion of Himself as "I am" could never have been conceived by fallen man, and it must have been carried to India from the land where that name was first declared. Those who have examined Hindu mythology assert that its fundamental doctrine is one God. (What kind of God it is we have just seen). If so, then there is the fact of God's revelation of Himself as the One God, to the Gentile world; the responsibility of the idolater in presence of this revelation, and the perversion of this truth by man, under the power of Satan. Divergent in detail and development as this system became in different countries, its identity as to source is also seen in that time is reckoned by weeks and days, and that the days of the week are consecrated to the same or similar gods.*

[*The days of the week are thus known see Ency. Metro. Vol. 9: Intro.) in the Indian, Roman, and North Europe or Scandinavian languages, and I add the corresponding English names.

Andity War — Dies Solis, the Sun's day — Sunday.

Soma War — Dies Lunae, the Moon's day — Monday.

Mungela War — Martis dies, Thisco's day — Tuesday.

Boodha War — Mercurii dies, Woden's day — Wednesday Vrihaspat War — Iovis dies, Thor's day — Thursday Shukra War — Veneris dies, Frea's day — Friday Themisker War — Saturni dies, Seater's day — Saturday History of Idolatry.

1883 258 There are also other traces of Egyptian idolatry. The Ganges in India was accounted sacred as the Nile in Egypt, the sun in both countries, in India a cow, reminding one of Apis. But the worship of cats and dogs, of leeks and onions, is not found in India. There idolatry took a somewhat different direction. Symbols of their gods were not sought for among the brutes, or in their kitchen gardens. They multiplied their gods, but as a rule, all were in the shape of men and women, sometimes with a monstrous and unnatural addition or change when a particular attribute or quality was to be made prominent; as when the head of an elephant was given to a human body to express prudence and sagacity, also four arms to show power. As an expression of an abstract idea, it is that of an untutored and perhaps childish mind; but from an aesthetic point the Hindu idol is disgusting and repulsive. The ancient form of Hinduism differs from its present, which is known under the name of Brahman-ism. But a mere glance at the course of idolatry after its authoritative establishment and organization in Egypt does not require more than the notice of the transition from the pantheistic aspect of the ancient Hindu mythology to the fundamental idea of one god, as Brahm, with polytheistic associations. There is another idolatrous system, that of Buddha. This is said to be less gross and barbarous than Brahmanism. While Brahm is a myth, Buddha may have been a real personage who, disgusted with the cruelties practised by the Brahmans, formed a sect of his own. But the Buddhists were driven out of India and settled principally in Ceylon. Some went to China, others to Tartary, and possibly even to Scandinavia. The Brahmans on the contrary would not go beyond the limits of India, their sacred region. In their emigration the Buddhists carried images of Buddha into these countries whither they went, and worshipped him as supreme, but mixed with his worship some of the Brahminical or Egyptian mythology. Thus the stream of that system of idolatry which had its beginning in Egypt has flowed thence over the greater part of the East and a modification of it sweeping back overflowed all Europe. And this

must have happened between the years B.C. 1635 and B.C. 542, for at the later date the Buddhists had been driven out of India.

Among the Greeks and Romans the fabulous deities were not living animals, as are found with the Egyptians, nor images of unnatural shapes and forms as in India, though not quite free from the latter (as Pan with the feet of a goat), but by some of them certain animals, if not deified, were considered sacred to a particular deity, (as the peacock to Juno). With these masters of the world idolatry seems divested of its bestial form, and unaccompanied with the more bloody rites observed in the North. By them idolatry was made attractive, clothed in forms of beauty and voluptuousness. Yet Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury are but different names for the Scandinavian Thor, Irea and Woden, and may be traced to the Egyptian Osiris and Isis. But if there be room for question as to the practical identity of the idols of one country with those of another, one thing is certain that the same superstition, the same cruelty, lurks in all, that the particular character of the development of idolatry is in great measure due to the habits and education of the people of each country, and that, whatever the development, man is proved in all to be stupid, vile, and lost.

1883 275 In other continents, Africa and America, where Egyptian ideas may not be traced, the same tendencies to bloody rites and senseless ceremonies are seen. If in some places corruption be the prevailing feature, cruelty is no less its character in other places. Idolatry is also a degrading superstition, it makes a slave of the man God ordained to have dominion. And according to Scripture it is demon-worship, and the demon's power seen in the arts of sorcery. And here is more than imagination, it is a reality. Here is seen the direct power of Satan, to whom some have given themselves as his immediate agents. Balaam and the witch of Endor are instances; also Simon of Samaria, Elymas the sorcerer, the damsel of Philippi. The wise of the present age deny that there was or could be such power. They are the modern Sadducees who deny any angel or spirit, who say that the idea of the Devil is only an engine of priestcraft. But the Bible declares the awful reality, and idolatry corroborates it.

Such is the mental condition of man. The idea of One God was not suddenly lost at the first; but, man's mind not liking it, the truth became fainter in each successive generation, and at last was completely swamped in the flood of gods many and lords many which spread its devastating waters over the whole world.

Yet notwithstanding the visible effects, and the character of idolatry, it is strange to hear men gravely asserting that, in all ages and regions, the nations of the world (however different in character and manners) have yet united in the belief of a supreme Being. That man had in the age next succeeding the deluge a faint idea of the One God is true; but that in all ages and regions a supreme being was acknowledged is an assertion which lacks not boldness but proof. A "Supreme Being" is more than being superior to other gods. It means no other god beside the One God. Idolaters always had gods. A writer of the past age, speaking of the heathen, says that in their public and private affairs "the Divinity is invoked." And again, "In every people we discover a reverence and awe of the Divinity." That the pagan betrayed a servile and superstitious fear both in public and private, and under its influence performed rites to his idol, is true. But in "public," as is known, each nation had its own god; even the cities of the same nation did not give pre-eminence to the same divinity; and as to the "private affairs" all the respectable families had each their own lares et penates. What is the meaning of invoking the Divinity, when the rites observed were a sort

of entreaty that the god would not maliciously interfere with them rather than seeking his aid? And why the Divinity, as if there was but one object before the idolatrous world? The same writer (Rollin; see Anc. Hist. Pre.) speaks of the treatment those received who depraved by false philosophy rose up against this "doctrine." Were there any ever found who spoke against the "Divinity" as the One Supreme? There were some who despised the folly of idol-worship, and were called atheists by the idol-mongers. Was it false philosophy to speak against the abominations which could only shock the feelings of a moral pagan (if such could be found), and would lead the intellectual away from the senseless worship? But to speak of idolatry as adoration of the "Divinity" is a hiding of the sin of "many gods" if not an apology for it. But the writer is happily inconsistent with himself; for, in spite of the universal adoration in all ages and regions of the Supreme Being, he deplors the fact of man's incapability of persisting in the purity and simplicity of this first principle, that amid the general depravity only a few faint rays, small sparks of light, remain unextinguished. This same lament would have been equally in place had it been over the time of Cicero (or indeed of any time before or since) who is cited as inculcating the existence of a Supreme Being, and the homage due to Him. The words of the great Pagan are "Sit igitur hoc a principio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores deos, eaque geruntur eorum geri iudicio ac numine." (De Legg. II. 7:) Do "dominos" and "deos" simply mean a Supreme Being, a "Divinity"? Do they not rather show that Cicero advocates idolatry for the citizens in general, though he himself might despise it?

It is a proof how far the mind of man is alienated from God that even in Christendom, where His word is printed and available for all, and in the hands of those who profess and call themselves Christians, there is more contempt of the folly of idolatry than condemnation of its sin. And why in these "christian countries" is it contemned, if not through the light of the Word so generally neglected, and by some despised as of no more authority than cunningly devised fables? Christendom is in the condition of one who knew the Lord's will and did it not; its judgment will be "many stripes." But there is a worse evil than idolatry and far more guilty; which is not merely a sin inevitably resulting from fallen man's mental constitution, but which implies and necessitates a Revelation from God: that worse sin is infidelity. Revelation was not necessary to make man an idolater; it was necessary to make him an infidel. In its widest meaning as designating those who have no faith, all idolaters in whatever condition of ignorance are infidels. But if we confine the word to its common acceptation, it is evident that a Revelation must be given before it can be rejected. And as the rejection of known truth is of earlier date than idolatry, no process or lapse of time was needed for its development. Its first form was the denial of God's word; as such it sprang fully equipped from the head of the first sinner. God said "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The Serpent said "Ye shall not surely die." God's word was disbelieved, and Eve became the infidel. Pharaoh was an infidel; when the word of "I am" came to him, he said "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice." And Israel as having the oracles and the testimony of God were as much infidels as idolaters. As idolaters they clung to Egypt's idols, as infidels they said Egypt was a better place than Canaan. And if we compare these two grand engines of Satanic craft, in idolatry the sentiments (i.e. fear, dread, desire, awe, admiration) are most in exercise, if not solely; in infidelity the passions have but little play. It is human reason, the intellect, though even the intellect is swayed by the heart, which is enmity against God. Infidelity was usually found rather with the educated than with the ignorant; of late years even the lowest classes in the social scale, and the most uncultured, are swelling its ranks. And as education — the present panacea

for all moral evil! — spreads, so infidelity increases. For if education expands the mind and strengthens its power, the increase of infidelity is inevitable. For, the mind being enmity to God, its expansion is the expansion of hatred, and the strengthening of its powers to spread its own evil. And the means of education which the wisdom of this world has adopted, and the craft of Satan has caused to be used, as to philosophy taught, is underlaid with scepticism; more subtle in some than in others, but therefore the more dangerous. The books of past ages and professors of the present age are for the most part tainted with infidelity, and some of them very deeply. It is the result of man's mind trying to measure the Revelation of God by the light of reason. Reason was never given to discuss the command of its Creator, never to decide whether obedience was due to God, or whether his Word is credible. Revelation is its own evidence, its own authority. And every one that has read a page of it has more or less, at least once in his life, felt the power and authority of it. Conscience in a measure responds to the truth; but conscience may be silenced, and the general result is that man without conscience falls into the depths of corruption or wanders in the darkness of his own reason, 1:e. infidelity. The legitimate sphere of reason is earthly and temporal things. Now that it is darkened, to attempt to subject the Word of God to its authority is the greatest proof of its incapacity for the office. And further we have but to remember that the Word of God is the message of His love to find equal proof of its antagonism to God.

Infidelity is a term of wide range; its professors are subdivided into many schools, from the man who pretends to believe the Bible but denies its plenary inspiration, down to the depths of the fool who in his heart says "No God." It is essentially negative but with a varying phase, due to the manners of the people and the age of the country where it appears. Atheism denies the being of God. Some question whether any have really arrived at that stage of unbelief. Yet in just retribution a man who has for years openly asserted "No God" may be given up to believe his own lie. The Pantheist imagines God to be in every thing, a sort of essence diffused through all creation, and everything a part of God. That is, he denies the personality of God. Some deny providential arrangement and government, their favorite theme and word is "nature." To such moral evil is an impossibility; and "physical," as applied to evil, a misnomer. For that to which the expression is given is (as they say) nature's means for arriving at perfection. The deist recognises the existence and in a measure the government of God, both which he pretends to know by the light of reason alone. He wilfully ignores the condition and the results of reason when man had no Revelation from God; he derides the thought that his reason is indebted to the light of the Bible for its emancipation from the many gods of Paganism. Like the fabled Prometheus he has stolen heavenly fire and employed it against the Book whence he had it. For him the Bible, however much he may admire its precepts, has no more authority than the Koran or the mythologies of paganism. To him sin is not the effect of enmity against God, but errors of judgment or perhaps the mistakes of nature. It is for him to account for the present condition of man and the earth he inhabits; for if he deny sin as that which brought death into the world, the god of his imagination cannot be the God who is Love, the God of the Bible.

1883 290 At the present day, at least in this country, all who reject Revelation seem to be uniting under the name of Secularist. Under that name are found those who assail the Being, the Attributes, the Personality and the Providence of God, and who endeavour by philosophy — falsely so called — to overthrow the christian's faith in the genuineness, authenticity, inspiration, and exclusive authority of the Word of God. Could they succeed, all belief of a future judgment,

and consequently the immortality of the soul, would be derided as an idle dream, and the grossest materialism would become the universal creed. And what do these Secularists propose as a substitute for the Bible? They pretend that sufficient guarantee for morality is found in nature and in human intelligence. What their idea of morality may be is difficult to say; but according to their highest definition, can it fill the craving void felt by every soul at one time or the other? A craving after the unseen and the unknown? A craving which compels the idolater to worship the image his hands have made, and leads the infidel to idolize the god of his imagination, 1:e. his reason, himself?

Positivism is another name for the latest phase of infidelity, differing but little if at all from Secularism. It is a combination of all shades. It is materialistic; for the man whose name is identified with this system denied all that is supernatural — by which he meant theological. He put aside all that is metaphysical; 1:e. he allowed nothing but mere matter, the relation, the succession, the likeness which one thing bears to another. This system teaches that human perfection is to discard all reference to a Divine cause, and to resolve everything to nature and to mechanical laws. This will be the "universal religion" which will supersede all other creeds and notions; the one doctrine sufficiently comprehensive to answer all questions, and sufficiently positive to convince all men. This "Religion" has no starting-point save what it calls the active, affectionate and intelligent tendencies of human nature. In a word "Collective Humanity" is God! Are there in human nature no other tendencies but those of love and intelligence? Are not the opposite rather the tendencies which so prevail that love and intelligence as characterising mankind are only names, truly of things conceivable, but little beyond? Hatred and therefore war, ignorance and therefore superstition, mark the annals of the world. Some few by great perseverance and incessant labour may emerge from the mass of ignorance; but who, at any period, of men stood forth as the exponent of universal affection and goodwill? Possibly a man might die for his friend; but the exceptionality of such a case proves the general rule. Let the history of mankind bear witness. And if this witness be received, when where and how is this affectionate and intelligent "Collective Humanity," the god of the Positivist, to be manifested? It certainly will be a god that had a beginning. But in fact this system denies the Being of God and is Atheistic. It denies the personality of God — for man in the aggregate is God — and therefore Pantheistic. Deism it denies as providential superstition; like Secularism it affirms the law of nature to be the sole agency at work in the world. It is infidelity in its widest meaning, in its most illogical form; and its most absurd theories shock every rational mind. Nor does it come behind any previous school of scepticism in daring impiety. At a comparatively recent meeting of Positivists in a neighbouring country it was proposed and carried nem. con. that the idea of God should be banished from the country.

All this tremendous wickedness is not in pagan but in so-called christian lands, where the truths of christianity have been more or less proclaimed. It is in christendom that the greatest expression of antagonism against God is found, the proof that the nearer the Light is brought to man the more his hatred of it appears. The reason is plain; for the Light makes manifest the darkness, and condemns it, and this the darkness resents. Revelation provokes infidelity. Idolatry is the produce of fallen nature as the oak from the acorn. Infidelity is enmity against God and His Book.

There is a kind of metaphysical infidelity which endeavours to substitute "subjective revelation," that is, consciousness of truth in the soul, for objective revelation, that is, the Bible. So that a

man's own spiritual intuition and convictions are to take the place, and usurp the authority, of the word of God. This may be called "inward light," or even the name of the Spirit of God may be applied to it. But being apart from and independent of the word of God, it is only delusion. Subjective revelation, even if a reality and not a delusion, could never be the standard of truth. For if the whole word of God could be contained by any one mind and divinely understood, something more is needed to make the convictions of one authoritative for another. To accept them as authority is putting man in the place of God. But if subjective revelation was in each living man (if not in each, to some it must be objective), each one would be his own authority, his own standard of truth. And what if these "Authorities" clashed? Two things would inevitably result: first, that man would believe in himself, would worship his own convictions, would please himself, he would be his own god, and therefore an idolater, and as not believing in God, rejecting His word, would be also an infidel; the second result would be that Truth, as such, would be lost. Such a tide of conflicting notions, absurd opinions would flow over the world, that every landmark would be submerged, and the world of ideas (if we are allowed such a term) would be as the earth once was "without form and void." To talk of Revelation as being subjective so as to deny the inspiration of the Bible is only common infidelity in a deistic guise. When the light of truth falls upon the dark mind without bringing the conscience into the presence of God, there can be but one result. The truth is opposed, and hated. And hatred of truth is the true parent of infidelity; even as idolatry is the natural fruit of the heart, when left to its own promptings. This fruit of the deceitful heart in any one of its varied forms was never condemned, and its votaries destroyed by others whose form of idolatry differed; each new deity that the ignorance and lusts of men invented was acknowledged by all, though it may be only receiving homage from the men of a particular locality. This was but natural, for if the people of the hills had a god peculiar to themselves, why should not the people of the plains have the same privilege? So the same kind of liberalism, which now accords to each man to think and form his religious creed as he likes, then allowed to each idolater to have his own god, and every idol had a niche in the common Pantheon. But when the truth was revealed from God the antagonism of man was immediately roused against it. When did the truth ever fail to evoke opposition, and make manifest the latent infidelity of the heart? Only when the Holy Spirit by His own direct power opened the heart to receive it.

Paul bears testimony to the fact of the activity of the will against the Word of God. "When the law came, sin revived." In the case he is describing the law was accompanied with the power of grace, "I died." There was a yielding to the authority of the Word, there was self-judgment. But nevertheless, there is the fact, "sin revived." The heart's dislike of God's word, be it law or gospel, is immediately manifested. Indeed the natural man is more opposed to grace than to law. When the truth of One God was revealed through Moses, man, already an idolater, became an infidel. He would not give up his idols, and denied that there was only one God. This was the early phase of infidelity, and the Gentile world lies under the responsibility of having denied the truth of one God. The infidelity of Israel was more guilty than that of the Gentile, inasmuch as the unity of God was a special testimony to them. Israel equalled the Gentile in idolatry, but exceeded them in infidelity. When grace and truth came by the Lord Jesus Christ a more extended front was presented to the attacks of infidelity, and the truth in Christ was assailed at every point. God manifest in the person of Christ gave opportunity for the exercise and display of intensest enmity against Him. To the denial of His eternal power and Godhead as the Creator was now added the denial and rejection of His grace and love as displayed in the advent of His Son, our Lord Jesus

Christ. Now that God is fully revealed, His present grace and long-suffering, with His future judgment, infidelity, as it were taking advantage of His forbearance, boldly asserts by many a voice that there is no God. This last stage of daring impiety when it could be openly confessed without calling forth the execration of a merely honest and moral man, has been reached in these last days of Christendom. In the last century the French encyclopaedists were the active Propagandists of atheistic philosophy, from whom as a centre it radiated throughout Europe; and now in our own land their successors unblushingly walk the streets in midday. Not many years ago the atheist was regarded as one with whom it was a disgrace to have public intercourse. Now he is tolerated, and even his entrance into the councils of government advocated. This is the age when God is openly set at nought, and His power defied. This is the age when the representatives of government (who profess and call themselves Christians) join in processions and lend their countenance to the rites of Mohammedanism and Paganism. It is vain to say it is for secular purposes; the deluded Mohammedan or Pagan will not so regard it. The infidelity of so-called Christians, and the deep dishonour to God, the heartless indifference to truth is manifest. What is the moral difference between this and the avowed atheism which seeks to banish the name and idea of God from the country? The world is maturing for Antichrist, the arena is being cleared for him who will deny both the Father and the Son. The facts of the day viewed in the light of God's words show that the time is swiftly approaching. I do not predict, but wherever we look, at home or abroad, mankind appears, more plainly as time rolls on, as "having no hope and without God in the world."

1883 307 At the beginning of the present dispensation this character of the world was not so distinctly legible. For the mercy of God in Christ was proclaimed, and it remained to be proved that the world would reject it. Public proof was soon given. He in whom was life, whose life was the light of men, was despised: His holy person was assailed when here in humiliation, but in grace, "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber." And more than this, the blasphemer dared to say "He hath a devil; why hear ye Him?" The Jew was in the van of the world's array against Christ. It was the person, no less than the truth, that was denied, when the priests bid the Roman guard say, "His disciples stole Him while we slept." It was the denial of His inherent power to break the bonds of death, of His Godhead; it was the denial that His shed blood was atonement for sin. Paul says, "if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins." If the disciples stole His body, if He did not rise from the dead, then there is no atonement, no salvation, no mercy. The character of God is belied, His love denied, His willingness to receive sinners a mere fable. But the truth was too strong for the malice and cunning of Satan. This foundation-fact rests upon evidence — apart from divinely given faith — as irrefragable as any fact in the world's history. The mercy of God has ordered it, so that upon the lower ground of the credibility of human testimony the infidelity of man is without excuse. Afterwards truth was assailed more insidiously. Portions of the declared Word, and specially those relating to the person of our Lord, were sought to be undermined; the enemy well knowing that, if but one stone of foundation truth were removed, the whole building would inevitably and quickly collapse and fall.

Nothing is more subtle than infidelity: it penetrates every form of religious thought, every shade of opinion of which the Word is not the source. It is not confined to the bold deniers of revelation, but is found sometimes in creeds. Every creed, or confession of faith, that has not for its basis the full truth as to the person of Christ, in short, the whole Bible as given of God, is infidel in character.

True believers are sometimes touched with it, through adherence to an unscriptural creed; not vitally, of course, but hurtfully; for wherever it penetrates, its baneful influence is seen in evil doctrine and evil practice. The human mind is infidel in the abstract; but infidelity as a fact could not be till a revelation had been given. In like manner the aspect and form of infidelity will be according to the character of the truth revealed. The grace that was revealed in and by Christ made man plead for law; so that the Galatians, who had been converted from idolatry, thought it right to adopt the law as equally necessary with the gospel of grace. But the worst aspect of infidelity is in its assaults upon the person of our Lord; and this, not as seen in men unconnected with the church of God, but in those who were prominent, or who aimed at prominence, among the saints of God. We see the wretched and absurd theories of those who entirely thrust the Bible aside as a book of God. The theories — if they deserve that title — of the men who have attempted to blend the theogony of heathen philosophers with the truth of Christ, are still more absurd; and, while exceeding the wildest dream that ever came from the head of a pagan, they add insult and blasphemy. The heresies that first troubled the church are characterised by the introduction of Eastern philosophy, not a little modified by Grecian, into the assemblies, and mingling it with the truth. In this teaching were combined two things which at first seem incompatible, but which, when fully examined, are complementary: viz., the denial of the essential Godhead of Christ, and also of His proper humanity. The Christ of God — the true Saviour of the Bible — disappeared, and, in place thereof, the wanderings of a dark but vain mind, the worthless speculations of science falsely so called. Against these heresiarchs both John and Paul wrote. The evil had begun while the apostles were yet here. Satan began immediately his attempts to hide from man (who so needs it) the knowledge, the immense fact, that He who had been here was "the true God and eternal life."

It was a strange compound — oriental philosophy and divine truth. It would seem as if the philosopher of that day sought to enlarge the range of his view by borrowing from truth, but perverting what he found, to make it fit into his own system. But he was no nearer the truth; he was a worse man; for he had heard the truth, and loved not but made merchandise of it. How much greater the guilt, and the evil consequences, of teaching as truth of God the vain speculations of men! This was done in the first ages of the church; and they who did it pretended to be the only ones who had knowledge and true understanding of the word. Hence their name — Gnostics. Under this, as a general term, very many different parties arose; but they all united in this, they denied the Son. Infidelity was the true name of their philosophy. The leading idea, that is the starting point (which is very like that of Brahminism), is "absolute unity," a something which was both spirit and matter: from this unity was evolved the whole universe of manifold beings. Matter became separate from spirit, and so in consequence the principle of evil. The spiritual beings emanating from the original monad became imperfect through contact with matter, and were held in thrall by it. Does it not occur to us that the inventor of this fable had seen the Mosaic account of Creation and of the Fall, but had so distorted the facts that the truth was lost?

1883 323 But there is more to break this thralldom and free the spiritual part of man from the domination of matter 1:e. the body: fasts, vigils, total disregard of the body were enjoined as necessary. By these a man would rise to higher and successive degrees of virtue, would pass through various transformations, or metempsychoses, till he reach the final stage, the absorption of his soul into the deity. If "metempsychosis" was left out, the Gnostics taught the observance of

penances and — not the mortifying of our members which are on the earth but — the depreciation of the body as a thing not to be considered for a moment; that is, they denied that the body was the temple of the Holy Ghost. This led some to harsh treatment of the body, others to the extreme of self-indulgence and corruption, because the body — matter — was so vile a thing that it might do anything, it was not worth guarding. So from the same evil root of doctrine came two opposite evils in practice. Both extremes met in denying the truth. The latter are the Nicolaitanes of Revelation 2:1-29 : and Paul in Colossians 2:20-23 warns against the former. The "touch not, taste not, handle not" is but man's commandment, a pretence of wisdom, the worship of the will; and the "neglecting of the body" is only "the satisfying of the flesh." The influence of this philosophy did not cease with the early ages of the church, it is seen in our time, it was rampant in the middle ages. For what is monachism but the continuation of the attempt to attain to a quasi-holiness by the mortification of the body?

Some may have shut themselves up in monasteries through simple ignorance, vainly imagining they were obeying the Holy Spirit's injunction in Colossians 3:5. But how many the proofs that the asceticism inculcated by some of the early sects has been only a cloak in latter times to hide the corruption practised by others!

One is ready to ask, how could such doctrines and practice be endured in the church of God? would not the least intelligent saint reject both, and abhor the men who thus defiled the church? The epistle to Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-29 :) furnishes the answer. The church had left her first love. This opened the door and paved the way for the entry of every possible abomination and dishonour to the Lord. Soon entered the disciples of Balaam, the Nicolaitanes, and Jezebel calling herself a prophetess. These not only entered but found a welcome. Never would such have found footing in the church of God, had she not left her first love. He who so loved the church as to give Himself for her, would have guarded her from all evil. But the church lost her virgin character, and just as Israel of old went after other gods, so the professing church ends in being the great harlot of Christendom. But there is worse than corrupting the saints — the infidelity of Gnosticism (how manifestly the work of Satan sowing tares while men slept!) subjected the person of the Son to the mind of man attempting to comprehend His being, as if in defiance of the word that no man knoweth the Son but the Father. The vain intellect of men has attempted to solve that mystery, which angels contemplate with awe and wonder — God manifest in flesh. No where else is man so plainly the dupe of Satan. In the day of His humiliation the demons knew and confessed who He was. Satan, a liar from the beginning, led man into the labyrinth of his own conceptions as to the person of the Son of God. What could be the result of Satanic power working upon human ignorance, enmity against God and His Christ the sole principle in each? Just what we find in the first heresies, in which the old idolatry of heathendom supplanting the truth of Christianity makes an infidel Christendom. Henceforth the public testimony of the church as a whole was lost. Sovereign grace preserved a few witnesses. The idolatrous character of the Gnostic infidelity may be accounted for — at least in part. For Oriental philosophy, which influenced the West, taught as a fundamental principle that the Universe was an intelligent being, of which matter was the body and God the soul. This Pantheistic notion of God (which as a form of infidelity seems anterior to the purely Atheistic form) was the prolific source from which were educed the wildest theories — so wild that even heathen mythology might be called wisdom compared to them. Mixed with the truth the amalgam is more abhorrent than Atheism. Professors of Christianity could not of course

adopt the gods of Paganism, nor Brahm's development and sudden expansion into numerous deities. These monopolisers of "true knowledge" attempted a compromise. In place of gods they had "emanations" from the "Original Unity," the "monad" of Eastern philosophy. Each prominent Gnostic had his peculiar theory to which he wickedly but vainly attempted to bend the word of God. Evil as well as good was personified as emanations or "aeons" from God. Thus making God the source of evil as well as of good. Christ was an "aeon," by some accounted the highest and sent into the world to correct the mischief wrought by others. Some maintained that He was by title the Son of God, but inferior to the Father. They denied His humanity because matter was essentially evil. His body was only the appearance of matter. It follows necessarily that there was no real suffering, no real death: it was all illusion. Where are the foundations of Christianity, and of truth? What becomes of the character of God as a Just Governor? Where is the love of God in giving His Son, or the truth of the declaration of John 3:16, if there was no reality in the cross? Without the cross all would be confusion and contradiction, the book of nature and the book of revelation alike unintelligible. The cross is the central point in the whole universe of God. It declares God's righteousness for the past or present, and is the proof of His love, upon which His highest glories hang. If the cross be an illusion, so is exaltation in millennial glory; and our glory with Christ a myth.

1883 338 But there is no part of truth which those worse than silly dreamers did not falsify, and in doing it made statements more absurd than the darkest pagan uttered. The Gnostics denied the divine authority of the New Testament, affirmed that the world was created by inferior beings, imperfect and evil in their nature, that Moses — whom some abhorred was actuated by the malignant author of this world whose object was his own glory and not the advantage of man. They denied resurrection, matter being so evil, the soul would never be reunited to it. They attributed all the calamities of the world to malevolent genii, and studied magic arts to counteract them. They manifested the superstition of idolatry with their boast of knowledge. They were infidels of the worst type. They dishonoured the written word of God more than those who utterly deny it. For even in the New Testament which they professed to receive their culpable ignorance led them to take the word, the light, the life in John 1:1-51 : as so many distinct eons or emanations. Would any but the blinded dupes of Satan put forth or receive such follies?

Such the condition of the church before two centuries had passed since its formation. The word errors were taught under the profession of the name of Christ, but a denial of Himself. Not a vital point of truth but was assailed and, as far as man could, undermined. And in these early heresies is the evil root of every succeeding error since known, the pregnant source of blasphemous doctrine and evil practice which have ravaged the church from that time until now. But we are looking not at mere errors, but marking those chiefly that denied the full truth of the Person of Christ, which are not errors, but infidelity. A man may hold wrong views concerning many things in the Bible. He may be singular in his views as to the mode and subjects of baptism, as to the doctrines of election and the Lord's coming; if he be sound and scriptural as to the Person of Christ, His perfect manhood, and His perfect deity he cannot be fatally wrong upon other and lesser points. But the heretic who denies the true humanity, or essential Godhead of Christ is an infidel.

Infidelity such as this appeared in the first century and sprang from Jewish sources. It was not infidelity in the sense here used, to insist upon circumcision, and the ceremonial law; but when

Cerinthus and his followers maintained that the Lord Jesus was simply the son of Joseph and Mary, that there was nothing divine about Him, or that His divinity was simply the communication of the Holy Ghost at His baptism, then appeared infidelity, fatal and the most horrible to a Christian. It is the reappearing of the old Jewish enmity which met the Lord on all sides when He was here. Though veiled under humanity, He declared himself as God, and the Son of the Father, and that He and the Father are one. The Jew quite understood this, and took up stones to stone Him saying, "thou being a man makest thyself God." The Jew in rejecting the Person of the Son is without excuse. How much greater the guilt of those who, after He had been declared the Son of God in power by resurrection of the dead, still denied His Godhead. The Gentile element however was not entirely absent during this first age. It then began to be taught that the body of Christ was not a real body. And in the second century the church was flooded with heresies arising from Eastern ideas, and containing the same blasphemy. In the third century the Manicheans arose, a sect which held the eternity of matter, as well as denying Christ. In the beginning of this same age the Godhead was declared to be but One Person. The Son and the Holy Ghost were but modifications of the revelation of the Father. About the middle of the century Sabellius openly taught that the Word and the Holy Spirit were only functions of the Deity; that God in heaven was the Father of all; that He condescended to be born of the Virgin, and thus was the Son, the Word; and that He diffused Himself under the appearance of tongues of fire on the apostles, and thus was called the Holy Ghost. Hence though not the originator, this heresy is called after his name, the Sabellian heresy. The distinction of the Persons in the Trinity was thus denied, and the real incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ go with it. And so intimate is the connection between the truth of God and Christ, and the salvation of man, that if part of it be lost or given up, the foundation is destroyed upon which the righteousness and the grace of God can together provide a ransom for man.

1883 356 All the various heretical sects up to this time are but offshoots of Gnosticism. They caused parties within the church rather than distinct and separate communities without. The time however had now come when an open and antagonistic division cut in twain that which in the past was considered as one church. Gnosticism, was itself fundamentally a combination of Judaism and heathen philosophy, which denied the Christ of God and put a creation of its own in His place. In this all the principal Gnostic sects united, however they varied otherwise in detail. But it had to make way for a simpler and less gross but equally fatal error, Arianism.

Arius in the fourth century, as if seeking a remedy for the discordant notions floating within the arena of church profession, seems to have gathered them all under one head, discarding many of the absurdities, such as the "emanations," the "genii," and similar notions held by Gnostics in common with pagans, but retaining and making the inferiority of the Son to the Father the basis of his system. Not that other heresies co-existing with the beginning of Arianism were swallowed up by it, but that Arianism came to such prominence, (being either violently opposed, or espoused by the secular power, then nominally christian) that the lesser heresies (i.e. as regards the number of their adherents) were comparatively lost sight of. The religious world was ranged under two heads, the Arian and the orthodox. For many years the East was Arian, and also a great part of the West. The council of Nice was occasioned by their disputes. Persecution resulted from their bitter contests. At the commencement of the sixth century Arianism was triumphant in many parts of Asia, Africa and Europe; but it sank to nothing when the Vandals were driven out of Africa and the

Goths out of Italy, though not extinguished in Italy till the close of the sixth century. Revived again in the West in the sixteenth century, it at length gradually yielded to Socinianism. But this paper is no attempt to give an account of the different heresies which infested the early church; its object is to mark briefly the advance of infidelity which is not confined to the deniers of all revelation, but in a very insidious form attempted to destroy the foundation of Christianity while pretending to greater knowledge. Amid many notions both blasphemous and foolish from the first denial of the resurrection when the priests bribed the Roman soldiers to say, "His disciples came by night and stole Him while we slept," down to modern times, one uniform aim has ever been pursued by the religious infidel. The profane world has its aspect of infidelity in Positivism and Secularism, but that which is found in connection with the church (be it ancient Gnosticism, Arianism, Unitarianism and Rationalism of the Colenso school) is a religious infidelity equally fatal as Atheism, and more worthy of condemnation. The person of Christ has ever been the point of Satan's attack, the sole aim of the devil to deny the truth of Him. There were other errors beside Arianism, as are now beside modern unitarianism. For where the will is not subject to God there must follow heresies and divisions; but all unorthodox are not infidel. The distinguishing mark between secular infidelity and religious is that the former denies God and His judgments, the latter is the denial of God in Christ and His grace. The former appeared when judgment or penalty was joined to the first command. The latter when grace appeared in Christ. The former has always been defiant. It began in Eden when Eve dared the threatened judgment, led away by the serpent, that said, "Ye shall not surely die." There were those in the time of Moses who like Pharaoh said "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?" The same generation appears in Peter's day saying "Where is the promise of His coming." It is Satan's lie at the beginning, it is the denial of judgment, and is the same now. What infidels deny is what they fear. Did they not dread the wrath of God there would not be such strenuous efforts made to prove the Bible a myth. To these men, immortality is a mere fancy, and the spirit of a man goeth downwards as of a beast. Or if they admit any kind of futurity, it is the pagan notion of Elysium. An infidel poet of the present day prates with unmeaning words of "dwelling among the stars," just as it was said by the heathen "Itur ad astra."

Religious infidelity, denying the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ as declared in His word, meeting the need of man ruined and utterly lost, is the special feature of the heresies of Christendom. Grace and truth came by Christ; where is grace if the glorious person of the Christ of God be lowered in any manner from what He truly is? In denying Christ, the God of all grace is denied, and in the way in which He delights to be known to man. Yet with this there was a pretended acceptance of the Bible, or of a part (for much of it was rejected by these heretics). This kind of infidelity is worse than that of the profane world. The infidelity of the church opened the door for the worst abominations of idolatry, and in nearly every place where the light of Truth has shone the thickest darkness settled down. It was but the natural consequence of departing from the Truth. It was also retributive judgment. The eye of Christendom did not remain single, and the body was full of darkness. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" When light becomes darkness, the darkness is greater than before the light came. And such was the case with that which called itself the church. In sovereign mercy God preserved a remnant for Himself; but the few faithful who would not bow to Baal set up in the nominal church were persecuted and despised by the rulers in it. Immediately previous to the Reformation was the darkest time; so dark, that that period is known to the world as the "dark ages" — such a mass of infidelity, corruption and every imaginable evil; such shameless disregard of truth, and contempt

by the "clergy" for all that was called sacred. The general immorality of Christendom at that period equalled, yea, exceeded that of heathendom. For while corruption abounded in each, do the annals of paganism record a Tetzels? A man commissioned by the greatest ecclesiastical authority to give people liberty to sin for a pecuniary consideration? No immorality greater than this. In pitying mercy to man — to the poor deluded masses, God raised up the reformers, — and through a path sprinkled with martyr's blood brought again to light the long-forgotten truth of salvation by faith in Christ alone. And the common people heard it gladly. The heresies of the early church brought in the idolatry and darkness of the middle ages. And though the Reformation dispelled the darkness in some places, yet there remained such an amount of superstition in most places that in the last century the intellectual were driven into scepticism. In many countries men deprived of the true light by a corrupt priesthood, disgusted with all they saw, ended in Atheism, or infidelity in its most absolute form. Thus it is that infidelity and superstition reacting upon each other have like successive waves rolled over the West. The imaginative and more excitable Oriental is more the slave of superstition. But even in the West, the places where are found men who boast the loudest of intellect and knowledge, Medieval forms and ceremonies are reviving, and the religious world is fast going back into the darkness of the middle ages. The descendants of those who formerly condemned and forsook the forms and the ceremonies of establishments are now adopting them, and chapels are vying with churches in outward show. It is all superstition, though in a form pleasing to the world. It has overtaken the wave of scepticism, which a few years before rolled over our land, sapping the foundations of everything moral, honest and upright. At first the infidel sneaked in holes and corners of the earth; now with unblushing front he treads erect the streets and highways. And at this moment what is the scene which the true believer looks upon? Infidelity and superstition, whose mingled waters are rushing over the land and drowning men's souls; opposite in principle, alike in destructiveness.

If on the one hand infidels are bolder and increasing, on the other there is much more earnestness on the question of religion. By "religion" is not here meant humble and sincere searching God's word for a deeper acquaintance with it, and a life more conformed to its teachings, though that through grace is not banished from the earth. But the two names which divide the religious world are Rationalism and Ritualism. The former is religious infidelity and allied with secularism, and the latter is but another name for superstition, and tends Romeward. Both evidence the activities of a religious nature, in some the deeper misgivings in natural conscience on questions of eternal moment. If the soul is not in the presence of God, the result is that one of two courses is taken, according as the mind is superstitious or materialistic. In the latter case Rationalistic paths are followed. In the former Ritualism attracts; where the sensuous, the imaginative, and the impressible, are snared by gorgeous ceremony, and made captives by the dogmas of tradition. Rationalism subjects God's word to human reason: what it cannot comprehend, it rejects. It is sight, not faith. Even if the Rationalist accepted the whole Bible merely because his reason approves, it would not be faith. Faith says "It is written," and this suffices. Any other faith is human, not divine. The Ritualist is fleshly in his devotions: feelings not faith, sentiment not truth, the springs of his activity. Hence that which engages the eye and the ear is cultivated. With this goes the observance of fasts and feasts, days set apart by human authority. Is not the command "Six days shalt thou labour" as much against the observance of saints' days as against the feast days of idolatry? Worse than this is the surrendering of soul and body to the authority of a man who dares to put himself between God and another's conscience. What is the difference between this

blind submission and that of the ignorant pagan to his priest? Circumstances may forbid the debasing rites of idol-worship, but in the sight of God the Ritualist is an idolater.

1884 5 Paul also, by the Spirit, speaks of these men. Among the Corinthian saints some said there was no resurrection. This was the effect of the Gnostic notion that matter — and so the body — was the principle of evil. Therefore the body could not be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and it follows also that He has not come; but the Lord Jesus said He would send Him. There is denial of His word, as well as dishonour to His person. To the Colossians the apostle writes and warns them of the danger of not holding the Head, and to remind them that "He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him," — "Whom we preach, admonishing every man." They needed warning; for among them were those who, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, would beguile them with a pretended humility, but doing their own will. Their notions "were only the elements of the world and not according to Christ." For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. When writing to Timothy he speaks of the great mystery, "God (or, He who) has been manifested in flesh." It is Christ, for as all else is distinctive of the Son, so He "has been received up in glory." But in latter times some would apostatize from the faith, i.e., would deny fundamental truth, giving their minds to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, in hypocrisy, of those speaking lies. The infidelity of the world against the God of creation is not so dreadful as this; for here are men who have in measure looked upon and handled the Word of life, and then denied Him. The impress of these early infidels is still retained by Christendom. Every succeeding generation shows it, slightly magnified it may be, but essentially the same.

There are two other forms of infidelity; but these stand apart by themselves. Delusions both infidel and idolatrous, viz., Mohammedanism and Mormonism. Infidel, for each arose in countries where Christianity had been preached, and where the truth was wholly or partially denied. Idolatrous, for each exalted a man and gave him the homage due only to Christ. But Mahomet and J. Smith stole largely from the Bible, as appears from their respective books, the Koran, and the book of Mormon. Both books pretend to be a further revelation, and completely supplant the Bible, as if it were imperfect. Neither denies it to have come from God; but, owing to its incompleteness and mistakes, a fresh communication from God was needed to develop the truth and clear it from all error, which the founder of Mormonism in his professed creed attributes to the interpolations of scribes. But he does not seek to correct the Koran; this would be very like Satan casting out Satan. Nay, it is God's Book that is set aside, His truth is denied; and this denial, whatever extravagancies and wickedness accompany it, makes these delusions infidel.

Mohammedanism had its birth in Arabia. Paul had been there (Galatians 1:17). Before the close of the sixth century idolatry again prevailed, as the Epistle to the Galatians warned of the danger, and charged its principle on such as after the cross went back to ritualism. Mahomet appears, his wife is his first convert, and she converts her cousin who was a professed christian. Thus infidelity and apostacy are stamped upon it at the first appearance. At that moment there were only three, and one an apostate! Mahomet professed to extirpate idolatry, but he only changed its character. The rally cry of his followers was "God is great and Mahomet is His prophet." Their infidelity consists in denying, not the being of God, but the person and work of the Son, and, we may add, in supplanting the abiding presence of the Spirit by the fabulous mission of the warrior vicar of God. Most of the countries now called Mohammedanism were once Christian. The reveries and wickedness of Gnosticism were received in place of the truth; and in retributive judgment they

were given up to believe Mahomet's lie.

Mormonism began in America in the beginning of the 19th century. The infidelity of Mormonism is peculiar. The Mormons profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in repentance, etc.; but their infidelity spite of their "faith" which scarce exceeds the eastern delusion appears in this article of their creed, — "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the book of Mormon to be the Word of God." To add to God's word is no less infidelity than to deny any part of it. The difference as to this, between the ancient and the modern delusion, is one of degree, not of kind. The ancient says that though there may possibly be some part of the Bible true, no belief is to be placed in the copies held by christians. The later delusion accepts the Bible as christians have it, "as far as it is translated correctly." Thus Gnosticism, Mohammedanism, and Mormonism have this in common — the insufficiency of the Word of God. Each more or less sanctioned corruption; for the denial of the Word of God, whether in the form of taking from it, or of adding to it, opens the door for every fleshly wickedness. In these brief remarks two facts are established: that man without revelation inevitably became an idolater; and that with revelation he became an infidel. Revelation, not reason, cast its light upon idolatry, and man saw that it was senseless and degrading. He forthwith derided it. The same light manifested himself, that he was a sinner and lost. This he resisted. But as he could not extinguish the light, so his unbelief could not change the fact. And just as idolatry varies in form according to the different manners and habits of men, so infidelity assumes different phases according to the special truth to which it is particularly opposed. In fact unbelief is as natural to man as idolatry: only it was latent and needed revelation to bring it out. The one is the proof of ignorance, the other the expression of enmity. Both declare the heart of man to be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

How was man to be delivered from these two universal evils — idolatry and infidelity? For look where we may, one or other, or both is seen. The root-sin is unbelief and God's remedy is applied to the root. The true and only remedy is faith. And here look at faith for a moment, not in its higher character as that by which the believer is justified, but in its perfect suitability as a means to receive blessing, and indeed the only means for a creature who had become utterly incapable of doing one good work. Impotent as man is, there was worse still; for his will is opposed to God. How does he stand in relation to the testimony of that one immense fact that God sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world but that it might be saved? In natural things man is so constituted that belief in well authenticated facts is involuntary. No question of like or dislike but of evidence. Can any narrative rest upon stronger human evidence than the Gospel? And if that as fact be immovable, then the truth of Christ's Person, and atonement, of God's grace and man's ruin, is undeniable. It is this that God presents to man Responsibility consists in believing the testimony of God concerning Christ, or in the rejection of it, for upon faith hangs salvation. It is clearly and solemnly, given by our Lord — "He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." But his will is opposed to God and to His truth. Does that destroy the evidence of truth, or remove responsibility? Both remain, and the cause of final judgment will — unbelief in Christ, which leaves all other sins for punishment. The faculty of credence is inherent, and adequate testimony commands it. The business of every-day-life could not be carried on without it. An event takes place beyond sight and hearing, the evidence is unquestionable, and unhesitating credence is given to the report. This is the mere natural faculty to receive testimony; man was endowed with it when created. The fall did not destroy it. Therefore

God, in providing His remedy for sin addresses this faculty of the soul, the only one which could morally be appealed. to. For the understanding was darkness, the will was enmity, and the affections were hate. A duly attested fact is record, and a Book is written whose genuineness and authenticity rest upon evidence far beyond any other book in the whole world. Thus man is challenged upon the ground of his capacity to receive evidence. Here is the point of human responsibility. It is God's remedy for sinful man brought close to him. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:8-9.) It is not understanding nor loving the testimony (that follows) but believing it. The responsibility of man as he is lies in this.

How divinely wise and suitable to the mental condition of man is God's salvation by faith. Such is the gospel; it meets man where he is, utterly unable to do any good thing for his salvation, but with a capacity to receive testimony. Those who receive the testimony of God concerning His Son are as good ground, and bring forth fruit. Light shines upon the darkness, and grace breaks down the opposing will. It may be said that many believe the testimony and remain indifferent. I doubt the reality of their believing, even with a mere human faith. When the truth of utter and eternal ruin is first realized, man cannot be indifferent. He may become so. But there is more infidelity under the garment of profession than of that bold kind which openly denies the truth. When a soul bows to the judgment of God, he receives the testimony of God, but may be as the man who said "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." And God gives the faith that brings assurance of salvation.

Idolatry, Infidelity and Faith divide mankind. The natural man as born in the world is an idolater; in the presence of Revelation, an infidel. But where by grace submission to God's word is true and unfeigned, divine faith is given. And God by it forms a distinct company for Himself. R. Beacon.

S. In that day

"In that day"

John 14:20.

It is interesting to note the threefold character of this great utterance of our Lord. Numbers, we know, play an important part in the communication of divine truth, and not least the number three, which has been called, not too fancifully, the numerical signature of the Godhead, implicit in the Ter Sanctus, the Holy, Holy, Holy, of Isaiah 6:1-13. Again, Christ speaks of Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and St. Paul exalts the three abiding virtues — Faith, Hope, and Love. Here, no doubt, the same number points, as always, to completeness completeness of doctrine and completeness of blessing. "At that day," says the Saviour, "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

"At that day." This began at Pentecost, and, though the knowledge then revealed will not reach its maturity till hereafter, when we shall know as we are known, yet surely it has deepened much since that wonderful epoch, notably perhaps during the last seventy years or so; at any rate in intelligent realisation by the saints of God. Yet we must not forget, in calling attention to Philadelphian recovery of truth, that the reality of it may often, by God's grace, have been enjoyed where there was little or no power of conscious entering into it. But, be that as it may, we proceed to note that twice more in the course of these last words of the Lord He refers to "that day," viz., in John 16:23; John 16:26; the point in the former verse being apparently that the disciples would be so illuminated by the Holy Spirit as not to need to ask for the solution of perplexing mysteries, whereas in the latter the announcement is made that they will ask in His name. Again in John 16:26 the word rendered "ask" is linked with the idea of supplication (*aitesesthe*) while in ver. 23 it is the word that a seeker after knowledge would naturally use (*erotesete*). The lesson to be drawn, as pointed out by an eminent divine no longer living (Bishop Westcott), seems to be that fulness of knowledge would be followed by fulness of prayer. In fact, as has been finely said, "the fulness of knowledge leads to fulness of prayer." At any rate, no knowledge can lessen the need of prayer; rather must it make such need more imperative, lest there be lack of humility. Moreover, as we know, supplication was to be made in the Name of the Lord a new thing, as the Lord tells the disciples in John 16:24. For, exquisitely beautiful and comprehensive (a model of what prayers should be) as is the prayer that at an earlier date our Lord gave the disciples at their request, there was no asking as yet in His Name, nor could there be. But let us look at each section of the verse somewhat in detail, if briefly and cursorily. The threefold character has already been noted. We may now note the order of the statements. We find then that what is absolute and transcendent comes first. It would be true, if nothing else followed, though it be the foundation of what follows. "Ye shall know," says the Lord, "that I am in my Father." Here we have most emphatically objective truth on which it is of all importance to be sound, i.e., truth that in itself is altogether outside ourselves. If we were non-existent, if there were no ransomed sinners, no church, still the Son would be in the Father. He ever was in the Father. Even on earth He was the only begotten Son,

which is in the bosom of the Father. Here no doubt the fact is enforced as the basis of our blessing. But still its objective character should be carefully remarked. It would be equally true if, to use the modern and rather colloquial phrase, we did not "come in" at all. Yet still this sublime fact would abide. It is indeed one of the most salient and glorious characteristics of christianity that it consists of facts. Merely human religions can only give us speculations, dreams, imaginations. Such are the lucubrations of philosophers and poets alike, the former never rising above their perplexed controversies, the latter now and then giving hints of something nobler and higher, but vague and hopeless as to any real attainment, as it was all bound to be. But how different is our "most holy faith," which is founded upon the impregnable rock of divine knowledge and certainty. So the Lord says, "Ye shall know," ye shall with ever deepening appreciation know that "I am in my Father." Needless to say, none can ever sound the depths of this great mystery, but we bow our heads in grateful adoration, as we enter further and further by the Holy Spirit's aid into the blessedness of the revelation. And while such words of our Lord are unlike any other words, unlike in their simplicity as in their profundity, we can at least see how fittingly and reassuringly this great truth takes precedence in the declaration by the Lord of this threefold doctrine. For it is, as we have seen, the basis of what follows, and to which we pass on.

"Ye in me." Here we have Christian position or standing, as it is called, as in the first statement the position of Christ is defined — a position that implies how He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and seated at His right hand, and that for our blessing among we know not what more universal results of the counsels of God (and the work of Christ) into which we are incompetent to enter, as reverence would forbid, whatever the spirit of speculation would say. For speculation must be vain when not actively pernicious. And in such matters the wisest man knows nothing more than a child, unless God is pleased to reveal His mind. But this by the way. Here, as we know, reference is made to the standing of believers, with which, theoretically, at least, we are so familiar. For does it not belong to that department of truth which those known as "Brethren" were largely instrumental in recovering? The Epistles to the Romans and to the Ephesians are, as we know, to a great extent but a commentary on these three words, as they severally concern the individual and the church. It is without doubt an aspect of Christianity that many pious souls most inadequately enter into, though not to be separated from the practical side, in short, with what is known as "state," with which the verse concludes. For indeed the three truths herein presented are as essentially connected as inseparable, as they are literally linked together. While all revelation hangs together in harmonious union, especially must this be the case with doctrines that our Lord has placed in close association. Doubtless when the perception of any one of them is weakened and dimmed, the others are in like degree. So it is, as one has said, with faith, hope, and love. Weaken one and you enfeeble the energy of the others.

Lastly, the Lord says, "And I in you." Now we come to what is purely subjective, and what all who are truly converted must in their measure realise. They may have little appreciation of the sublime truth that the Son is in the Father, but a feeble conception of standing in Christ; but none can fail, if they believe at all, to feel within, the comforting or the reproving influence of the Spirit of Christ. Yet we may confidently say that what the Lord has joined together spiritually He intends to be realised synchronously (if I may use this word for want of a simpler). It must be at least as true of spiritual things as of natural. This point I would press, the other being the precedence taken by objective truth, by which one means, to put it briefly, the transcendent side of revelation. R.B.

S. Israel's Preparation for, and Failure in, the Land.

Israel's Preparation for, and Failure in, the Land.

1. No where does the patience and longsuffering of God appear greater than in His dealings with Israel in the wilderness. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. The antediluvian world, the cities of the plain, and Egypt bore witness to the judgment of God; the wilderness to His mercy. Why is this? Because those who went through it were sprinkled with blood before they entered it. Mercy, even though the people put themselves under law, thus became a necessary feature in God's righteous dealing. Yet this is not the deeper thing. God would display Christ, and the various victims offered upon the altar, the incense upon the golden altar in the holy place, the varied duties and functions of Aaron, all declare Him, and are for the instruction of the church of God. The New Testament alone unfolds their meaning; a book which Israel never had, but which is laid open to the church of God. Nevertheless we do not find all we need in the wilderness; for the saints of the church are not only contemplated as pilgrims passing through a wilderness, but as dwellers in a land, 1:e. blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Not yet in heaven, still on earth, in the body, in the midst of enemies but warring a good warfare with blessed victory. So when Israel enters the land, a new scene altogether different from the wilderness is presented for our learning; where new energies are called forth to meet different trials and testings, as seen in the conflicts of Israel under the leadership of Joshua with the inhabitants of the land.

How different too the character of the failure and sins in the wilderness to those in the land which are recorded in the book of Joshua. It is the same flesh, and the sin in the land is the complement of the sin in the wilderness. There, the main feature is distrust of God, in the land it is rather vain confidence in man in his strength as at Ai, in his wisdom as in the matter of the Gibeonites. Whatever the contrariety in appearance and working, whether the despondency that would make a king and return to Egypt, or the confidence apart from God that would meet the power and the wiles of the enemy, it is the same old nature that never learns, never submits, never seeks the wisdom and grace of God.

Christians as being in the wilderness, and seated in heavenly places, are liable to both these sins. They may not be manifested in the same believer at the same time, but, looking at the whole church these two aspects of the church are always visible. How prone we are to doubt and fail in confidence in God, to repine at His dealings, to murmur because of sorrows and difficulties, to long for the things of the world, and then to rebel in heart. These are the experiences of the wilderness, and are far from being uncommon. Other dangers characterise the land. A believer who has in any way known the power of God in believing, or in service, may forget the source whence victory came, and take glory to himself; forgetting that not his rain's horn, but God made the walls to fall. He forgets himself as well as God, his flesh is puffed up, and confident in himself he despises the enemy. God makes him feel his powerlessness, and puts him to shame. This is the experience of the land. Not despairing of God, but confidence in self. Our true place is where we put the sentence of death upon ourselves, and have full confidence in God. The wilderness condition is

not one endowed with power, as in the land. The great lessons in the wilderness were the varied aspects but complete work of Christ; and it was necessary that He should thus be set forth that when they — Israel — possessed the land, they might see how their blessing all centred in Him. The nation has not yet learned it, nor can they till the new heart is given them. It was absolutely necessary that we should have all these details, that we might learn how to judge and deal with our own old nature. And when grace has taught us that Christ, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, died bearing its full judgment, and that we in Him have died to sin, then do we as believers receive power to maintain conflict with the world. It is vain to attempt battle with the enemy without, before the enemy within is judged. The change in the typical presentation of Christ, 1:e. from Moses to Joshua, corresponds to the growing of the believer when he first apprehends the truth of being in heavenly places in Christ. Both Moses and Joshua are types of Christ. The former led Israel through the wilderness, and Christ is the power that leads us through the world, and while believers look to Him, there may not be consciousness of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. Blessed it is, when, not realizing power over the flesh, we are able, burdened and sorrowing, to turn to Him. But to be delivered from the burden, to rise above the sorrow is something more, and this is when we know Him not only as the Captain of our salvation — our Joshua — but also as our High Priest in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down as the connecting link between the Head in heaven and His members on the earth. But Christ is also with us here, not bodily, but by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us through Priesthood to look to Him as seated on the throne. So that He is with us here, and in heaven, and Priesthood connects these two, so that we have direct and immediate access to God. Joshua has to stand before Eleazar the priest who shall enquire of Jehovah for him. It is Christ by the Spirit leading us to approach Him as our High Priest above, and to God, through Him revealed as our Father. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." We must be in the land to know this fully. But to be in the land — seated in Him in the heavenlies, does not take us out of the wilderness as to the body. On the other hand, only those who by grace know their standing in Christ can bear without murmuring the trials of the wilderness. And thus it is that the christian as to circumstances, is yet in the wilderness; and as to his standing, in the heavenly places, with and in Christ. A riddle to the world, a divine reality for us.

Turning to Israel, before they enter the land, through the claim of the daughters of Zelophehad to their father's inheritance, God proves the sovereignty of grace, and makes provision in a case where the law made none. We get the families of Manasseh, and the children known by the name of the head of the family. But Zelophehad had no sons, and none to perpetuate the family name. There were only four daughters (Numbers 26:33). By the law only sons could inherit. Is this inheritance to be lost, swallowed up by others? Nay, grace gives to these daughters the inheritance of their father, and grace made it a "statute of judgment." Already is given, in shadow, the great truth that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female; all believers are sons, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

We note, in passing, how absorbed Moses is here in the welfare of Israel. Elsewhere we read his pleading to be allowed to enter the good land, until God told him to speak no more of this matter. Here when Jehovah bids him ascend Mount Abarim to see the land, and then die, he immediately prays, not for himself, but that "Jehovah the God of the spirits of all flesh" may "set a man over the congregation." This is very beautiful, it is nearly the same abnegation of self as when on a previous occasion he said, "Blot me . . . out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32).

Moses knew the people, how necessary that there should be a leader who should go out before them, and go in before them, one who would never lose sight of them, so that they might not wander and be as sheep which have no shepherd. The Lord Jesus when He was here said, He was this good Shepherd. Joshua led them out of the wilderness and in to the promised inheritance. The Lord led His own sheep out of Judaism (which had then become a wilderness) into the green pastures of grace. Not personally while on the earth but by His Spirit after He had ascended. And is not this way and purpose of God seen — enough but darkly — in that Moses dies before Joshua leads Israel into the land? But it is the Spirit, the Comforter, the Servant of Christ, Who now leads us, acting in Christ's name, into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. The Jew out of his Judaism, the Gentile out of his degradation into the richer fields of Christianity. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalm (Psalms 23:1-6 :) puts the song of faith in the mouth of the redeemed of Israel, and in a more blessed way, in our hearts now, in this day of reproach and misrepresentation. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters." The people were numbered before Joshua was appointed. He was appointed for their sake, just as the good Shepherd came to seek the lost sheep. How the numbering of the people, and the record of the name of each family, and the allotted inheritance for each, prove the care and love of God, entering — so to say — into the details of their life, so that place and quality of their possessions are appointed by Him. There was due preparation made, the order of their march was determined. It was God's army going to take the promised inheritance; the rank and file, as well as each officer, knew their place, and the march did not begin till all was ready.

There is the same loving care watching over us, not such order as the world may see, nor to such possessions as the world may take away. Our possessions are heavenly. But neither are we left as orphans now; all that we have now is appointed by His wisdom and goodness. To most of God's children now in this world, it is poverty, suffering, to not a few; but the best to all. This challenges our faith. Is suffering with its varied aspects the best for us? Ought we to doubt it, seeing that, having given us Christ, God will with Him surely give us all things? ' Oh, for more confidence in the supreme love of our Father and God! Our portion is not here but above, our city is one made without hands eternal in the heavens. But if the people who are to have the less glorious portion are recorded by name, why is it that the names of the first-born ones are not given? Yea, they are all recorded where our inheritance is. It was right and proper that the names of Israel's families should be known here, for here is their inheritance, and their title-deeds are in God's book for the earth. It is equally right and proper that our names should not be given. How, if by name declared before the world, could it be said of us — "as unknown?" Known we should be by the moral traits which the Lord taught, but not by name as the families of Israel. Yet we are known by name to God; and in the Lamb's book of life not the family name, but the name of each individual is written.

Directions as to the feasts are given, but in reference to the land. And a conditional provision of mercy for the man-slayer. These all look onward to the future of Israel. Though well we know how the gospel appears in the institution of the cities of refuge. Neither the feasts, nor the cities can apply to the wilderness. Yet we have the best share in each. Our portion is not the earthly and material, but the spiritual and the heavenly. The feasts are not for us to be observed respectively at different seasons, but all are in one, One which combines all, where, though there is the

material bread and wine, yet the spiritual and the heavenly overshadow all as we in remembrance of Him "show the LORD'S DEATH till He come." For these two words contain the worth, and dignity, and the sacrifice, that were ever prefigured in the types of old, whether of High Priest or of Victim.

2. 1886 51.

Israel numbered, and a new leader appointed, are not all the preparation needed to enter the land, for in these their responsibilities do not appear. Accordingly they are reminded of Jehovah's dealings with them since they came out of Egypt. He had led them through that great and terrible wilderness, and had cared for them; their feet did not swell, nor did their garments wax old. He had fed them with quails — earthly food — and with manna — angels' food — from heaven. At the same time He had made them know that He was holy and just, and visited their iniquities with judgment; yet at the close of their journey had crowned them with mercies and loving kindnesses, and notwithstanding their sin had brought them to the promised land. All this is recounted to them by Moses in Deuteronomy. Israel's responsibilities were so important that, to remind them that their continued possession of the promised land depended upon their obedience, another book is written, and the results of faithfulness according to the law, and of disobedience, are all foretold. This was an integral part of the preparation, for they were under bond of perfect obedience, though they had broken the bond continually ever since they made the rash vow. And here see the contrast between the tenure of possession as then proposed, and of their establishment in the good land when the counsels of God are fulfilled. Not obedience to the law, but sovereign grace gives them permanent possession. It rests on the same ground as does our assurance now of the possession of a far brighter land than they will have. Their land — now a wilderness — shall truly blossom as the garden of the Lord, but our citizenship is in heaven, our mansions are above, our city is one made without hands. While Israel are yet men upon the earth, though enjoying the greatest blessing foretold by-and-by for the earth, we shall be in risen bodies of glory drinking new wine with the Lord Jesus in the Father's kingdom. But all, whether for the church in heaven or for Israel on earth, is founded upon Christ. Our responsibilities flow from grace, theirs rested upon the ground of law-obedience, enforced by mercies and judgments, and the precepts and warnings, in the book of Deuteronomy, flow from law ground; and therefore this book is consistently both preceptive and comminatory. Yet underneath the solemn warnings and the sure judgments lie the determined counsels of God; here and there a promise and a prophecy of future blessing appear amid the claims of righteousness and the threatenings of a broken law. Indeed the book almost begins with a glimpse of the blessedness and glory to come, presented in the form of a prayer, or desire of Moses, but to be gloriously fulfilled in good time. "The Jehovah God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as ye are, and bless you as He hath promised you" (Deuteronomy 1:11). Restoration is implied, for mercies are theirs, and grace is sovereign (see also 33: 26-29). The possession was at first conditional, and such conditions as made their continuance in the land impossible. For fallen man had engaged to be perfectly obedient to God. This was the ground Israel had chosen, such the tenure upon which they presumed to hold the land. Deuteronomy recognises this ground, and though grace had come in, and God, rising above law, had declared His mercy, the demands of the law are not abated, nor the penalties mitigated. All are enforced by the past mercies and future judgment. But they are crowned with blessing, and warned as sinful men under law; thus they are made ready, and the power of Jehovah leads them.

Yet is there something more ere they tread the long-wished-for land. In no common ordinary way must Israel enter, but just as the power of Jehovah led them out of Egypt through the divided waters of the Red Sea, so must they enter the good land and pass through the Jordan dry shod. The power of Jehovah their God was their triumphant banner as they passed through. He is the Lord of all the earth and His people must be led into their possessions in a way befitting this Name; "tomorrow Jehovah will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5). Not only must Israel be known as His people but the nations must have a witness of His eternal power and Godhead; and they trembled at the thought that the Lord of all the earth was the God of Israel. "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that Jehovah had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (v. 1). The ark is 2000 cubits in advance of the people as they march towards the Jordan, that they may see the way to go; and in the midst of Jordan it remains till all have passed over. This was a preparation like the numbering and the appointing of a new leader quite apart from their responsibility. This new way of entering the land was not only a wondrous display of Almighty power, but from which Israel should have learnt to live in obedience to Him Who held the waters in the hollow of His hand. The holiness demanded by law was surely enforced by the power of the law-giver. After the last words of Moses (Deuteronomy) what more fitting sequel than the evidence of the truth that God was for them (cf. Romans 8:31)? But they saw not the moral bearing of the miracle, it was but another wonder added to the many already witnessed both in Egypt and in the wilderness. God would fit them (as it were) for dwelling in the land, but they understood not His ways. Israel saw the miracle; it was reserved for the church to know its meaning.

Indeed the truth conveyed by the ark going through the Jordan never could be known till Christ came, nay, only by His going away through the path of death, and then making a way for us through the same waters, but His presence abiding that the power of it might keep back the overflowing waters of death. The ark going through the Jordan is neither suffering for sin nor intercession for a rebellious people; it is Christ in power, but a power which is the special result of having Himself gone under death's power when He made His soul an offering for sin, winning victory where it could be won in no other way than by the death of the Victor. The Jordan is not so much the Victor's death, as His power over death, though undoubtedly the way in which He won the victory is not indistinctly seen. But prominently we see the fruit of the work and cross of Christ, Who triumphantly leads His own people, as it were, in the very face of death, and through its domain, a way hitherto unknown, to the knowledge of the heavenly places in Him. This way is impossible to man, yea to saints save as He is there to keep back and stay the otherwise overwhelming flood. The ark in the Jordan is no part of atonement, but the presence of the power of Christ which alone can withstand the power of death, our only bulwark against it. Not their past mercies, nor the promises alone kept back the flood from destroying Israel, but the ark resting in the midst while the people passed before [in presence of] it. All the promises are made good in Christ; He accomplishes the purposes of God whether for Israel or for the church. The Red Sea was the way from death to life, and there is seen the power of death over the enemy — the world as such has no more dominion over us — while death to the foe it is life to the blood-sprinkled. It is ours to know how we get victory over the world, through the death and resurrection of Christ; but there is a more subtle power than the world to be overcome, even the flesh. The Red Sea — in

type — gives us the standing of death and resurrection through Christ, but as a condition of soul, I apprehend, not realized till by faith we pass through the Jordan, that is, till consciously dead and risen with Christ we write sentence of death upon the flesh. What type in the wilderness foreshadowed the truth of our having died, and being risen in Christ? Some if not all point to it, surely all are in harmony with it, but all pointed directly to the Person and work of Christ. So the ark in the Jordan not less to Him, but also to our death with Him in that He died to sin, and to our rising with Him in that both the people and the ark come up out of the Jordan. For as Israel followed the ark into the waters of death, so we, sustained by His power, pass through — not feeling its power as He felt it — rejoicing in His victory and gain our good land, sitting with Him in the heavenlies. On the cross Christ met death as a Victim, that was atonement. Here, as typified by the ark in the Jordan, He meets death as a Conqueror. Jordan may overflow its banks, but He quells the power of death and we triumph in His triumphs. He gave proof of His victory over the power of death when He rose for He could not be holden of death, but He conquered death and the grave, not for Himself but for others. "And the graves were opened; and 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). "After His resurrection" for in all things He must have the pre-eminence; He is the

First-born from among the dead. This victory over death for the body we shall know when He comes; but we are called to know it now for the soul in what may be called a higher aspect, at least as regards holiness if not glory. For victory now is connected with our faith, by which we triumph over the power of death in the "flesh." The resurrection of the body is not by the power of faith, but by the power of God apart from faith; the trump of God and the voice of the arch-angel will awaken every dead saint, and every living saint shall be changed, and both will rise to meet the Lord in the air. Faith leads us now to anticipate the joy and the glory, but the fact of resurrection will be by the power of God, in His own good time. The Lord said, I will raise him up at the last day.

Jehovah will have a memorial of their glorious entry into the land, and twelve stones are taken out of the bed of the river to be left in the lodging place where they should lodge this night. But not only for them, it was also to be a sign for their children. The stones are to be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. But this memorial is erected in the place where they lodge. The first night at least they could not forget. No vague remembrance as of a thing past and done with, but the stones would remind them of the river and how they passed through, and would tell them of the power and presence of God; was it not also by implication a pledge of His continued presence and future conquest? They were not to forget God, for He would never fail them. But there was another twelve stones, but not for Israel's eye. Israel have no visible part with these twelve stones, save as all their blessedness flows from Christ. Not a man from each tribe, but "Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan" (ver. 9). When the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, the sea stones — this memorial — was seen only by God. And there is in the Person and work of Christ a preciousness and value which only God can estimate, beyond any created intelligence. For beside being the Saviour of them that believe, He is the Vindicator of God's name, of His truth and righteousness. If no soul had ever believed in Him, He the Lord Jesus, would still be the delight of God, Who exalted Him where sin had dishonoured Him, and conquered sin and death that had ruined man and spoilt creation. This is God's peculiar position in Christ. The believer gets the blessings flowing therefrom, but he cannot measure Christ's worth, nor God's estimate of it.

We read of two goats, one of which was called Jehovah's portion. So here the twelve stones beneath Jordan's swelling flood is God's portion. For a time the raging waters of sin and death hide Christ from men; soon He will reign in power and glory, and God be exalted in the earth. Not even then will man or angel know all the worth of Christ. But what a blessed portion is ours as we look at the stones in the lodging place! We are only "lodgers" in this world, and that only a "night." But we have a memorial given to us of the Lord, and one which tells of our salvation, and also how it was accomplished. So that we have, as it were, the memorial in the Jordan connected with that in the lodging place. But who even of the first-born ones can fully estimate the Lord's death? As the stones were for a memorial for the children of Israel for ever, so the Lord's supper is in remembrance of Him until He come. The stones in the lodging place were as much for Joshua as for any other Israelite. We do not read that he was commanded to set up twelve stones in the Jordan. Moses was the only one of all Israel who "by faith kept* the passover." Did Joshua's faith go beyond the memorial in the lodging place, and he alone of all Israel worship God in the place of death, where the priests' feet had stood? Thus owning the power of death but worshipping Him Who conquered death? Then though not in so great light as the church of God, he was partaker of a like faith which is never limited to mere external obedience. It was Christ — the ark — Who overcame and stayed the power of death, and Joshua returned to bless the God of his salvation. It was an act of worship in the same spirit, though not in the same form as when we remember the Lord in His death.

[*It may be "instituted" as a permanent emblem Ed.]

3. 1886 68.

Israel is exalted among the nations upon whom the terror of Jehovah is fallen. Jericho is witness that at the first report of Jehovah's wonders in Egypt, notably in the Red Sea, also to the two kings of the Amorites, their hearts did melt, and there remained no more courage in them. The crossing of the Jordan completed their dismay, the dreaded nation was come, armed with the might of the God in heaven above and in earth beneath. For now it was not mere report, but the power of God attested by the waters of Jordan.

How true a picture of man is given by these Canaanites; for terrified at first by the report of God's judgments, they are found after forty years' delay ready to oppose what they confess to be the power of God, and if their hearts still melted with fear, they had the will to resist. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

After such wonderful interpositions of the power of Jehovah for Israel, what more is needed but that they march immediately on to victory? There is nothing more true than that after grace shown, God looks for a corresponding answer from His own people. Under law the answer required was obedience, now under grace it is obedience still but springing from altogether a different source. And herein lies the responsibility of saints now, so different from that of men, as such. Man's responsibility apart from the gospel is, "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Sinful man is utterly incapable of doing his duty. Sovereign grace appears, saves him, makes him a new creation, and changes the whole ground of responsibility: not annulling the command — the duty of fearing God, but putting him where, and supplying the power by which, the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in him. He is thus on

the ground of "no condemnation," and of the indwelling Spirit, and the corresponding answer to this is, to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Thus the Holy Spirit — the law of life, as in a new creation — makes a fresh starting point on new ground where old things are passed away and all things become new. The duties and obligations attaching to all the relationships of life remain, but the past failure is forgiven and the believer begins afresh, and now with power from God. A new responsibility commences; the former was without strength, this is with the assurance of power from God. It is no excuse for the failing believer to plead the power of nature; a superior power, that of the Holy Spirit, is given, and christian responsibility is measured by that gift. Our privileges are greater, our enjoyments are higher, and our responsibilities are deeper, than those of Israel, even had they been perfectly obedient.

Returning to the chapter before us (Joshua 5:1-15), Jehovah had wrought for them, His grace had followed them ever since they came out of Egypt. Hitherto there had been no response to all this favour; for forty years they had remained in an uncircumcised condition. Nor would they have thought of it now, content to lie under the reproach of Egypt; but God never forgets the claims of holiness, and now that the dangers of the wilderness are past, Israel must respond to their new position. If their untoward manners in the wilderness gave reason for the forbearance of God, there can be no more delay. "At that time Jehovah said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time." God is rich in grace and will have them (in type at least) such as His holiness requires. That which is offensive must now be judged. Nature had had full sway in the wilderness, but in the land the knife must be used; for it is impossible that an unrestrained, unmortified, nation can fight the battles of the Lord. It would be like Satan attempting to cast out Satan. Not the knowledge alone of sins forgiven fits us for contending with spiritual wickedness in high places. Israel had that (typically) in the wilderness, the blood on the altar pointed to it. The power of Christ quelling the power of death — as the ark in the Jordan — and then the practical result — the sharp knife — must be realised before saints now are equipped for the war. Paul tells the Ephesians that they are in heavenly places in Christ; then he bids them be strong in the Lord, and to put on the whole armour of God. The circumcision of Israel was carnal, ours is that of the heart; in each it precedes victory. And this, though practically the believer's act upon himself, is due solely to the grace of God. It is only by the Holy Spirit in us that we can live contrary to the old self. The natural man denying himself is an impossibility. He may by strength of will deny himself one thing, but it is always the exalting of himself in another. To judge the whole nature, root, and branch, is nothing less than of the Spirit of God in us, "that ye may not do the things that ye would." The will of God is our sanctification.

Then when the work is done, God rejoices in it. And surely it is no small matter to us, that the mortifying of the flesh is not the produce of our mind — no monkish effort — but so in accord with the mind of God that He, as it were, identifies Himself with us in it, and says, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you" — I, not you. His is the power, His be the praise. So the apostle, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." What a marvellous blending of the saints' responsibility with the sovereign power of grace!

Scripture speaks of the reproach of Christ; and every believer is more or less bearing either the reproach of Christ, or that of Egypt. Hebrews 13:13 shows us what the reproach of Christ is, and who they are that bear it. To leave the camp and go to Him is a deep affront to the religious world.

For this is the reproach cast upon those who "go forth," that they are disorderly, self-righteous, narrow-minded, separatists: and wherefore? Because it is a going forth to Him, as Lord, Master, and having no rule but His word, no bond of connection but His Spirit. Separatists indeed from the camp, but how can that be called narrow-minded which would and does embrace all the children of God? Nevertheless it does bring on us reproach, and the Spirit of God says it is the reproach of Christ, the reproach of Him Who was crucified without the gate, as a malefactor, as the religious world of that day were the prime actors in that deed. It was a religion of forms and ceremonies, once acceptable, but which then had become worthless. But the "camp" still exists, and has its forms and ritual, and the same hatred for those who separate from them. Yet there must be some deeper reason than that of leaving the camp's ritual and formalities, a reason which lies possibly unseen at the bottom of the well. There is no covering so thick under which love of the world, and an uncircumcised heart, may so comfortably lodge as religious forms and a sensuous ritual. This is making room for the flesh in the things that professedly belong to God. And this is just what Israel would have done, save for the intervention of grace, which put the sharp knife into their hand; and it needs a sharper knife to cut one's self away from the associations of the religious world, than from the profane world. Hence the dislike of the religious world for those they speak against is far more expressed, than that of the outside world. If those who go forth to Him without the camp bear His reproach, those who cling to the camp bear the reproach of Egypt. And every child of God found there, dishonours God, dishonours Christ, yea, himself too as a believer. It is the same grace that now leads a believer out of the camp, as then led Israel to Gilgal.

Since Israel uncircumcised could not have overcome their enemies, nor even inherited the land, human reason would say, Let them be circumcised before they cross the Jordan. Not so the wisdom of God. Grace is first, then afterwards the results of grace. Holiness is the fruit of faith. Israel passed through the Jordan before they were led to Gilgal, and the believer must know his place as risen with Christ before he can realise power to overcome the flesh. "If ye then be risen with Christ mortify your members which are upon the earth." Believers bear the name of Christ, not because they walk worthily, but the worthy walk should follow the bearing of the Name.

Judging, or mortifying, the flesh is not the act of a moment; and he who pretends that it costs nothing to deny himself has never yet judged himself rightly. It is he who has suffered in the flesh that has ceased from sin (1 Peter 4:1). There are deep searchings of heart; and only when the old nature is fully exposed and found to be nothing but sin, is it truly judged. There must be the suffering — I do not say the yielding — before there can be the judging. The flesh is found to be enmity against God, and in presence of His grace and love, it is abhorred and condemned. This is using the sharp knife, God working in us. The forgiveness of sins is one act, and abides forever. It is not moral dealing in the soul, but God's act for the soul. Moral dealings are not momentary acts, more or less time is needed ordinarily to discern the incorrigible evil of our nature. After this fight with self is won, 1:e. when the question of victory is settled for ever in the death of Christ, and faith apprehends our risen position in Him, the saint — so to say — is in a fighting condition and able with the assurance of victory to meet all enemies. This moral dealing with the soul is symbolically seen in Israel at Gilgal; they remained in their place till they were whole.

Before Israel begins the war, the passover is eaten on the appointed day. No blessing, no height of enjoyment, can be separated from the foundation truth set forth in the passover, the divine reason why God can and does bless. There His righteousness had (typically) its full demands, and

the Avenger passed over the guilty. All their after mercies flowed from that. It is most instructive to us to see it here in connection with their position in the land. It recalls Egypt, the house of bondage; then they were slaves, now they are receiving a kingdom, and all due to the passover. And saints, now sitting in heavenly places in Christ, still remember that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." The feast of unleavened bread is the proper sequence of the passover, and so the apostle adds, "therefore let us keep the feast."

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-same day." The knowledge of our risen position in Christ does not remove the necessity of watchfulness against the flesh. On the contrary, such high standing ought to make us more unsparing of all that is of this world. We have a nature that loves the leaven of this world. In purging ourselves from this we eat unleavened cakes. But we have also a new nature, and by it are capable of eating the old corn of the land. I say capable; but not without the indwelling Spirit could even the new nature, although having the capacity, realise the blessedness of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is thus we eat of the old corn of the land. While here below, unleavened cakes mark our responsibility, the old corn of the land is the grace of God known in its highest aspect; and these keep pace together, eaten in the self-same day.

If the unleavened cakes must still be eaten with the old corn, why does the manna cease? This is an instance of how impossible it is to set forth the place and privileges of the christian in one comprehensive type. Israel could not be in the wilderness and in the land at the same time, and therefore in the type, manna, which is the special food for the wilderness, ceases necessarily. On the other hand the old corn is peculiar to the land and could not be had in the wilderness. The christian is both in the wilderness and in the land; he is both a pilgrim passing through a world which to him is a desert, and in heavenly places in Christ. Therefore he still feeds upon Christ as the true bread that came down from heaven, and as risen, eats of the old corn, of the fruit of the land. To know the cleansing power of His precious blood, to know Him as High Priest ever living to make intercession for us, maintaining us in faith, delivering us in the hour of temptation is just what we need as pilgrims here below, but does not reach to the height of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. The Lord Jesus said before He left the world "Peace I leave with you," and this includes all wilderness mercy and blessing; but "My peace I give unto you" is the possession which the Lord, as man, had with the Father in heaven. And He was the first man that knew such peace; never before had there been such intimate communion between God in heaven, and a man upon earth. It was peculiar to Him. The voice from heaven was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." And the response from the only perfect Man, was, "I do always the things that please Him." Who can measure the peace, the communion of the Father and the Son? Yet this peace, peculiarly His own, is the special bequest of His love to His disciples. This is truly the fruit of the land of our heavenly Canaan. It is more than grace, mercy, and peace as needed during our sojourn in the wilderness; it is communion with Christ in possession of heavenly things. To have our mind set upon the things which are at the right hand of God where Christ is, to find our highest, nay, our only true joys there, and to find their spirit influencing and permeating our whole life down here, is truly to eat of the old corn of the land.

4. 1886 83.

Yet one thing more before the conflict begins. Joshua, though the most prominent in Israel is not the real Leader. The real Captain of the host is Jehovah Himself. Joshua did not know who the man with the drawn sword was. Had he not yet learnt that He Who had led would still lead? He had led through the wilderness, He would still lead against their enemies. But the fact was revealed to a prepared heart, and he "fell on his face to the earth and did worship and said unto Him — what saith my Lord unto His servant." And mark, the word of the Captain is not as to the order of battle against Jericho, that is given later, but first a word which reminds Joshua in Whose presence he is. "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:15).

Saints now need the same word. Indeed there is no word ever given to the saints of old but what finds its application to saints now. While we rejoice in God our Father, let us never forget that our Father is God, and that reverence and godly fear is ever our becoming attitude in His presence. It is no spirituality and deeper communion when we hear too familiar language used in prayer or praise. This is not so much lacking in addressing the Father; it is when speaking to the Lord that irreverential manner is most frequent. Holy confidence, and freedom of access does not mean familiarity, which may imperceptibly become levity. Jesus is indeed our Saviour and Friend, but saints should constantly remember that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ. And so the Lord Himself says, "Ye call me Master . . . and ye say well for so I am" (John 13:1-38 :). Evidently the first thing for Joshua is to loose his shoe, for he was on holy ground; but that is where the church of God is now, and there to know the Lord as worthy of honour even as the Father, as well as our great Leader against all spiritual wickedness. The reverential worship of Joshua, and the man with the drawn sword just express our position in the world, only that our warfare is not with men but with the powers of evil in heavenly places (cf. Ephesians 6:12). When the father received the prodigal, among other things he said, "put shoes on his feet." It was not fitting that he should be shoeless in his father's house; he was no longer a homeless wanderer, but a son restored to all the privileges he had lost. And we, forgiven and received into the Father's family, have shoes on our feet, for we are sons not hired servants. It is the witness of acceptance, and place in the house. Israel left Egypt with feet shod; readiness for the journey, and breaking with the world. And the saint is now told to have his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and this is activity in service. All these have to say as to our position through grace before God and before man, as leaving the world behind us, as having our associations and joys with those who are of the Father's household, and as having God's message of love and peace for man. But here in Joshua it is something far higher and is not for the world's cognisance. The unshod feet in God's presence is the sign of subjection, the heart, the understanding, and the will, surrendered to God. Joshua said "What saith my Lord unto His servant." The outward manner must be in accordance with the inward spirit, and he puts off his shoe.

There is no true worship apart from holiness, reverence and godly fear. And if all these are taught Israel through Joshua in view of their earthly Canaan, how much more heed should we give, having in view our greater privilege and higher destiny! Nor is there a true fitness for the battle to be fought with the world, the flesh and the devil, unless the three things now before us, namely, consciously risen with Christ, self-judgment, and subjection in true worship, are known and enjoyed. Equipped with these the believer goes on to victory. Israel now prepared after a carnal sort, we for the heavenly places, for the spiritual conflict by faith in Christ and by the power of the

Holy Spirit. The taking of Jericho is marvellous proof that Jehovah was Captain of the host. The imposing yet strange array of the army as it marched round the city, — rendered more striking still by the presence of the ark and the attendant priests — must have filled with wonder if not with dread the minds of the dwellers in Jericho. But there was a power with the army beyond what they could see, of which the ark was the symbol. By that power alone apart from man was the city won. Israel did not raise a finger till Jehovah by His unseen power had thrown down the walls; then it was that every man went straight before him. And then it was not battle but judgment upon the guilty. This first victory is a confirmation of the word spoken to Joshua, "As Captain of Jehovah's host am I now come." It was also a sample of how future victories should be gained. For victory is sure for those who trust in God. The presence of the ark would be a witness of faith in Him, as the ram's horn is expressive of contempt for human might. For it was with these two most prominent characteristics — faith in God, and no confidence in the flesh — that the Captain's power was made so manifest. Later we may see more energy, and faith more active. When the sun and the moon stood still at the word of Joshua there was more of the boldness of faith than at Jericho. Yet even that, when one day was made equal to two, does not reach to the height of the glory when by the will of Jehovah the walls fell down flat. The standing still of the sun and the moon was equally the power of God, but Joshua and Israel were very busy in the fight; here it is man standing aside and as it were looking on while God single-handed — if we may so say — performs the whole work. The Captain of the host made good His word and proved His power.

Why no such display of sovereign power afterwards? If man (Israel) is more active in subsequent battles, and the intervention of their Captain not so marked and glorious, it was because failure came in. After failure, when grace brings in restoration, faith frequently appears more energetic. It was so with Israel; at Jericho their might was in abeyance; as to the Red Sea they were told to stand still and see the salvation of God, so here they wait till God overthrows the first barrier in the land to their possession. This wondrous overthrow is the pledge of final victory, the assurance that the Captain of the host is leading them. But why is there no following instance 'of the same power acting apart from man? Because they had to be taught the necessity of watchfulness and dependence upon God, of which they did not feel the need when at Jericho. The required moral condition had been symbolically set forth, 1:e. no confidence in themselves, but faith in God; but they had to learn their need practically. So while they still overcame their enemies, there was greater demand for the exercise of faith; a putting forth of their own might, yet under the control of God, was the appointed way of possessing the land. All was theirs according to promise, actual possession was "every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon" (Joshua 1:3). Unfaithfulness prevented full possession, and God would not throw down walls for those who failed in faith. Surely all wisely and graciously overruled for our instruction. But never after was the presence of the Captain so marked. And how fitting that this first trophy in the conquest of Canaan should be rather the evidence of His presence than the result of Israel's prowess. It was the confirmation of the original promise first made to Abraham; joy to Israel and terror to the Canaanite. At no subsequent point in their history were they so exalted as at this moment. Even the glories of Solomon, and of the temple when dedicated did not more manifestly show the presence of Jehovah.

Compare them now with what they were on leaving Egypt. Let the eye run down the whole thread of their history when they cried out for fear (Exodus 14:10) to this day of triumph, and then say,

What hath God wrought? Yes, it is the triumph of grace. Grace which like Jordan overflowed its banks. Grace which had been put to the test, which had never been found wanting, which it is not enough to say had met all the need of a perverse nation in the wilderness, but the need of Him Who in spite of their rebelliousness would righteously bring them into the good land according to His promise. And now behold this self-same people crowned with glory in the presence of their enemies; is it not the overflowing of grace? Yea, of sovereign grace, which will continue to be sovereign, rising still over every obstacle until the day come when He, the Captain of the host — now our risen Lord — shall come in power and glory, and visit the earth with sudden and overwhelming judgment, of which the fall of Jericho is both a type and a warning.

Beautifully interwoven with Israel's greatness is the story of Rahab — one of the most degraded in the guilty city. This is truly the river of grace overflowing both its banks, towards the Gentile as to the Israelite. And with no other event in their warfare could it so suitably be found. Quite in keeping with Jehovah working in grace for Israel apart from any putting forth of their own strength. The same grace singles out one from among the crowd of sinners in Jericho, but she the only one who truly bowed to the word of God. Grace would not leave that one to perish, and the word of judgment which bowed her soul before the God of Israel is followed by the word of grace. Spies, so called, were sent to view the city, but really they were messengers of grace to a woman who was a sinner; and she trusts the word of the spies — bringing glad tidings — as she had before bowed to the impending judgment. Her soul was prepared to receive the message of mercy. None accept grace but those who bow to God's sentence against themselves. God's grace is only truly glad tidings to the soul that owns the righteousness of judgment. When this is not the case the result of hearing the gospel is sometimes like seed falling on ground where there is no deepness of earth.

Spies! They went to her house, lay hid all the time, and then escaping by the window fly to the mountain and hide again for three days. What had they discovered? Nothing but what might have been apprehended already by faith. "I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee (Exodus 23:27 etc.). The spies only verified the word of promise spoken forty years before, and they report that "all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." But what did they discover? They found a poor sinner who trembled at God's word, and they showed her the way of salvation, and she believed, and perished not with them that believed not. And this was the reason why spies entered Jericho. The Captain of the host needed no spies; He could look over the battlements and highest towers of the city; He could search every man's heart. Besides, He was going to throw down their walls; no spies needed for that. Nor were they unseen; their entry, though by night, was immediately told to the king of Jericho. But when it is the purpose of God to save, what can this king do? Rahab was one of God's sheep; not of the fold of Israel, but brought into it through grace. Grace was at that moment breaking bounds even for Israel. God had said that He would make their enemies turn their back unto them, but it was beyond Israel's expectation that upon their shout He would throw down the walls. God had said that they should possess all the land wherever they trod, but He did not tell them in what a marvellous way He would lead them to tread the streets of Jericho. If His grace was then overleaping and going beyond the strict letter of the promise, how could it be restrained from going still further and rescuing a poor Gentile from destruction? It was an intimation, at that early date that God would call whomsoever He would,

and is the exercise of that sovereign grace which afterwards would be characterised by bringing in Gentiles when Israel would be set aside. The Lord Jesus said when leading out the sheep of Israel to new pastures, "other sheep I have . . . them also I must bring." And Rahab was one reckoned among the

"other" sheep while Israel was still nominally the people of God. "Must!" There in Rahab's case is the same necessity of grace: then to number her with Israel (Joshua 6:25); now, whether Jew or Gentile, to greener pastures and streams of living water, and to be numbered among His "one flock."

Only after the cross did the great ingathering of "other sheep" from among the Gentiles begin. Yet before the gospel was sent out to all nations God had His witnesses outside Israel, with varying intelligence and faith according to the truth revealed. Job stands foremost in his day and God bears testimony that there was none like him in all the earth. His three friends doubtless were saints though far behind Job in intelligence of the ways of God. They were accepted through the intercession of Job. Melchizedec, the royal priest, wondrous type of Christ as without beginning of days or end of life; Jethro, who confessed the God of Israel though he would not cast in his lot with them: Rahab, pre-eminent as witness of sovereign grace: Ruth, who gave up the advantages her own country offered, to share the poverty of Naomi in order that as she says, "thy God shall be my God," thus identifying herself with the poor of Israel — the same spirit as is recorded of Moses who chose to bear the reproach of Christ, rather than enjoy the pleasures of Egypt. And Ruth like Rahab has a place in the line of the ancestry of the Son of David. Naaman again, who submitted to the word and received healing: the widow of Zarephath, Gentile witness of life in resurrection power. And, coming down to the days of our Lord, we have the Centurion whose faith exceeded any in Israel: and the Syro-phenician woman — another Gentile witness of the power of Christ over Satan. All these testify to the grace of God Who sought and found sheep bearing a testimony apart from the special witness of Israel. Each of these has a specific character. All proclaim the sovereignty of grace. The presence and power of the Lord Jesus in the earliest days of the church when on Peter's first preaching three thousand were converted is analogous to this first victory in Canaan. On each occasion the enemy was surprised. The Christ-rejecting Jews and Satan at their head, not less so, when the power of the Holy Ghost came upon the gathered disciples, and immediately after three thousand converted, than were the men of Jericho when their defence suddenly disappeared and gave free entry to Israel. In the church (Acts 2:1-47 :) it is a victory of grace, of Christ over Satan, and wresting from him the captives that he thought must now be his for ever, seeing that they had crucified the Lord. But that death is the means of life; what greater proof than the three thousand added to the church? Such was the mighty display of power in Israel and in the church before man cast his dark shadow over its bright glory; a glory which otherwise would have continued to shine in its power. But a blot came upon the church through Ananias and Sapphira as upon Israel through Achan. Grace, in each case mingled with judgment, was sufficient for both emergencies. But neither in Israel nor in the church was such a thing afterwards seen as walls falling at the presence of the ark, or of three thousand souls converted at one preaching. Afterwards the responsibilities of faith more appear. The grace of God still saves, the power of the word is still felt, but the energy of faith is more prominent. Divine wisdom controls all. By faith we overcome the world. The servant of the Lord is now in a position where his own dependence upon God is more felt. Most essential this to faithful and true service, yet not as a principal, but as a

subsidiary to the grace of God, 1:e.,. the faith and devotedness of the servant — which as a rule mark the successful evangelist — is used as a means by which God will accomplish His purpose of sending His message of love to souls.

Thus, then, Israel is prepared for the land. They have been led through the waters of death, they have set up their twelve stones as having overcome death (it was the ark that stayed the waters). They are circumcised, and they have Jehovah Himself as their Captain, Who has proved His might at Jericho. How did they answer to all this grace and painstaking?

Israel's Failure in the Land.

5. 1886 100.

Man being in honour abideth not. Such is the divine testimony. Failure is inherent in man. In innocence, under law, or under grace, no matter what the position, or the privilege, he has never abode therein. Failure may first be secret, in the heart, sometimes the act is hidden, but if unjudged is sure to appear in its consequences. One would naturally suppose the greater the honour the greater would be the jealous care to abide therein; this as a rule holds good in worldly honours; alas, in the things of God the contrary is constantly seen. Favour through the evil nature of man has led to unwatchfulness, and in many instances with ruinous results; always, in the case of a believer, bringing grievous chastening. To forget God even while enjoying the blessings is the history of man from Adam down to this day. Until the call of Abram, save for a few witnesses, God was shut out in man's thought, from His own world; and outside the chosen race the condition of all was "having no hope and without God." The fearful consequence was that as they did not like to retain the knowledge of God they were retributively given up to their own evil. Divine light came into this scene of darkness, not at first shed upon all — that full light was reserved for the time when Christ came, Who coming into the world is the true light for every man — but upon a particular race and only upon others as by reflection when they came in contact with Israel. Though not the full blaze for them, it raised them above all other nations and gave them a special place of honour. The point before us now is not the purpose of God in thus separating this race from others, proclaiming Himself as Jehovah, the One God, and proving them, but the fact that they were in honour and abode not.

Another race is now chosen not one according to nature, but called out and separated from the world after another manner: blest with the fullest light, with the complete truth, having not Abraham but Christ as Head. And here as in Israel, this new company abode not in honour. The first blot upon the honour both in the church and in Israel in the land was visited with death; but the pristine vigour and glory of the church had not departed ere failure came in, and a failure equally if not more ruinous as regards public testimony than that of Israel. To them the special testimony was the truth of the One God. To the church it is God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11). As Israel failed in testifying to the unity of the Godhead and rushed into idolatry, so Christendom has failed to bear witness that life is only in the Son, and placed it partially if not wholly in works. The grace which nevertheless maintained Israel in the land (for a time, and not without judgment) now acts more prominently in and for the church, which in a far higher and different way is the habitation of God, not in a temple made with hands but by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). In Israel it was in such a way as the natural man could apprehend. God through the Spirit dwelling in the church is not

discernible by the natural man, but only by faith which alone realises His presence.

It is because of the Spirit's indwelling that all in the church of God, 1:e. every true believer, are members one of another. Therefore necessarily if one member fail or suffer the whole body is affected, and far more intimately than the congregation of Israel could be. This close intimacy of suffering and equally so of rejoicing, is through the unity of the Spirit which was not possible before Christ had ascended as the risen Man, and had taken His place on the throne of God. Thence He sent the Comforter to abide with us. Thus one Spirit abiding in each, in all, constitutes the one body. The effect of the sin of one member is not confined to himself. There is what may be called its corporate consequence. If the Spirit is grieved the whole assembly — the local representative of the body — suffers; corporate blessing is hindered, the presence of the Lord not realised in the meetings. There is no remedy for this but humiliation and united prayer. The Holy Spirit may through the intercession of the assembly lead the failing member to judge himself, and, restored in soul, the hindrance to corporate blessing is removed. But if not, the Lord will surely make bare the wrong which the assembly is bound to judge, it may be by public rebuke, or require excision, but the Lord's name must be vindicated, and the purity of the assembly maintained. When the failing one judges himself before the secret becomes known, and is restored in soul, it remains a matter between himself and the Lord. "For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31 etc.). This scripture has special reference to the disorders that crept in at Corinth when the saints mixed the Lord's Supper with feasting as a common meal. But it embodies the principle that if sin is discerned, and therefore judged by the individual himself, he will not be judged. And this judgment is not the judgment of the world, which no believer can come under, but the chastening of the Lord. The chastening of the Lord is that which is administered through the assembly; not the same as the Father's chastening in Hebrews 12:1-29 :

We see in Israel not the real unity of the Spirit, but a little foreshadowing of it, and all the clearer, because the image of it is not in an occasion of joy and victory, but of deep shame and fear. Had the occasion been some remarkable feat by a chief, all would share in the rejoicing as a natural thing, but when it is a sin involving death, then the reality of the thing foreshown comes vividly before the mind. Achan sinned, but God said "Israel hath sinned." It is the first time that the hidden sin of one individual is charged upon the whole congregation. Achan, and his family, alone knew his guilt, but the consequences of his sin were felt by all Israel; they were put to flight by a despised enemy. But though all suffer why is the sin charged upon all, when they were ignorant of it? Is it not a proof that Israel was not THE object before the mind of God, but the church, where the shadow given in Israel becomes to us a divine reality. Surely it was also teaching them that since they were under the lead of such a "Captain" in Whose presence Joshua had to loose his shoes from off his feet, they must be jealously careful that no secret evil should be found among them. It was a sharp lesson, but the holiness of God admits of no compromise. At that moment Israel had charge of it, as its witness before the nations of Canaan. But if Israel failed to guard and keep it, and being known as Jehovah's people, God would vindicate it Himself. Hence the swift and complete judgment of Achan and his family. They had all been defiled though not all consciously guilty, and if Jehovah is the Captain of the host, then every man must be clear from guilt, and from every defilement.

It was in the joy of their first victory in the land, that the first failure occurred. Its effects soon appeared. One man sins, the whole congregation suffer. New circumstances bring the sin to light.

Israel left to their own resources find they cannot stand before their enemies. Confident in their own strength, elated with the ease with which Jericho was taken — as if it had been by their own arm — they decide as to Ai. The defiling power of Achan's sin was already working. Joshua, and priest, and all forgot God and attempt to do without Him. Had they asked counsel of God, the sin of the guilty man would have been at once disclosed and the shameful flight from Ai prevented. Israel failed through vain confidence, which was the result of Achan's sin. Yet all was overruled that they might know the necessity of holiness, and of the power of Jehovah for victory. The deeper truth of being members one of another, that if one suffer, all suffer, is intimately connected with the church of God, and the call to us to be watchful, to be holy, comes with far more solemn importance. For we are knit together with a closer tie, called to a higher and inward holiness, to contend with more dangerous foes, and to bear the name of the risen Lord in the midst of enemies who hate Him more than the Canaanites hated Israel. It is the church which has the special interest in this failure of Israel. But the church is the body of Christ, therefore really it is Christ the Head, Whose glory as Head is before the mind of God. As indeed from Genesis to Revelation He is the centre of all God's ways with man. The things that Achan coveted pointed also to the evils that have crept into the nominal church and tainted more or less the character of real believers. The wedge of gold and the silver, under the Babylonish garment is the symbol of the love of the world and of that which gives power in the world — gold — under the pretence of religion; 1:e. the world's religion which is to God the most offensive thing under the sun. Observe the words "and the silver under it," wrapped in the Babylonish garment. It is covetousness — which is idolatry — covered over and hidden under the semblance of piety which has marked the history of the world-church. And soon every evil will be found in the cup of the scarlet-clothed harlot whose name is "mystery, Babylon the great." Thus at the very beginning of Israel's possession are shadowed though dimly, the evils which has brought ruin upon the nominal church, which in the end will be spued out of His mouth. For Israel to possess silver and gold and the goodly things of this world — not to covet as Achan — would be a mark of God's favour. But for the church to covet these is a practical denial of its true position, a disparagement of its peculiar heavenly riches, and a deeper offence to Christ than the sin of Achan to Jehovah. Achan did not bring such fatal results upon the congregation of Israel as his imitators have upon the professing church. The judgment upon Achan and his house declares how abhorrent this world-religiousness is to God, as well as His holy resentment against the one who had interposed his sin, a barrier to the uninterrupted and continual display of the glory of Jehovah in His mighty power leading Israel, lately circumcised, Gilgal and the twelve stones fresh in their minds, into the possession of the given inheritance. God resents nothing so much as interference with His ways of grace. At Jericho we see the exhibition of the glory and power of Jehovah, and how He would subdue and drive out the Canaanite before the chosen people. At Ai is displayed His manner to those who while reaping the promises, have dimmed the lustre of the glory of their Leader, the "Captain of the Lord's host." Here is not the éclat of throwing down the walls, not the power that acted without the lifting up of one hand of Israel, but making them feel that their sin had prevented and hindered the visible expression of His power as they had seen it, and in consequence the ordinary and human means of stratagem are used. The trick of pretending to flee was by the command of Joshua, and God gave them the little city, but oh, how little is seen in this of the glory of Jehovah, when the whole force of Israel is brought against the small city of Ai; and even then with the appearance of not daring to meet them in open battle. How far all this is beneath the exceeding display of God's power at Jericho. Then they could boast of the great

power of their "Captain." Now it is mingled with a sense of failure and dishonour, and to all among them who had a care for the glory of Jehovah, the feeling that they had tarnished His glory before the Canaanites. God would have continued the wondrous display, but while giving further proof of His grace and faithfulness, Israel has put an obstacle to the visible manifestation of His Godhead to the Gentile as had been seen at Jericho. For there was overwhelming testimony; that glorious conquest might have brought every nation to submit without daring to fight, but Israel's discomfiture at their first attempt against Ai eventually armed the nations and gave them courage to resist if possible Israel's further advance; it gave them the thought that perhaps they might overcome the dreaded people, and that the God of Israel after all was not so greatly to be feared. The Canaanites would naturally think that it was only by mere stratagem that Ai was overthrown. There was apparently nothing supernatural in the taking of Ai as at Jericho, the wonders of which they would willingly forget. Human skill in stratagem, or mere force they could meet. Hence Israel had to contest every step of the way. Only the ground on which they stood could they call their own. Was not this the consequence of their own sin? And so the word is fulfilled (Joshua 1:3) not yet according to the fulness of the original promise, but for the present modified according to their failure in the matter of Achan. But Israel's failure is used of God to teach us now how imperative holiness is in the church of God. Without such teaching how much we should have lost. Could the holiness which God demands, and the revenging of ourselves against all defilement (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:11) be more solemnly impressed upon the conscience of the assembly than in the judgment of Achan? And more, we should not have known how grace acts in wisdom, restoring, yet in such a way as to make the restored people remember their folly. Marvellous are the ways of grace. The process of discovering sin in the assembly may be most painful, always humiliating, but it is in order that the presence of the Lord might again be realised. Achan did not judge his sin, he valued the things he stole. His own conscience unpurged, he defiled the whole congregation, and Jehovah must step in to purge out the leaven that was leavening the whole lump. The end of discipline is to restore, not perhaps exactly to the same position as before, for the failure will ever remain as a fact; but the restoration of any saint always deepens the power of godliness in his soul, and is always to the praise of His grace.

6. 1886 114. The vain confidence of Israel in their own might was seriously rebuked at Ai; and no less was their wisdom found to be folly in the matter of Gibeon when as at Ai they forgot to seek counsel from God. Trusting to themselves, they are deceived by circumstances and make an alliance which is not according to the expressed will of God. They have made it in the name of Jehovah, and it cannot be broken. How easily they were ensnared! Even a little close questioning would have exposed the true character of the Gibeonites. For, if they dwelt in so distant a country as the mouldy bread and the rent wine bottles pretended, there was no cause to fear Israel. They had heard what God did in Egypt, to the kings of the Amorites beyond Jordan, and that He would destroy the Canaanites and give the land to Israel. If they were beyond the limits why fear, and hasten to own themselves servants to Israel? Their eagerness to form an alliance would have betrayed them to the wise of the world. But Israel were then in a position where, if they had not wisdom of God, they must sink beneath the world's wisdom. The cunning of the Gibeonites was too much for them: they were foolishly deceived. The princes, even Joshua, seemed a little doubtful at first, but the stout assertions of the Gibeonites soon lulled their suspicions to sleep. It is an instance recorded for our admonition how far more easily than others the people of God may be deceived when they attempt to decide any matter without His counsel and guidance. Let us

remember there is no folly so great as a saint depending upon his own mind, or acting according to the maxims of the world. That their folly was overruled, and that God made it an occasion for showing how He would be merciful to those who trembled at His word, even though they were of the accursed race of Canaan, is most blessedly true. Isaiah proclaimed it (Isaiah 66:2); but God here shows it. How far mightier the display of mercy, of grace since the cross! The Gibeonites also give the true position of a soul really penitent, for they bow to the sentence of death; they were sore afraid of their lives, and therefore did that thing. They plead not the alliance, they surrender themselves unconditionally, "behold we are in thine hand; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do." So true is it that glimpses of richest grace, and of practical righteousness, of the reality of the soul's lost condition before God, are thickly scattered through the pages of God's book, long before the great foundation Was laid in the precious blood of Christ. Here on one side is Israel cursing the Gibeonite, on the other the submissive Gibeonite content to be anything that Joshua may determine. Over both is seen the picture of God's mercy to a self-judging sinner. But we are looking at Israel's failure; before as to their might, now as to their wisdom. If Israel while contending for an earthly kingdom needed to be endowed with power and wisdom from God, how much more we who are receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, a heavenly kingdom, in seeking and receiving which our obedience, and dependence, and wisdom should be as far above that required of Israel as the realities of holiness are above its mere types!

Alas! the church of God very soon followed in the footsteps of Israel. At the beginning the presence of God was as manifestly with the church, as He had been with Israel. The Holy Spirit came to take His abode in the newly formed body, and attested His presence by a rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues of fire. He was the promised Comforter come to guide them into all truth, even as the Captain of Jehovah's host appeared to Joshua, and to lead the armies of Israel. And the energy of the Holy Spirit's power was soon felt by the great enemy, and three thousand were added together. What a triumph here of the name of Jesus over the power of Satan who had so blinded the Jew as to reject Him. It was the taking of another Jericho. Not more wonderful the falling down of city walls than the conversion of so many souls on that Pentecostal day. This was to the church, as that was to Israel, the pledge and pattern of victory over every foe had there been faithfulness in each to have continued in the goodness of God. But when did man individually or corporately continue in His goodness? Individuals from the first Adam have not continued, saints have needed and still need restoring grace. And as to man incorporate, there are two notable witnesses. Israel as a nation, and the church (far more intimately incorporated than the nation), both have failed, both like individuals need restoring grace. Nor will God fail in this; for Israel's blessing is nearing, and the glory of the church yet nearer. But the untrustworthiness of man, and of saints must appear. The glory is God's. If the church had learnt in the presence of God the lessons that the course of Israel afforded, what shame and sorrow would never have been known! The apostles had not long departed ere the church forgot God as the source of power. It forgot that it was only in the name of Jesus that the world could be overcome. "In my Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:1-20 :). In Mr Name only. Not using His Name as a mere talisman, as Sceva's sons attempted (Acts 19:1-41 :) but in true faith, and then the wondrous results follow. The church in its name and strength dared to contend with the world, and the world won the victory as easily as the men of Ai over Israel. When Israel fled, it brought humiliation and crying to God, and this brought

to their knowledge that they were defiled, and so they are led to restoration and joy. God gave them victory over the same foe that had so recently triumphed over them. It was a grand sight to see Israel on their faces before the Lord. Did the church as a whole ever take such a place? Nay. Here and there might have been a gathered few, but their numbers were lost in the general mass of profession. The result is far worse for the nominal church than for Israel. Indeed the analogy between Israel and the church lies rather in the principle of the flesh, trying to be independent of God, than in the manner. In the spiritual warfare of the church with the world the words of the Lord have been forgotten, "In my name;" the names of men have been substituted for His Name, and the world gained a victory. The nominal church is now a power of, and in, the world. As such, it is hastening to its doom; it is the nauseous thing that Christ will spue out of His mouth, and then as a mere harlot it will be destroyed by the world (Revelation 17:16). The manner of the church's failure is rather in contrast with Israel's at Ai and with Gibeon. Israel attempted no compromise with Ai. The mistake was in not seeking counsel from God, and in attempting to fight Jehovah's battles in their own strength; they did not try to enlist the enemy, and swell their ranks with aliens. But this is what the church did, and spared no pains to win whole masses of men to the profession of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. And when the priest was turned out of the temple where stood his idol, the so-called christian priest took possession of the temple and changed the name of the idol to the name of the virgin, or of a "saint." And this was called conversion! It was the birds of the air lodging in the branches of the great tree. Naturally when such an element came into the professing church, it needed the powers of the world to preserve order, which however did not succeed, as ecclesiastical history abundantly testifies, the strong arm of the law in not a few instances being appealed to. And what a pitiful groping after wisdom we see in the early ages of the church, which are more marked by squabblings than by unanimity! It could not be otherwise. It was an unholy alliance between the church and the world, and was deliberately entered into. Distinctive grace and truth were lost.

Israel's alliance with Gibeon was a greater sin than their proud contempt of Ai, though it was not apparently so disastrous. True, Israel was betrayed into it through unwatchfulness; but after the previous experience of the consequences of not asking counsel of God, their neglect in this case is still more inexcusable. And to make alliance with the world, even though unwittingly, brings in its wake the greatest evils. Israel's league with Gibeon was more dishonouring to God than their attempt apart from Him to take Ai. How could Israel be a witness for God against the wickedness of Canaan, and at the same time in league with one of the nations? Gibeon's submission was not for their consideration. And the union of church and world has surely destroyed in this day corporate testimony for God, such as the whole church was and is called to hear. Israel did it ignorantly, the nominal church knowingly. The church is more guilty than Israel. To know the Lord's will and to do it not will bring the "many stripes" upon Christendom.

Many associations of professing christians have taken the sword and thus endeavoured to fight against the world. But the men of Ai have invariably overcome them. The true soldiers of Christ remember that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and that they who take the sword shall perish with the sword. But union with the world is fatal, and the church as a whole has lost its character. The true and living church — only known to God — is but a remnant among the mass of professors.

Gibeon was no help to Israel; they became the occasion for the combination of the remaining kings of Canaan who sought to wreak their vengeance upon the city which in their eyes had proved traitorous. Gibeon, now the servants of Israel, call upon their masters for protection. This alliance brings immediate war. Satan resents the submission of Gibeon to the word of God, and to the people of God; he gathers his forces against them, but only to manifest more gloriously the presence of the great Captain of the hosts of Israel.

Israel might have been slow to prosecute the war. God overrules all, and uses their failure to carry out His purpose. The time of rest was not yet come. And now armed with a direct promise they prepare to meet the confederate kings. "Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hand, there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Jehovah says, "into thine hand," yet did the hailstones destroy more than the sword of Israel. This may not have been so strikingly supernatural as the falling of the walls of Jericho, but faith sees the same hand in both. The former event was contrary to the common law of nature the latter was the power of God using nature beyond its ordinary limit. In each there was a direct intervention of nature's God.

What a glorious day for Israel. The combined forces flee, Joshua wields his sword with might from Jehovah. The "Captain of the host" is with him. And that is not enough, for Jehovah Himself appears apart from human instrumentality and thus completes the victory. The Lord of creation commands and nature obeys, and the hailstones smite not Israel, but the flying foe. Each stone with its own special message discriminates between Israelites and Canaanite. The sword of Israel and the great stones of Jehovah are both guided by the same mighty and unerring Hand. Once before there was a similar intervention of God for His people; then the hail was mingled with fire (Exodus 9:24). Then the people were bond slaves, now they are conquerors "for Jehovah fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:14).

Joshua at the sight rises in faith and power, and bids the sun stand still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, that the triumph of Jehovah and of Israel may be complete. In the sight of all Israel, he speaks and God hearkens to the voice of a man.

How one witness after another comes crowding up before the idolatrous world of His eternal power and Godhead! The hailstones, and the long day of twice the usual length, assert in unmistakeable language even to the degraded Canaanite, that God was the one God in the earth as in the heaven. They are without excuse. They still worshipped the false gods of their own making. But when we remember that even the highly favoured nation of Israel, even the people on whose behalf these astonishing displays of power were made, did themselves soon sink into the lowest depths of idolatry, and became worse than the nations whose land was now given them, whose sin was the cause of their extermination, we have a strong — if not the strongest — proof that no display of divine power, of goodness short of the grace that comes through the cross, can wean the heart of man from the love of evil. In this most renowned battle of Joshua is seen the double thing — the energy of God in man, and the same energy apart from man: the power that, clothed all Israel; and the faith that is prominent in Joshua. Faith truly proves itself to be the gift of God by its own power; for to command the sun to stand still is greater than the confidence of victory. But the energy of divine power apart from and above man is now manifest. Israel had the privilege to prove their valour, then Jehovah appears and crowns their victory. Thereafter it is a record of victory; the kings and their armies may gather, but city after city is taken until the people find rest.

No further tale of sin or failure follows while Joshua lived. In the church of God not, only we may see the energy of faith in individuals, but there is undoubtedly the action of the Spirit of God who controls the power of the adversary and leads the servants of God to victory. Israel under Joshua in the land is a mirror wherein we see the reflected image of the church, though so many centuries before the church was called. All were warnings, admonitions, and ensamples. Alas! where is our profit?

Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom.

7. 1886 131. From the call of Abram to Joshua's victories in the promised land, the great lessons of faith — separation, pilgrimage, God's patience with man, judgment of sin, resources of grace for a perverse people, the sacrifices and ordinances connected with the tabernacle, the functions of the priesthood — all, while for the people then, and pointing to the foundation and ensuring their future blessing, are yet, as we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, more for the instruction of Jewish believers than for the nation when going through the wilderness. That Epistle was to detach believing Jews from the carnal observance of these ordinances and to point them to Him in whom they believed as the One who filled the eye and mind of God when the tabernacle was set up, and the priesthood established; but not to the exclusion of Gentile believers, who enter into all the joys and privileges of the common faith, learn the value and significance of all the offerings, and glory in the excellencies of the Great High Priest who abideth for ever. Although the argument, point, and power of the Epistle were specially addressed to Hebrew Christians, it gives the true position for the believer whether Jew or Gentile, outside the camp. It marks out the path which only faith can follow and therefore peculiarly instructive to Israelites; but it is ours as well as theirs as disciples of the same risen Lord.

He who now speaks is the Son, who is God. None but He was worthy to bring such a message of grace, none but He able to declare it perfectly. He as man was the appointed Servant, and is therefore the appointed Heir of all things. Yet by Him the worlds were made; He is both Creator and Heir. This is the joining of two glorious names which the wisdom of the world would never have imagined. The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with the great fact of the Person of the Christ, the Son who is Creator and Heir. The "worlds" which He made are not confined to the mere material world: there is a moral idea contained in it, the ages of the dispensations, and the relationship and responsibility of man to God, as seen in all the phases of His dealings with the earth. In all Christ is the object — by Him and for Him, for His glory. He was from eternity the appointed Heir. Therefore His was the appointing and ordering of the dispensational ages, or worlds. And whether in the world of types and shadows, or in the coming world of millennial glory, the Christ, the Son is the One Object in all.

God rested on the seventh day. Sin came in, and God began to work again. The Lord Jesus bears testimony to this. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Before God appeared, and in a sense began the world over again in the person of Noah, He allowed space for man, now fallen, to show what he was. Left to himself he filled the earth with violence and corruption, and became a prey to the angels that kept not their first estate. The whole period since his expulsion from Eden to the flood was preparatory to prove the necessity for God (in grace) to work if His divine purpose in creation — His own glory — was to be fulfilled. Not that He left Himself without witness; grace was active in Abel, Enoch, and Noah. But the solemn fact remains, man without government ended in

the deluge. The next step in God's dealings is government entrusted to man, wherein is given another proof that God must work. The first governor had been a preacher of righteousness; but as soon as he was in the responsible and new position of governor he got drunk. God did continue government by man in the earth, but his unfitness to wield the sword of justice was proved in his first act. And the failure — which coming so soon and so marked proved it to be inevitable — is not in a man of the world, but in a saint; not in a man with no knowledge of God, but in one who knew His power and had seen it in the overthrow of the antediluvian world, and had preached righteousness. Here indeed is proof of man's incapacity, but by this is declared how he needed the interposition of God, and so the way was cleared for the coming of the Man of God's right hand. The idea of government was not lost upon the earth. But the one notable instance in that early day was Egypt, the firstborn of the nations, and the expression of the world's strength. The king is found in proud defiance of Jehovah, "Who is Jehovah?" he said. If the saint as governor failed, what else could be seen in a proud heathen but sturdy rebellion against the authority of God? Of course it was only crushed by unsparing judgment. But God was carrying on His purpose, and bringing to view that man at the best was a failing creature, and, when invested with power and authority, used it against God. It was right that man should be made manifest and be set aside to make place for the Only Man who is able to rule. To this end Pharaoh was raised up so that in him the power of the world should be set aside. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:16).

Meantime God was preparing a people as a platform whereon to display His purpose of having two great companies, the one heavenly and the other earthly. 1 The people from whom the earthly company is formed are the first called, but not to enter at once into their own special place. They are led through circumstances which become means of instruction for the second company which was to be formed ages after. Every trial, every difficulty, every failure of Israel, is recorded as warning for the saints of the church. All the grace and resources of God to meet the need of His people as displayed in the functions of Aaron, and in the various offerings, are to declare to us what a fulness resides in Christ who is both God's Lamb and High Priest. All no doubt was to maintain Israel in the way; but let us take the heavenly standpoint, and what a flood of light is cast over all, from the passover to the possession of the promised land! Now we see what Moses could not see. The hidden mystery revealed through Paul may not be discerned, but there is heavenly provision for more than earthly need. The wilderness was surely a fitting preparation for Israel to possess the land; but how much more does it express the christian position — pilgrims lately come out of Egypt, on our way to God. How fitting, we may surely say, that the pattern of good things to come should be given in the wilderness, which itself is a type of our place in this world; of what it is, or should be, to us. When Moses was about to set up the tabernacle, God gave him a heavenly pattern for all that belonged to it, "And look that thou make them after their pattern which was showed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:30, Exodus 27:8). The pattern was heavenly; why a pattern of heavenly things if only for an earthly people? The apostle so reasons of the whole service and priesthood connected with the tabernacle in the wilderness, in his Epistle to the Hebrews. And now that the heavenly things themselves do appear — Christ and the church — those who still cleave to the figure, for the time then present, cannot be perfect as to conscience! and, again in stronger language, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Hebrews 8:5, Hebrews 13:10).

Israel having passed through the desert and at rest in the land (Joshua 23:1), not the rest that fulfills the purpose of God (see Hebrews 4:8), but rest from war during the remainder of Joshua's life and his contemporaries, sufficient for the then purpose of God, Israel at that time affords a type of the Christian's highest position short of being actually in the glory with Christ. It is an image of the church sitting in the heavenlies in Christ, which is revealed to faith while yet here below.

It is not only God's purpose to have a church, but also that Messiah shall have an earthly kingdom; and the same people who have already served specially for the future needs of the church, themselves also participating in the results of the death and priesthood of Christ, though not so fully as the church, are now to be prepared for the advent of the kingdom of Messiah, as distinct from His kingdom of the whole world as Son of man. And it was necessary for the glory and honour of Messiah that the people should know that none but He could reign, and establish them in righteousness and in blessing. Though called the people of God, and by that name distinguished from all other nations of the earth, they are for a season allowed to manifest their own evil before David, the man of God's choice, is called to reign, that they might know in the age to come that all their blessing and their greatness is due to God's grace, yea, to Him whom they rejected and crucified, Who alone bears up the pillars of the earth. And therefore the top-stone of their greatness will be brought with shoutings of grace — grace unto it (Zechariah 4:7; Psalms 118:22-23).

Sad picture in the book of Judges of what man becomes even with highest privileges if left to himself! Soon Israel became like the worst of the heathen. From the closing chapters it may be said of them, as of the men before the flood, they filled the land with violence and corruption. Nowhere is depravity more exposed. The hatred of man to God culminates in the cross; but as yet he had not the opportunity to show it. But so far as the goodness and patient forbearance of God appear, so far does the incurable evil of man appear; the longsuffering of God only brings out in clearer lines his wickedness, and the absolute necessity that by stern discipline and righteous judgment the people should be trained to say when Messiah comes to reign, "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:1-48 :). How much there was, and is needed for this! How long a time for evil to increase, which could only be surpassed by the mercy of God who will accomplish His purpose of grace to man and of glory in Christ! But the book of Judges does not contain images of the heavenly things now revealed; no allusion is made to it in the epistle to the Hebrews save the brief mention of a few names, exemplars of the power of faith (Hebrews 11:32). Truly there is much for individual saints, as indeed everywhere, but nothing which points to the special truths for the christian. These special lessons are ended, and a new chapter opens of God's ways with Israel. If the church was before the mind of God in the ordinances given to Israel in the wilderness, not less is the kingdom of Messiah before Him when Israel is in the land. God is preparing the people for the kingdom of the Son of David; as the antediluvian age was preparatory to the intervention of God in government, and as the times of the Gentiles, when world-power was given to Nebuchadnezzar, are preparatory to the universal kingdom of the Son of man. In each case the disorder and wickedness of man proves the necessity of His intervention for the fulfilling of His own counsels.

Throughout this book we see nothing of the rule and power of the priest of God. It was the idol-priest that swayed the people, and idol-worship prevailed in the land. God gave them up to their enemies. In mercy deliverers were raised up and a temporary respite afforded. Here and

there a passing beam of light, but soon to go out into deeper darkness. It is a descending scale of iniquity. They became lawless, each one doing what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6), and the result was civil war, when one tribe was nearly exterminated. In those who were raised up temporarily as judges there were characteristics and marks which (looked at as symbols) proved them to be imperfect and unfit to rule. Nor was it God's will that they should. They were only instruments in His hand to do His will, and then to be put aside. And all of them to a certain extent are a reflex of the condition of the people. When the true King comes, He will not reflect them, but they Him. He will come as God's First-born; the first judge we read of was a younger son. Another had an ox-goad which truly proved the power of God, but was no fitting emblem of kingly power. Barak was a weak man and gave the place of honour to a woman; of the coming King it will be said His own arm brought salvation. And how patient God was in teaching Gideon to have faith, who truly reflected the condition of Israel when he cowered behind the winepress threshing wheat, and himself the least in his father's house. Jephthah — whose faith was marred by a heathenish vow; provision was made in the law for thank-offerings: why imitate the heathen? But Jephthah was the son of a harlot, Samson, the unfaithful Nazarite. Yet these are instances of faith, cited by the Holy Spirit. How many others, like treacherous Ehud, or whose names are only mentioned, or not even this? God is sovereign in the choice of His instruments. Indeed all of them were only raised up for special deliverances; and, when their given work was done, they passed away leaving no power behind them; and after each, the people fell back into their old evil of idolatry, yea, worse than before.

Such were the people who ere long are to be a holy nation, every one taught of God. What a triumph of grace when this stiff-necked and rebellious race shall be obedient, and in a position second only to the church in glory! From the opening of the Book of Judges to the end of the reign of Solomon is one connected chain of events, and so given as to show that all as different parts form one whole, or as the bright and darkest colours of the same picture, the preparation for, and the establishment typically of, Messiah's kingdom. From the beginning God allowed man to follow his own will first, and then according to His infinite wisdom made man's wisdom to be a means, or used it as an occasion, for the accomplishing of His own purpose. Mark the successive steps in this fresh chapter of God's ways; sin abounding, judges forgotten, the priest rejected, man's choice of a king, God's choice persecuted; but the man of the world perishes, the man of God is exalted. It is an epitome of the world's history.

8. 1886 148. As with the antediluvians, so with Israel, God leaves not Himself without witness. Among them He called out Abel, Enoch and Noah, and now He elects Ruth, having given her a position in a family of Israel. The time was not come for a Gentile testimony independent of the ancient people. But this little remnant — Elimelech and his family — is marked off from the nation, their history is not given incorporated with that of the guilty people but in a little book by itself. It hints at the purpose of God to separate His own from among the mass of the ungodly. He has a separate book where He writes the names of His saints, even the book of life. This family failed in faith, they lost sight of the fact that the land they were leaving was God's gift to them, and let the famine be ever so grievous, He knew how to provide. Elimelech looked at the famine and had faith enough to perceive that it was judgment upon Israel, but forgot the power that was able to keep those that trusted in Him. This man and his household depart into a foreign land to dwell among the enemies of God. Would it not have been far better to have abode where God placed him? to

have suffered even with guilty Israel, than to flee, as it were, from His presence and seek relief where surely the want of faith led him? To him, as an Israelite, the consequences were most distressing; he died away from his inheritance, in the midst of a people that of old sought Satanic aid to destroy Israel. And his two sons, sinking deeper in disobedience, marry daughters of Moab. The chastening hand of God finds them out, and they die. Naomi is left alone with her daughters-in-law. Husband and sons gone, who are now to provide for Naomi? All is lost, what can she do in a strange land? In these distressful moments did she regret the want of faith which led them so far from home? Ah, it was with her as with many another of God's chosen ones. Far better wait to bear heavy trials where God has cast our lot, than to seek a way of escape by human means, which are always the fruit of lack of confidence in God, and bring spiritual loss. Naomi left the land because of famine. Husband and sons die, and though there be no famine in the land of Moab, it is still famine for her. The God of mercy steps in, the news comes that Jehovah hath visited His people in giving them bread, and she is brought back to the land which ought never to have been left. The loving-kindness of God never fails, His mercy endures forever. Mark the overruling wisdom of God; if the chosen witnesses fail in testimony for God, His grace raises up a brighter witness for Himself in the person of a Gentile. One of the daughters of Moab will leave her kindred, and her people, and her nation's gods, to follow Naomi into a strange land, saying, "Thy God shall be my God." Here was a witness for the true God raised up from among the idolatrous Moabites to be His brightest witness among the feeble remnant in the land. Truly not one of them had made such sacrifices as Ruth made. And how great the reward! she enters the line of David's ancestry, yea, of David's greater Son. But what a rebuke in the simple faith of Ruth for Naomi who left the land not submitting to God! yet a rebuke in the form of restoring grace, crowning her in her widowhood with tender mercies and loving-kindness. It is the manner of His love; and saints now bear testimony to the same manner. Ruth comes in among the people, who, though so guilty, were still owned as God's people. He visited His people with bread. (Ruth 1:6.) She knew them to be His people, and though her faith was veiled under strongest attachment to Naomi, she says not merely, "thy people shall be my people," but adds, "thy God shall be my God." Thus, amid the violence and corruption of Israel, a little company bears testimony to the God of Israel. It is but a brief sketch, yet is the hand of God as visible in marvellously providing for the well-being and honour of Ruth — and through her for Naomi — as it was in the judgments that fell upon Israel. In the midst of the darkness God gives a bright scene of family and household piety, to which we turn with gladness from the surrounding national and social wickedness. What a contrast to the impiety of the idolatrous household of Micah's mother! (Judges 17:1-13 :) The book of Ruth, however, is but a passing and transient gleam. Still it proves that in the 'worst times God never left Himself without witness, it declares His faithfulness to the weakest of saints, it manifests His power that all things must bow to His will and subserve His purpose of grace; for a Moabitess is brought in, through Elimelech's failure, to partake in the highest honour which could then be conferred upon any woman of Israel. At the close of this book (Ruth) God unfolds His purpose, the end He had in view, and the means thereto — to bring in David. But two more generations must come and go, for the time was not yet come, the iniquity of Israel not yet ripe, ruin beyond human remedy must be visible ere God sets His king upon His holy hill of Zion. David closes his chapter of God's dealings with Israel, giving a foreshadowing of even greater iniquity and of a mightier deliverance, when the Son of David shall sit upon His throne. Israel's sins and sorrows will then be over. The elders and people (Ruth 4:11.) pronounce a blessing upon Boaz, but the Spirit of God leads them to use

words which can only be fulfilled when Messiah comes. "Build the house of Israel." Their Messiah is our Lord Jesus, He will build their house and in the future day do infinitely more than restore the glory of Solomon, so that the nations shall be amazed, and say, like the queen of Sheba, that the half had not been told. The book closes with the genealogy of David. Is it not remarkable that this record should begin with Pharez? That the elders and the people should take the house of Pharez as a pattern of blessing for the house of Boaz? "Let thy house be like the house of Pharez"? Who was Pharez? Let Genesis 38:1-30 : answer. Why not begin with his father, Judah? His was the greatest of the tribes of Israel. But it was through Pharez, son of Tamar, the promised blessing must come. God led His line of promise through base things of the world, and took up those that man would spurn. This was to magnify His grace and exalt His name. How unlike man, by whom the greater the object before him, the better the means used. Not so with God; base things, and things that are not, characterise the instruments, or the channels, to accomplish His word. Truly, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah" (Isaiah 55:1-13 :) At that moment, Israel, according to the righteousness of law was ruined, and could have no valid title to any one thing on the ground of obedience and fidelity to God. They had joined themselves to idols; they were then morally in the condition of Pharez, children of transgressions, as the prophet said long after (Isaiah 57:4). Their own ordinances shut them out, for God had said by Moses, "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 23:2). But in a world of sin, where even saints fail, there can be no other ground, save judgment, than absolute grace, and then sovereign grace. It forms and carries out its own purposes, and chooses its own way; and so it comes to pass that, if the beginning be Pharez, the end is David. At this point, according to the book of Judges, we see the nation as such, to be idolaters; in the book of Ruth, a little remnant failing in faith, and the grace of God abounding and pointing onward to greater blessing.

We may consider this the first stage in the preparation for the coming kingdom. What is the second? The Holy Spirit leads through scenes of greater evil and worse abomination, yet ever keeps before us the increasing necessity of His kingdom; His great object, the inbringing of God's King. The next downward step is the failure of the priesthood. The sons of Eli were a greater abomination before God than that recorded in Judges 19:1-30 : The priest was the connecting link between Jehovah and the people, he was the appointed means, and no other dare assume his functions. But when the priest wickedly departed from God, and used his position to increase the dishonour of God, then the appointed means of communication with God, and of restoration to Him, were gone. Hophni and Phinehas made the people sin. The indulgence of the father was as fatal as, if less criminal than, the iniquity of the sons. Judgment overtakes the wicked sons: they are slain in battle; the father dies under the hand of God. Yet sinfully lenient as he was to his sons, his heart was true to God. Not their death, but the loss of the ark, is the immediate cause of his death. The dishonour to God was more to him than family sorrow and disgrace, and he felt that there was no possibility of approaching God in the appointed way while the ark is in the hands of the Philistines. Ichabod is pronounced upon the people: what is to become of them? There was another beside Eli who felt the extreme gravity of Israel's condition; the wife of Phinehas would not be comforted, and the name of her son bears testimony to her grief. How could they any longer be called God's people? God steps in and provides a new link between Himself and them. Samuel appears, a prophet, the only possible means of recalling guilty Israel, and of communicating to them the word of God. Such means were not needed so long as the normal link of the ark and the

officiating priest subsisted. The advent of a prophet was proof that all else was gone. A prophet came to Eli (1 Samuel 2:27), but his was a special message to one man, not to supply the place of the lost ark and of the guilty priest. This was the position of Samuel, who stands out prominently as the first of the prophets, as it is said, "All the prophets from Samuel" (Acts 3:24, of Psalms 99:6), God thus naming him as the first of that line of messengers to a people utterly rebellious, as "Moses and Aaron among the priests." For the first time the prophet is the link between God and Israel. But how inveterate the evil of this people, and how unsparingly exposed! They soon reject him and avow their desire to be like other nations and have a king. They had broken the old connection, God brings in a new one. The old office of judge and priest was seen for the last time in Eli; a new position is seen in Samuel, who is judge and prophet. The people refuse the intervention of grace, and prefer connection with the world, and to have a king like other nations. In truth it was the rejection of God, not only of His prophet. The intelligent reader of God's book cannot fail to see how every recorded sin has been the means of accomplishing God's predetermined will. The purposes of men have been only clay, and the divine Potter has moulded it according to His own will. Everything — even wickedness — is made subservient to His purpose. And in the detail, what wisdom! yea, what grace!

Awful as it was to deliberately reject God as their ruler, desiring a man as their king, it is an immense step in bringing to pass the purpose of God. Only it must be man's king first, then the King of God's choice. As priest he had failed, and after the short transitional period of prophet rule, his failure as king is still more evident. Indeed, whether priest, prophet, or king, there is only One Who could not fail. And the ruin before us in this sad history through the failure of man is the preparation for the coming of that One, and demonstrates the necessity of it. Man must be tried in every way; every proof is given that nothing short of sovereign grace can bring in the promised blessing. Israel from the first were a rebellious people; but mark the controlling power and wisdom of God: He makes their rebellion now take the form of the blessing about to be given them, the form of Kingly rule. It was His deliberate counsel that a king should reign over Israel, but it must be His KING, the Man of His right hand. Man's choice is sure to be worthless. God sanctions their choice for a time, but only to make manifest, that, however good apparently it may be, his failure is inevitable. And so we have Saul, whose beginning was so auspicious and seemingly prosperous. A bright future lay before him; the providential acts of God clear the way to the throne, and the prophet anoints him. Success attends ere long his first essay in war, and there is great rejoicing among the men of Israel. All this but confirms the testimony against man, that with every advantage he invariably fails. Saul was raised to the throne of Israel to prove, among many other witnesses, the great fact of failure stamped upon human nature, as men put a trademark upon their goods and merchandise. I say for this purpose, as well as to prepare the way for David, the chosen of God. Again, look at the marvellous way of preparation: it was by treachery, hatred, and at last open persecution; just like what the world — the Jew — did to Christ, the Son of David.

Saul began to fail from the first. He had the witness of God's presence with him, he was told that if he were obedient his kingdom would be established; every motive was supplied for faithfulness; but he sank lower and lower till he reached the lowest depths. And when he sought aid from the witch of Endor, he hears his doom; he dies by his own hand and drags down the kingdom which God had entrusted to him into hopeless ruin. Then God intervenes, and the man who had been prepared of God comes to the rescue, and Israel is raised to power and glory more rapidly than

they fell into degradation and servitude.

Apart from all human responsibility — for Saul was responsible for the right use of his advantages and high position — we can trace the over-ruling hand of God in bringing Israel to such a condition as would most of all exalt His own power and grace in establishing them as chief among the nations. No sooner does the man of His choice take the reins of government, than the enemies on every side are subdued; the Hebrews despised of the Philistines become the mighty kingdom of David. And what we see in the kingdom of Israel will be yet more gloriously displayed when the Son of Man takes possession of the kingdom of this world. All hangs upon the mighty arm of Him who will be not only God's King upon the holy hill of Zion, but the MAN ordained to rule over the world.

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Saul's first failure was not when he impatiently offered a burnt offering (1 Samuel 13:8, etc.). This intrusion into the priest's office was open to the eyes of all; the most untaught of the people would know that the functions of the priesthood did not pertain to royalty. The first proof of his unfitness comes in guise of a human virtue, or quality not a little esteemed, and the unobservant reader of his life would fail to discern under the amiable exterior a heart without confidence in God, and consequently disobedient. When he should have appeared before all Israel to be publicly inducted into his high position, we may say his coronation, he was not to be found, but hidden among the stuff (1 Samuel 10:22). This to human eyes had the appearance of modesty, a very lovely feature in any character; but it must be judged in the light of its surroundings.

Three very notable circumstances had just before transpired whose significance was unperceived by the most interested, for they were tokens confirmatory of his call to the throne. First, two men tell him that the asses are found, brought home, not by his diligence, but by the providence of God. Then three men meet him with offerings, going up to God to Bethel; and of these Saul has his portion as the anointed king. After that he comes to the hill of God, and there a company of prophets meets him with rejoicings. Saul himself comes under the immediate power of the Spirit of Jehovah, he prophesies and is turned into another man. "All these signs came to pass that day." They were foretold by Samuel, and were witnesses of the truth of his word. A godly man would surely have recognised the hand of God and sought to understand. But no lasting good effect was produced in his soul; much less could he read in them the deeper intimations of God's goodness in store for Israel. For do we not read in them that Israel who had strayed away from God should be found and brought back to their home? Yet not Saul found his father's asses, neither was it he who shall give even a passing image of Israel's future restoration; this was reserved for David. Saul only scattered and caused deeper ruin. Again, when Jacob, the banished from his home, was nearing it, he was led to Bethel, and there becomes a worshipper; so should Israel return and worship God with meat offerings and drink offerings. The "going up to God to Bethel" reminded of past mercy and is the pledge of future restoration. And though at the time of this typical prediction the hill of God was held by the Philistines — they had a garrison there — it did not prevent God giving to Saul this foreshadowing of blessing which might have been his own (see 1 Samuel 13:14), but which will surely come to pass in a day yet future. But the sketch of blessing is not yet complete: the picture is crowned by a company of prophets, who are exulting "with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them." How the tide of blessing swells as it rolls on! First,

two men; then three; last a company of prophets. First, restoration, then worship, then exultation and the presence of the Spirit of Jehovah. And the day is not far distant when the true King shall come to His throne, and shall be met with songs, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the Name of Jehovah." And then will the Spirit be poured out upon all flesh (cf. Joel 2:1-32 :). And when this prophecy is fulfilled, it will be said of the whole nation, as was said of Saul, that it was turned into another man.

Alas! Saul had neither eyes nor ears for God's teachings, and these foreshadowings of grace were lost upon him. And having no faith he failed to reap the immediate blessing. All were to him mere circumstances. He was only a natural man; even his acquaintances had no high thought of him from his previous life, for when he prophesied they were amazed, and said, "What is this that is come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" These indications of grace, vouchsafed to him at the outset of his career, found no response in his heart, and, as the sequel of his life proves, not simply from want of attention to the teachings of God — as many a saint may now lament in his own case — but from utter incapacity to understand his own position, and to know the mind of God. Hence his hiding among the stuff was but the shrinking of a common man from this sudden and unlooked-for elevation to the throne. It is the index of his soul. Utterly dark as to Israel's condition before God — save perhaps as to the outward aspect — and ignorant of God's mercy, confidence in Him was foreign to his heart. With the timidity of nature the anointed Saul shrinks from the place to which he was called. The timidity of the flesh is not so offensive to us as its boldness, but both are mere nature, and opposed to God. Neither of these appeared when David was called.

Saul held his peace when the children of Belial derided him (1 Samuel 10:27). Apparently he would wait till God should by some public act confirm him yet more in his position. Nor has he long to wait. God had already touched the hearts of a band of men who followed him to his home in Gibeah; and next gives him victory over Nahash, the Ammonite, which would be all the more impressive because of the circumstances of Jabesh-gilead, and the cruel condition of life Nahash would impose upon the inhabitants. God puts His seal upon Saul by this victory; for the Spirit of God had come upon him, and his message to the people was made effectual by the fear of Jehovah falling upon them, so that three hundred and thirty thousand men come at his call. But in all this there was no test of obedience; Saul was only clay in the hand of the Potter. On this as on other occasions when the Spirit came upon him, he was turned into another man. Yet this remarkable first victory showed how God would be with him if he were obedient. At this point a most important moral question is settled. Israel has a king, and he is crowned with victory; but how does Israel now stand before God? This question has its solemn answer in 1 Samuel 12:1-25 : There Samuel reminds the people of past mercies. When their fathers sinned and came under the power of their enemies, they cried to God, they did not ask for a king, and God sent deliverers. Now, says Samuel, When ye saw Nahash the king of the children of Ammon come against you, ye did not cry to God, but said to me, "Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when Jehovah your God was your King." They were worse than their fathers. Jehovah thundered upon them, and in terror they own their sin, "We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

God, while vindicating His own title to be King, allows their choice to stand — for the accomplishment of His own purpose. At the same time by the mouth of the prophet He declares their responsibility and the danger of this new position. Priesthood had connected them with God

from Aaron to Eli; that link subsists no longer. The people have chosen royalty not as a new link between God and Israel, but to be like the nations. Such choosing was their sin, it was in truth rejecting God. Nevertheless royalty, was God's purpose, and is henceforth to be the connecting link between God and His people. For so He will be exalted in Israel, and in the world. But the establishment of a king must be in God's way, and the man must be of His choosing. This necessity is proved by the failure of man's way and of man's king. The divine principle of God acting upon man, is ever "first that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual." Christ's exaltation in the earth is dependent — if we may use such a word — upon the utter inadequacy of man to meet the purposes of God's glory.

Samuel tells the people the consequences of disobedience, "If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." The continuance of the king here depends upon the people not doing wickedly; afterwards, in David's line, the prosperity of the people depended upon the king's doing that which was right in the sight of Jehovah. Saul never connected the people with Jehovah. But God would make this people His own by no mere human tie, so that His purposed glory in them might be beyond the reach of human failure, or Satanic power. Saul's advent to the throne is but the solution of man's problem, "Is he fit to govern?" and the answer is, "Not fit." God brings in His Man, His own Son, and when that Perfect One sits upon His throne, then Israel's blessing will be perfect. The difference between man, and God's own Son, is shadowed in Saul and David. Yet David was but a failing man, though so highly exalted as to be chosen the type of Him who will soon fill the earth with His glory. A glimpse, and only a glimpse, is given in the united glories of David and Solomon, nothing like it before, nor will be, till the reality comes, and then will be seen how immeasurably short of it was the glory of the images seen ages before.

Now established by his victory over Nahash — for the carnal heart of Israel would think more of that than of the anointing oil — Saul is, in a manner, left to himself. After two years he is put into the crucible and tested. Is there any gold? Nay, all is dross! Is this the man to be king? Nay, all is failure! In the energy of faith Jonathan, not Saul, smites the garrison of the Philistines at Geba. They are aroused, and Israel is in a strait; there is no faith in Saul to meet the emergency. The people are scattered; for him God is nowhere. No wonder if his difficulties made him too impatient to wait for the prophet. He had lost the sense that the people were God's Israel, and he calls them "Hebrews," the name applied by the Philistines. Impossible for such a one to answer to God's mind concerning Israel. Here in his first trial he is found wanting, and the kingdom goes from him. God has found another whom He has commanded to be captain over His people.

Though sentence is pronounced, judgment waits till the cup of iniquity is full. God lingers over the fallen king, and another and a graver opportunity is afforded. Can he retrieve his position and avert the threatened judgment? Nay, he only increases his guilt. Growing opposition to all that bore evidence of God marks his course ever after. What a lack of intelligence in his rash curse upon any that might take food at a time when to eat was specially needed! God at that very moment was working by Jonathan. Saul mars the victory of faith, and threatens death to the man of faith. In intent he slays his son. Is not this opposition to God? It may be called ignorant opposition; but Satan, who was leading the wretched king to his doom, was not ignorant of the dishonour to God if Jonathan were slain. The people deliver him, and though Saul had said, "Thou shalt surely die, Jonathan," they say, "As Jehovah liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground." The power of the people and the authority of the king are in conflict, and the people prevail. The

determination of the people to save Jonathan proves that Saul's authority was gone. King now only in name, he submits. His enmity against Jonathan after that was nearly as great as his hatred of David, when he was brought forward. But the appearance of David closed the trial of Saul.

Remark that in 1 Samuel 14:45 is given the first instance in scripture of the democratic element rising and overcoming constituted authority; and in this instance we can truly say, *Vox populi, vox Dei*. But to argue from this that the source of human authority lies with the people is contrary to the word of God. Consider the circumstances here — Saul was not God's choice; ruin was settled down upon the people; only one man of faith in Saul's army; this public witness Saul would destroy. God will maintain the testimony for Him, and as Sovereign Ruler uses the people to save Jonathan. He steps aside from his ordinary course to preserve His witness, and convicts Saul of sin; makes him feel powerless, and verifies the prophet's word that the kingdom is taken from him.

One other instance we may point to where authority collapses before the energy of the mob. It was when the voices of the people, led by their priests, prevailed against Pilate. And I would say to Christians, those who seem to favour the uprising of the "masses" in this present day, that if the first of these two instances be the manifest interposition of God in the exceptional circumstances of that day, the second is no less the power of Satan who rules far more by the "masses" than by kings. Ever since the cross, the *vox populi* has borne the impress of the prince of this world.

We have said another and a graver opportunity was afforded to Saul. It is the last, like all the preceding, misused, leaving a heavier weight of guilt upon his soul. He has a direct command to utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, until they are consumed. A little while before when God was at least showing how deliverance was to be obtained for Israel, when Jonathan and his armour-bearer through faith overthrew the garrison of the Philistines, Saul showed himself to be without intelligence, without faith, and without the sphere of blessing. Now to all these he adds positive disobedience. The man who afterwards so persistently sought the life of David, whom he knew to be God's chosen, spares the life of Agag, whom God told him to destroy. And when charged by Samuel with disobeying God, he affirms that the people — not he — took the spoil. Yet he tried to excuse them under the plea of piety; the sheep and the oxen were spared "to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God." Samuel will not accept this excuse. Saul was responsible, and he far more in this case than the people, for the command (1 Samuel 15:3) was direct to him. To offer sacrifices to Jehovah is good, but when it is presented as an excuse for disobedience, it is positive sin. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." In the end, after all his protestations, Saul confesses, "I have sinned," and in extenuation pleads his fear of the people. Poor king! — he admits his authority is gone. What the value of his confession is, appears from his wish that Samuel should honour him before the people. Self was uppermost. "What will the people think of me?" that was his care. Samuel acceding to his wish only confirmed his rejection: it was too late for any more warning. In his eagerness to retain Samuel he rends the prophet's mantle, a circumstance used by the prophet to repeat his words, that the kingdom was rent from him; and from that moment Saul is given up. Samuel returns to his home at Ramah, and came no more to see Saul until the day of his (Saul's) death. That was a fearful hour. The powers of darkness were present in the witch of Endor but held in check by the presence of the prophet. That hour brought the sentence of immediate death, and blank despair, upon the soul of the wretched king.

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"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26) Every believer knows the necessity of Christ suffering for salvation, but they were necessary for making good His Messianic glory. He was made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He should taste death for everything. It was Christ's glory to exalt God in respect of sin, His especial glory to manifest God's righteousness in such a way, that the utmost mercy, so far from impeaching divine justice, serves but to exalt it the more. The justice is never more clearly seen than when God justifies the ungodly; for then is seen how perfectly Christ has met all the claims of divine righteousness against the justified one. To bring these two together, viz. eternal justice and fulness of grace, yea, each to magnify the other, was the great work of Christ. The cross is the witness of both the justice and the grace, but it also testifies how they unite and blend together to carry out the purpose of God. It is the glory of Christ to have done this. "It is finished," He said, and delivered up His spirit. There was no other way to enter into His glory; and to exalt God and to vindicate His name was the primary object for which Christ came. Then, God being glorified, redemption follows. Unsparing judgment upon the guilty would vindicate the majesty of God, but that excludes all mercy; and such judgment became necessary immediately on the commission of Adam's transgression. Mercy stepped in, and the transgressor was spared. But from that moment it behoved Christ to suffer. In due time He came to suffer; but the necessity for suffering and for death arose at that moment, not only that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, but first that the character of a holy God, and the inflexibility of His righteousness should be upheld and maintained. There were ages during which that righteousness was not declared; nor during that time could mercy so brightly shine. When the righteousness was established by the cross, there was no further restraint upon the full out-flowing of grace. God had, in His wisdom, other purposes, subsidiary and preparatory to fullest grace, to disclose before He was revealed in Christ. And one was that man must first be proved without strength and ruined, so that Christ may be seen as the Saviour God, and that not in a partial but in an absolute sense. The proof of man's ruin was not necessary for judgment. The one transgression was enough for that. That was truly and in itself irretrievable ruin; but God would have proof sufficient to convict man at the bar of his own conscience. Proof to this extent was necessary for salvation. The trial lasted from Adam to the cross. With the cross man's probation ended; then was the due time, and unsparing judgment and infinite mercy combine, and are displayed in Him whose soul was made an offering for sin. There, on the cross, mercy and truth met together; there, righteousness and peace kissed each other; there, in being made sin and forsaken — there, where perfect judgment of sin, and compassion for the sinner are seen in His death, is the highest moral glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is only through His death that God can declare Himself to the whole universe — the Saviour God. But this highest glory had no place in the thoughts of the two disciples going to Emmaus. Their aspirations were confined to Israel; they "trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." The nation's degradation, not their sin, was first in their minds, and all hope seemed crushed by the cross. Yet the third day was come with its wonders; angels tell certain woman, and these tell the disciples, that He is alive. Some of the company go to the sepulchre and verify the report of the women; but where is the corresponding exultation? Not in the hearts of the two; they were sad. The tidings that He was alive astonished and bewildered them. Evidently they did not fully believe the goodness; for, as they walked, they communed together in sadness. Hence the Lord, as yet to

them an unknown stranger — for their eyes were holden, says, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken t Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" The Lord Jesus is here answering their thought, and we learn that His sufferings are not only necessary for the preaching of repentance and the remission of sins, but equally so for the entering into His glory on behalf of Israel. Truly, Israel needed the atoning sufferings and death of Christ as much as Gentiles. But, while the cross sends the message of mercy to all the world inasmuch as He tasted death for every man, or everything, the sufferings of His whole life as well as of death on the cross are "not for that nation only."

Isaiah (Isaiah 53:1-4) presents the sufferings of Christ from and for Israel apart from atonement, which is unto all. As their Representative He was bruised for their iniquities, the chastisement of their peace was upon Him; but it is by His stripes they were healed, for Jehovah laid on Him all their iniquity. As Representative He necessarily became their Substitute and had to bear their stripes, and "was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of My people was He stricken." The glory of His person makes it impossible to separate propitiation from substitution in His death; nevertheless they are distinct ideas. In the latter part of this chapter there is atonement proper — His soul an offering for sin. The result is, not the being cut off and having nothing, but seeing the fruit of His travail, and victory over His foes. His being cut off are the sufferings which, through the condition of Israel and the righteous judgment of God, Christ must bear in His way to the throne of Israel. He, the Christ, began to bear the blows of scorn, hatred, and contempt long before He came to the cross. The crowd took p stones to stone Him, they led Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down, the chief priests sent officers to apprehend Him. Were not these, with other indignities, buffets to Him who was the true and only Heir to the throne of David? Was not all this that He suffered really judgment upon the people? It was their King who was so treated. But He is more than their King, and His atonement on the cross gives a value even to non-atoning sufferings which they could not otherwise have. But the remnant in the latter day will say "by His stripes we are healed." Righteousness demanded these stripes for Israel, grace gave an atonement for them and for the world. No wonder if the hearts of the two disciples burned within them as the Lord opened to them the scriptures which declare the necessity of His sufferings and death, but thus establishing the glory of the kingdom upon an immutable basis, and doubtless proving to them that Israel must be saved from their sins, sprinkled with clean water before the glory shines forth.

Generally the unbelief of the Gentile has a different aspect from that of the Jew. Gentile unbelief either ignores Him altogether, saying that the Gospels are only a fabulous story invented by the cunning of priestcraft to maintain the authority of a sacerdotal caste, or else, while acknowledging the historical truth of the Gospel record, denies the Godhead of Christ and the absolute inspiration of the record. Of Gentile as well as of Jew it can be said, "they esteemed Him not;" but of the Jew alone is it true that he "did esteem him, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." On the contrary Gentile writers are found who give Him the foremost place among the great reformers (!) of the world, not that He suffered under the wrath of God in judgment of our sins. It is reserved for the blindness of Gentile infidelity to talk of Christianity as a blend of all that was good in paganism and Judaism, with it presenting a code of morals, and imparting a better tone to the inner life of Man 1:1 :e. to the world. To esteem the Lord Jesus as merely a good man, even the greatest and best of men, while the Gospels attest that He claimed and received divine worship, is one of Satan's

master-strokes in dishonouring Christ and deluding souls. The Jew esteemed Him smitten of God and afflicted, and despised Him. The Gentile affects not to despise Him (save the vulgar infidels of this and all time), does not believe Him smitten of God any more than suffering to atone, but denies the true glory of His person. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten with a Father." This is said of the Word Who became flesh. When He came, the Gentiles did not know Him, the Jew would not receive Him; it is not said (John 1:11) the Jews did not know Him. Certainly the Jew, though more guilty, is more logical than the Gentile. Blasphemy characterises the former, guilty ignorance the latter. When the angel announced to Joseph the birth of Christ, he said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." The Pharisees said, We have no sin. Therefore their sin remained, and barred the kingdom; for they could not be saved from the sins they refused to confess, nor could the kingdom come before they were saved. Christ came to save first, and as His mission became more manifest, so Jewish hatred became more intense. Even the hated Roman was preferred to Christ, their true King. "We have no king but Caesar." How true! that "He was despised."

How could Christ reign over such a people save to dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel? that is, to judge them as the heathen (see Psalms 2:1-12 :) But then what about the promises made to the fathers, to Abraham and Isaac, and renewed to Jacob? What about the word spoken by the prophets, if Israel be entirely and for ever cut off through sin? All the earth is to be blessed through the exaltation of Christ as King of Israel. Where will the earth's blessing be without the kingdom? But where the glory of the coming King if the fairest portion of His earthly domains be not according to the original promise? Isaiah has only Israel before him when he says (Isaiah 9:6), "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Israel's condition must be changed before Christ could be to them Father of the age to come.* He would ever be the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, were Israel swept from the earth; but how then to them the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? The kingdom must be established; and when the people are gathered out of the lands from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south (Psalms 107:3) Messiah says, "Behold I and the children which God has given me" (Hebrews 2:13). The apostle in proving that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one, inasmuch as (they partaking of blood and flesh) He took part in the same, calls the Hebrew believers "children" (not here children of the Father, which is common to all believers now, but) as part of the godly remnant saved before the kingdom comes, quoting (Isaiah 8:18), where the "children" are the remnant for whom Messiah waits while Jehovah hides His face from Jacob. The "children" are correlative to "the everlasting Father." The King will reign in righteousness, in righteousness He will judge the nations. To Israel He is the Prince of Peace, and the prophet continues, "Of the increase of His government and peace, no end." How the Prince of Peace to a nation rebellious from the beginning?

[* This name in no way confounds the person of the Father with the person of the Son, but is a title which Messiah will take in His official glory as King of Israel. This child shall be called the Father of eternity. It is special to Israel, not to the Gentile, nor to the church.]

There is another and a precious name which the prophet does not mention: it, Jesus the Saviour, was reserved for the evangelist (Matthew 1:21). The prophet declares the glory of the King, the evangelist announces the blessing of the people. The first question with God was their sin. No

glory even for Messiah as King before that was established. It was the one thing needful for the people. No purging, no glory. Therefore the immediate need of the people is given in Matthew. Christ was born King of the Jews, but He must be a Saviour before He reigns. At His birth prominence is given to this Name; for all His glory, His special glory as Son and Heir of David hangs upon His being first of all a Saviour. He could only be such by the suffering of death. But the glory is decreed (Psalms 2:1-12 :) — He must reign. If the glory of His kingdom can only be attained through death, "ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" With the two disciples it was simply a question of power, with God it was a question of sin.

If David be the type of Christ the King of Israel, he also must pass through suffering before he ascends the throne. The type is, as every type must be, very imperfect; but it is not a partial type. Anointed at the beginning, then for a time unknown, afterwards brought out, but only to feel the persecuting power of the wicked king, and not till this king is slain does David sit upon the promised throne. I do not say this is a dim shadow of Messiah's path through the world, but here, as in all types, we must see the substance before we can understand and admire the shadow. Now that we have seen Christ we can trace Him in the shadows of David's life. Doubtless all the experiences of David were in connection with his own responsibility as a saint of God. Some of his trials he brought upon himself, and more than once was in danger through want of faith and of dependence upon God. On such occasions he is the contrast of Christ. But there were other occasions, and not a few, where he truly had his own proper experiences, but which are the reflected experiences of our Lord — reflected in the mirror of mere earthly material, where the imperfect surface blurs somewhat the perfect beauty of the original; yet sufficient is seen to lead us to admire the wisdom of God in thus presenting beforehand the sorrows of Messiah and the glories that follow. It is because of this special position, being chosen for that end, that David is called the man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14).

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"Though he were Son, yet learned he obedience from the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Messiah's sufferings were not necessary to teach Him to obey; He was by nature obedient, for He was holy. He never walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful, but delighted in the law of God. And whether He was like the well-watered tree, or as a root out of a dry ground, as He looked in the eyes of the unbelieving Jew, His obedience would ever have been perfect. He had no opposing will. He came into the world not as the first Adam, at once a man, but born and passing through all the phases of humanity from a babe to a full-grown man. He advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (Luke 2:1-52 :), that is, there was a growth mentally and physically. If the Son were only a man such a statement is needless; if He were only God, it is incomprehensible. But the Son is perfectly human and perfectly divine. As man He suffered, and increased in wisdom; yet though made like unto His brethren He alone could say, "Before Abraham was, I am." But having taken the place of man, He condescended as such to learn obedience. Oh, how perfect His obedience! He alone could say, I do always the things that please my Father. He did not seek His own will but that of the Father. This is the perfection of obedience. It was practised in a path of suffering, the appointed path to the throne. There was no other way possible.

Learning was part of His humiliation when He deigned to become man. The humiliation was deepened when He learned from suffering. The depths of suffering and sorrow were due to Israel's sinful condition. They had learned disobedience, not through suffering, but in the midst of blessing. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. They were a perverse nation, and had become enemies. When the Son dwelt among such a people, suffering was inevitable. If He had come clothed with the thunders of Sinai, the suffering must have been theirs; but He came meek and lowly, and riding upon an ass, and the Jews despised Him. The suffering was His. A Messiah, Heir to the throne of God upon the earth, He was lifted up; but His own people rejected and crucified Him. He was cast down.

Messiah took all this from God; not in the mere sense of God permitting it, but as the direct and immediate appointment of God. "The cup which my Father giveth me shall I not drink it." Thus He learned obedience. Suffering was a moral necessity both for His present path, and for His future glory. When David was anointed, why was not Saul removed from the scene, and the man of God's choice seated at once upon the throne? If Messiah's path was necessarily through suffering, there was equal necessity for David, or else how could he be a type? It is David's glory to be in a measure suffering as did Messiah. He needed training for his coming exaltation. Saul had no such training; he had warnings as well as signal favours from God. But he was God's instrument for teaching David that he might learn obedience from the things which he suffered. And herein is the essential difference between the type and the great Antitype. David learned because he was taught. Christ learned without being taught. When the evil spirit came upon Saul, there was more than discipline for David; it was that he might answer somewhat to Him who endured the malice of Satan as well as of man. Saul henceforth is the symbol of Satanic hate.

Saul is now definitively rejected; and Samuel is sent to anoint another. Here let us pause and look at Samuel. He who so faithfully rebuked the wicked king, now fears to do Jehovah's bidding. No doubt there was in Saul a nascent hatred as a crouching tiger waiting for its prey, ready to pounce upon the man whom God should choose. Samuel knew this, and also that every one who, knowingly or not, assisted David would be exposed to the same murderous hate; as Ahimelech afterwards proved. Hence Samuel says to God, "How can I go? if Saul hear of it, he will kill me." Is this the language of confidence in God? Faith would have said, "What can Saul do against God?" This moment of feeble trust in Jehovah was followed by the mistake of judging from appearances. So clearly is one failure followed by another. Samuel seems to have been much impressed with Saul's magnificent stature. And when he looked on Eliab, who, though he was not of such commanding presence as Saul, was evidently a man of no mean appearance, Samuel admiring the man says, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him." But God's choice of a man to be king depends not upon the adventitious advantages of nature. God had provided Himself a man from among the sons of Jesse, but had not named him to the prophet. The mere qualities of nature are nothing to God. "He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (Psalms 147:10). Samuel is rebuked, and we are instructed. "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." The calling of God is not according to human preferences. Here we have an instance of the truth declared by the apostle that God chooses the things that are weak and despised by man (sec 1 Corinthians 1:27-28). The first word to Samuel was, "Fill thine horn with oil and go; I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided

me a king among his sons." Samuel is afraid. God has compassion on His timid servant, and then says, "Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah, and call Jesse to the sacrifice." As if God said — since you have not sufficient confidence in Me, but fear for your life, I simply bid you call Jesse to a sacrifice, after that "I will show thee what thou shalt do, and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee." God does not change His purpose, but all that Saul or others need know is that Samuel is gone to Bethlehem to sacrifice. The prophet's fears are allayed. But this was not to his honour. Often we ask for, and obtain, a smoother path; but we lose honour and reward. But what a condition of Israel's when his coming made the elders of Bethlehem tremble. They knew who he was, and they had conscience of sins. He quiets them. "I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah: sanctify yourselves and come.

Seven sons passed before Samuel, none of them chosen. David was the eighth. This number is connected with resurrection and glory. It was a national life of glory, a quasi-resurrection when David came to the throne. When the true David comes to reign there will be a moral resurrection and a new national life for all Israel. Their dry bones shall be brought together again, and the breath of Jehovah shall make them a great army. But this glory is not yet. As night before day, so suffering before the glory. David was not in much honour in his father's house; the chosen one of God was unthought of by his father, who had to be questioned before he remembered the youth away keeping the sheep. Who would have thought of him?

Although David is no type of Christ as Head of the church, but only of Messiah the King (though here and there in his life are circumstances which are characteristic of the church), yet the sufferings he endured from Saul mark the path of Him who is Head of the church as well as King of Israel. If suffering was a necessary introduction to the kingdom, it cannot be less so to the higher glory of being Head of the church. The glory of the kingdom is for and in the world — the age to come. The glory of the church is separation from this present world in which the church now is. The sufferings of the church take a deeper, (should we not rather say a higher character?) in having fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, the Head, than those of the remnant with Christ the King? The church is a witness for Christ in this world. If there be no suffering from this world, it has lost its true position, and has a different path from the Master, being no longer a true witness for Him.

Saul's anointing is annulled. There cannot be two anointed kings before God. The effect is immense for both Saul and David. From that day forward the Spirit of Jehovah came upon David, and an evil spirit from Jehovah came upon Saul. Upon David the Spirit was abiding, upon Saul the paroxysms of the evil spirit seem intermitted, though he was the constant instrument of Satan. And Saul, when the Spirit of Jehovah departed from him, did not fall back into the ordinary and common condition of man; he was as marked from that day forward as David. But how awful the difference! In the two men, as in types, we see the personal conflict between Christ and Satan.

Now God brings David prominently on the scene, and makes him from that day forward the point round which all else revolve; in every detail he is the central figure. Whether it be David the fugitive, or David the king, he is the object before the eye of God. Nor could it be otherwise, for David is showing, as far as an imperfect man could, the path of the Only begotten of the Father to God's throne. The nation had failed under priest-rule and under prophet-rule. God is about to establish a king, and their sin and guilt will henceforth be measured by the way they treat Him. And

David in this very thing is the type of Christ. The sin of the Jew is measured by the presence of Christ among them; all previous guilt is as nothing compared with their rejection of Him. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin" (John 15:22). The judgment of the Jew, of the world, was involved in His presence; both Jew and Gentile united in refusing Him, and the solemn word is uttered, "Now is the judgment of this world."

Little did Saul imagine that the youthful player on the harp was then taking his first step in his way to the throne; or that, when he sent for David, he was sending for the man whom God had anointed to be king. As little did David know when he was soothing by his melodious strains the spirit of the man who would soon become his bitterest enemy, that he was entering a path where he must be disciplined for his high calling, and where in a higher aspect he was to be a type of Messiah. At first Saul loved him greatly; but when he learned, which he soon did, that David was the chosen of God, then he hated him even to death.

How wondrous and wise the ways of God; how perfectly suited the means to accomplish His purposes, manifold as they are! The troubled soul of the king is refreshed, and for a time David remains in the royal household. But how soon man forgets those who have been in any way a means of good to him! only let self-interest stand in the way, and gratitude and honour, which man boasts of so much, are often cast to the winds. All is forgotten, and on the next occasion when David appears before the king, he enquires who he is. Abner might be excused, but Saul ought to have remembered who had played before him. But forgetfulness of his benefactor was not the greatest of his sins; this is simply human; he wilfully opposed the known purposes of God. The true David, even Christ, has played on His harp to the refreshing of many a troubled soul. He has played to many a sinner on the harp of His great salvation, and refreshed him with His grace. Wondrously sweet to Legion, to Mary of Magdala, when the evil spirits departed from them; and also to the weeping father when He not only commanded the evil spirit to come out of his afflicted son, but added, "and enter no more into him." And how eventually He plays to troubled saints, refreshing them, and encompassing them with songs of deliverance. Alas, how soon we forget all His benefits! But here David causing the evil spirit to depart from Saul (it was only for a season) is a picture of Christ before Whom demons fly. At first David was rather in a private capacity. But God's time for his public display soon came; it was in presence of the armies of Israel and of the dreaded Philistine. What a proof then was given that the Spirit of Jehovah was upon him. The giant foe defies the armies of Israel, and Jehovah the God of Israel. He comes in all the might and pride of man, with all the adjuncts of the world, a helmet of brass, a coat of mail, greaves of brass upon his legs, a target of brass between his shoulders, with a spear like a weaver's beam. It is material power of the world in array against the power of faith. This man is the expression of the world's might. His stature nearly ten feet; he is invulnerable before and behind. All is useless, for faith overcomes the world.

How in the pride of conscious strength he boasts against Israel! Saul, higher by head and shoulders than any in Israel, is cowed, and all flee from him. How the Philistines must have gloried in him, a confidence equalled only by their terror when he was slain. In his boast against the servants of Saul he did not reckon upon the God of Israel, Who, whatever Saul might be, would vindicate His own name, and in His own way. Not by opposing worldly means to worldly power, as Saul attempted to do when he clothed David with armour, as if faith in Jehovah could use like weapons as the world. Faith puts them off and goes to meet the foe in the name of Jehovah of

hosts. That name was David's shield, and nerved his arm, and gave him victory. This manner of fighting raised the scorn and contempt of the world's power, and made the giant yet more insulting. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah." His Spirit was upon David, and with the (in appearance) contemptible means of a sling and a stone, as against a dog, the giant falls, and receives his death-stroke from his own sword. The battle is won. The victory is by the Spirit of Jehovah. Israel does not contend but pursues a flying foe, and reaps the fruit. But it is David the anointed, who becomes the cynosure of all eyes, the wonder, and for the time, the praise of Israel. Saul might slay thousands, but David his ten thousands. The women of Israel meet the returning army with songs. Their higher praise of David connects him in Saul's mind with the kingdom; for he knew from the prophet that it was given to another. Therefore from that day and forward he eyed David: the chosen of God as such draws upon himself the fiercest and most implacable hatred of the rejected king. So did the Jew treat Christ. Upon His Holy Head fell the concentrated hate of the rulers. Nor is there any more cruel hate in this world than that of the rejected of God upon the faithful. At this moment there is a bright gleam; the army is victorious, the women are jubilant. It is but a sample of the achievements of Messiah when He comes to reign. Here, as in other portions of the word, men by their action show the energy of the spirit within them, the women, the position resulting from the action, or conduct of the men. Here it is a scene of joy, of exultation; which gives a glimpse of the future, when all Israel will return with singing. This is not the first time the women of Israel are prominent in song. Miriam and the women of Israel with instruments of music answered Moses and the men of Israel singing to Jehovah over the drowned Egyptians. Deborah was foremost when she and Barak sang at the destruction of Jabin's army; and here they come forth to meet Saul and his army. Though women are restricted from certain functions in service, both under the law, and now by apostolic command, certainly cordiality in praise was never forbidden them. And it was a grateful thing to the army to meet with a joyful welcome where all united in gladness, save one whose heart was filled with jealous rancour against the man whom God had chosen as the instrument of this glorious victory. The poor wretched king, outside the joy common to all beside, soon turned the glad scene into one of deepening distress and woe. As it were, the slain Philistine revives, and the end is the death of the rejected Saul but the triumph of the chosen David.

12. 1887 209. As the victor over Goliath David enters at once into public life. From the humble position of shepherd he rose to be really the chief in Israel. Saul might still be chief nominally, but it was by David that Israel was raised from the depths of despair and fear, and a song of triumph given them. Even so will Messiah at the right time raise Israel from lower depths and give them a more triumphant song. He had already been anointed, and the Spirit of Jehovah rested upon him. The same Spirit led him to the battle and gave him victory. Jesse had no thought but to enquire after David's brethren, but the thoughts of God were far above the thoughts of Jesse. So the Lord, our David, after He was anointed by the Spirit descending as a dove and abiding upon Him, was likewise led by the Spirit into the wilderness to meet in single combat the antitype of Goliath in his defiance of Israel and of God. And even as Goliath must first be slain before Israel could rejoice in victory, so must the devil first be vanquished before blessing and reinstatement in highest earthly privileges can be brought to Israel. If David be the type of the Messiah, no less is Goliath a symbol of Satanic power. Christ's victory in the wilderness was His first act in His path of service, even as David's first public act was the slaying of Goliath. The great enemy, though not yet banished from the scene of Messiah's glory, must be made to know the power of Israel's future king. In the

wilderness the Lord Jesus manifested His power and gave the pledge of His future triumphs. There it was overcoming the tempter, as in resurrection breaking the bands of him who wielded the power of death: pregnant presages of His coming kingdom and power and glory. But that which gives us a practical lesson even in our everyday life is that both David and Jesus our Lord overcome the foe by the sword of the word of God. The same sword abides for us, and faith nerves the arm to use it. It is written," said the Lord. "I come to thee in the name of Jehovah," said David. God had written His name on Israel's banner, and that was David's confidence. The sure word of God gives us victory in every conflict. Faith rests upon it, and by faith we overcome the world and its prince.

David's victory was in presence of Israel and of their human foes. Christ's victory was unseen by human eyes, but in the presence of God and of the angels — He was seen of angels. Perhaps even the demons beheld the defeat of their chief, as they did afterwards confess His Person and His power, "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." But the day is coming when men shall be eye-witnesses of His power and glory, and all then shall know that He is Jehovah. When the Lord Jesus returned from the wilderness, it was not to receive the praises of men, but their hatred. They did wonder for a little moment, for there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about, and at first He was glorified of all (Luke 4:1-44 :). David was met with acclamations of joy, but the hatred of Saul prevailed. And with the Lord the scene immediately changed, His path was quickly marked with sorrow. Herod had put John the Baptist in prison, the one who claimed the position of a "friend" (John 3:29). And His first recorded preaching after His return from the wilderness was in Nazareth where they sought to throw Him from the brow of the hill. A similar path awaits David. It was after his victory over the defier of Israel and of the Jehovah of Israel, that he entered upon that special path of suffering, and tasted of that cup which Messiah drank to the dregs. David might taste, and for that must be sustained; a greater than he drained the cup. But we must repeat a remark made before, that while David's path of suffering as a whole is typical of Messiah's rejection by the Jew, when we come to details we find how blended is the imperfection of the saint with that which prefigured the perfect path of the Lord in similar circumstances. To distinguish between these surely needs the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Yet, even the saint's imperfection only serves, by contrast, to place in brighter light the absolute perfection of Him who was ever the Faithful and True Witness. David failed quite enough to have been set aside as a type of the Perfect One. But we see in his course the sovereignty of grace towards a much-trying saint, as well as the foreshadows of God's purpose concerning Christ and the supremacy of Israel in the coming age. And though in many points of his life the "type" is most distinct and clear, even there let us never forget the saint's responsibility. It is even so with us now. Not that we are types in any sense whatever, but we may be instruments of God as the channels of blessing, and of conveying truth to others; ourselves, like David, perhaps not conscious at the time of the purpose of God in thus using us. Yet in every case a certain amount of moral responsibility rests upon us measured by our intelligence in the ways of God. David as a type of the Messiah, and as a saint with whom God is dealing for his present and immediate profit, must both be before our minds, or we shall fail to learn what God has written for our learning now, and the unfolding of His purposes in Christ for Israel's glory; perhaps lose altogether the blessedness of being called "friends" (John 15:15), to whom the Lord discloses the counsels of the Father. As during the life of Saul the sufferings of David prefigure those of Christ, so does Saul set forth the unrelenting hate of the leaders of the rejecting and persecuting nation. There was no open idolatry during the king's life;

he maintained more or less the external order of the appointed worship. The priests, if not the prophet, were with Saul. But in his heart was hatred of God's anointed. And during our Lord's sojourn here below, there was the absence of idolatry, and with the Pharisees, the dominant religious faction, a hypocritical zeal for the law in external duties and ceremonies, but with that a fiercer hate of Him who is greater than David. The house was swept of its idolatrous abominations, but garnished with hypocrisy (see Matthew 23:1-39 :). Saul at first pretended to be zealous for God, at the same time that he, as in the case of Agag, disobeyed His commands. At first he would extirpate those who had a familiar spirit, at the end he sought their counsel. The Lord foretells that in a similar way the guilty nation will fall again under the power of the unclean spirit, and with it seven other spirits still more wicked. The downward course and miserable end of Saul are a picture of the evil generation that rejects Christ their Messiah, while David and his company, who are eventually exalted, show the portion and destiny of the few that followed Christ in His rejection (Matthew 12:1-50 :, Matthew 25:1-46 :).

Israel's praises of David brings Saul's hatred to a point and gives it form. With the quick eye of jealousy he sees David as the future king of Israel, and thereupon seeks to kill him. The wise men from the East came to worship Him who was born King of the Jews, and Herod is troubled, and devises means to slay the young child at Bethlehem. Deceit and treachery marked both Saul and Herod, and each sought to slay God's anointed, whether the type or the great Antitype. Saul told David to fight Jehovah's battles and to be valiant. But he hoped that David would fall by the hand of the Philistines. Foolish Saul! Had he forgotten that David slew Goliath. Herod told the Magi to bring him word when they had found where the young child was. Worship was on his tongue, but death in his heart. Both seemed to feel instinctively the advent of the true and rightful King. Saul tried by means of his two daughters to bring about David's destruction. With the second he imposes what he thinks an impossible task. David brings double the number required; whereat Saul is yet more afraid of David. He proceeds to give a direct command to his servants and even to Jonathan, that they should kill David. How strikingly similar many of the circumstances here recorded are to those which the Lord passed through. The Pharisees gave commandment to their adherents that if they knew where Jesus was they should take Him. They also consulted to take Him by subtlety. For a brief moment (xix. 7) David had respite. Not for long; the evil spirit again dominates the miserable king'. David seeks shelter from the king's fury in his own home, but as quickly leaves it; for even there the hate of Saul would reach him; he flies to Samuel. Three times messengers were sent to slay him, and three times God interposed in a wondrous way. The messengers of death are turned into prophets. Saul dares the manifest power of God, as if he said that God might turn aside his servants, but should not turn him! No act of his rebellion went beyond this. The mightiest man is only a reed in the hands of the Almighty. Saul must prophesy, he is no stronger than his servants, though his evil heart still retained his purpose against David. But God put a hook in his nose and turned him in a way he would not, as He did the Assyrian in a later day (see 2 Kings 19:28). The officers that were sent to take Jesus (John 7:32) came under a similar power, and were also turned from their purpose. Astonished they return, saying, "Never man spake like this man." We do not know that saving efficacy accompanied in this case the words of the Lord any more than it did the constraining power of the Spirit in the case of Saul and his messengers. In each we see God using the enemy to bear testimony to His power according to His will. What a vain thing is man! When the rulers take counsel together against God's anointed, He has them in derision. For the decree is gone forth: God's king must sit on the holy hill of Zion.

David is under the panoply of God, nor can Messiah be touched till the appointed time. David must be preserved all through, he must suffer but not die, for he had not life in himself. Christ had, and was able to go through death in His way to the Throne. How very partially each type can set forth either the depth of His sufferings, or His power and glory. There was that in the path of Christ where no man could go, a cup which none but He could drink, a baptism which was His alone. Death under judgment was His. Many have followed Him in death, but not in judgment. These were not types but disciples. The Master must be first and alone; "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards" (John 13:36). He bore away the judgment; then others, His disciples, could follow through death. As regards types Isaac came nearest for he was actually bound and laid upon the altar, but there is essential difference between the figure and the reality of death. It was only in figure that Abraham received his son from death (Hebrews 11:19).

Returning to David, how suited to the circumstances is his deliverance. He was with the prophet whose function is not to fight with the sword, but to bear testimony and, if need be, suffer! God delivers David in an extraordinary way. Saul becomes another man, foregoes his purpose, and in appearance and according to the uninstructed voice of the people is numbered with the prophets, as of the same company with Samuel and David. Not to the discerning eye, for his behaviour savoured rather of the frenzy of the prophets of Baal. Here is no providential mode of escape for David as when surrounded by his pursuers in the wilderness of Mann, Saul is called away by tidings of the invasion of the Philistines. Saul, himself under the direct and immediate hand of God, becomes the instrument of deliverance. May we not say here as Samson when he found honey in the lion's carcase, "Out of the eater came firth meat?" God delivers His saints in unexpected ways, ever for His own glory, yet always in keeping with the position and circumstances of His saints.

Jonathan's love (ch. 20:) was an oasis to David in the desert of persecution which he now feels in its acutest form. Driven from home, a wanderer, a fugitive. he had nowhere to lay his head. The power of Israel wielded by Saul is against him. So it was with the Lord Jesus. Foxes had holes, birds of the air had nests, the cunning and the unclean had a place in this world; He, the Lord, had none. Yet to Him there was a house at Bethany, a little green spot where He could meet with hearts that responded to His own. Of them it is said, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." Of only one other is this intimacy of affection spoken — of the disciple whom Jesus loved. Precious to the Lord was this communion of love in His path of sorrow. The loves of David and Jonathan are but shadows of the Lord's love for that family, and of their love for Him. Yea, however close Jonathan's love to David may be to their love to the Lord Jesus, David's love to Jonathan can be only a faint image of the Lord's special love for these highly favoured ones at Bethany. In this sorrowful yet deeply interesting meeting of David and Jonathan there is more than their mutual love. In Jonathan we see the godly in Israel owning their king. They confess Him before they see His glory; and they are themselves weak and in fear. Simeon, Anna, Nathanael, confessed Him; but Nicodemus is most like Jonathan, for he also, for fear of the Jews, came by stealth to the Lord Jesus, as Jonathan to David, fearing his father, and unknown to him and to the nation at large. He acknowledges David as the king of Israel. He had before stripped himself of the emblems of royalty and given them to David. Now he acknowledges that his life is in the hand of David. It is complete and perfect submission. There could be no fuller confession of David's rights as king of Israel, for he pleads not only for himself, but also for continued kindness to his house

forever. He expected to see David's greatness. "And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of Jehovah that I die not; but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; no, not when Jehovah hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth," "and I shall be next thee." Jonathan entreats, but his entreaty is in accord with the counsels of God, and therefore his prayer has a prophetic aspect. We see in this the covenanted blessings of the saved remnant in the age to come; not of those who share in the rejection of the Lord, the Messiah, to whom He said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." David's company became princes in the kingdom. Jonathan never took that place, he returned to the city, and did not follow David. None loved David more than he; but he is used, and (I believe) it was so ordered by God, that he should thus prefigure the future remnant of Israel who never know the reproach of Christ, that will he brought back to the land in "the kindness of Jehovah," and of God's counsels concerning them. The promise is given, repeated, and confirmed with an oath — two immutable things.

13. 1887 225.

Though dimly, "as in a glass," yet surely in this scene (1 Samuel 20:1-42 :) historically so sorrowful, we have a glimpse of the coming glory, 1:e., of Israel's part in it. Jonathan confidently looks onward to David's exaltation, and the subjugation of all his enemies; and, while mistaken as to his own place, foreshadows the position of the remnant that will be brought to inherit the land. Now, for a little while, David is, as it were, to be hidden till Saul is removed, and the purpose of God is ripe for fulfilment. So Jehovah says to Messiah, who is now hidden from Israel, "Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool." True, Christ is hidden now in the glory whither He went when He left the grave; but they who are His representatives here both suffer and are hidden as David. God through all David's sorrow was preparing his way to the throne, as even at this moment He is preparing the way for the advent of the King of Israel, and for judgment upon His enemies. Then Messiah will reign and take vengeance upon them who would not that He should reign over them (Luke 19:27). "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." As upon a footstool so shall He tread them down. And then shall the same remnant be exalted and have the chief place among the nations of the earth, next to the King in His millennial glory. Such is the position which Jonathan personally aspired to; his desire prophetically pointed to the future standing of the restored and purged nation, of which Jonathan is here the type.

Looking at these two men, not as types of Messiah and of Israel respectively, but as saints, there is much to be learned for our profit. The full light which now shines was not then given, and that which seems unnoticed with them is now seen most inconsistent with a life of faith and truthfulness. These two men are not caught up out of their human sphere, but while types of coming glory and blessing for Israel, are still saints and responsible as such. God allows their failures to be seen. They are earthen vessels while holding the future blessing. They were as the prophets of whom Peter speaks; that is, they signified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, in which on earth the godly remnant of Israel have the chief place. Neither David nor Jonathan could read, in the prayer of the latter, the then hidden counsel of God. It is now revealed, and we rejoice in Christ's glory and the consequent exaltation of Israel, inasmuch as it is one of the many crowns which will adorn the brow of the King of kings and the Lord of lords in that day.

Since He came the true Light shines upon every page of Israel's history. Before the cross the moral light was but little more than the prophetic. The necessity for truth in the inward parts seemed unknown to David and Jonathan. There was a little plot between them to deceive Saul. No doubt David was in great fear and showed but little faith. We cannot boast against him, for since that day many a saint has, with more light and less cause for fear, done worse. The Holy Spirit does not hide their failure, though He uses them in His wisdom. No command was given to David by his brother to be present at a sacrifice in Bethlehem. It was a story invented by David and repeated by Jonathan. "Therefore he cometh not to the feast." Nay, he feared Saul, therefore he cometh not to the feast. There was untruthfulness; and neither seemed to have had any conscience about it. These were the times of ignorance: now the full truth is revealed, and holiness is demanded in accordance with the measure of light. If God passed over (I do not say sanctioned) their duplicity, it is not an example to be followed, rather a warning to judge the secret springs of action and see that all is consonant with truth in the inward parts.

We discern the same want of conscience in the next scene. Truly the love of truth is not acquired in a moment. With some there is seemingly a natural love of truth, while others appear to be without it. But the natural love of truth always fails when tested in the things of God. To buy the truth and sell it not is only by the Holy Spirit working in grace upon the heart, and without Him there is no true love.

David fleeing from Saul comes to Ahimelech who fears, seeing David alone. Not unlikely he had heard of Saul's hatred, and of David's distressful circumstances. "Why art thou alone and no man with thee?" Alas! untruthfulness comes out in a more definite form. "The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee; and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place." Having begun with deception he gets deeper into its toils. Circumstances are invented (so to say) to supplement his first assertion. The king had appointed servants to expedite the business entrusted to David! Was it in remembering this and similar instances, that he afterwards sang of the blessedness of the Man in Whose spirit there was no guile? Well, even this shows the perfection of Him of Whom pre-eminently and absolutely it is said, "Neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).

David's guile brought sad consequences for Ahimelech and his house. Indeed, on the previous occasion it nearly cost Jonathan his life. Saul was far too shrewd a man to accept the story of a sacrifice at Bethlehem, and in his anger threw his javelin at Jonathan. His jealousy and hate made him keen of perception. David succeeded in deceiving the priest, who fell a victim to the king's wrath. Perhaps, had David told the whole truth, the priest might have even then cast in his lot with him, as Abiathar his son did later. Full trust in God would then have doubtless uttered the words of faith which afterwards David said to the son, "With me thou shalt be in safeguard;" even as we are with our David spite of Satan's power and the world's hatred. As it was Ahimelech boldly maintained David's integrity; though was there not a gentle rebuke to him for his want of truth in the words, "Thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more?" The effects of one man's sin are seldom confined to himself, and in some instances defilement is the consequence which is always the case when sin being known is not rebuked in faithfulness to the Lord. But here Ahimelech was not defiled. In his simplicity he accepted David's statement. The effects touched him even to death, but he was guileless. David was the indirect cause of his death, and he afterwards admitted

it; for at the time he suspected what the fatal result would be when he saw Doeg. Should he not then have made a full disclosure of his true position? False shame sometimes engenders guile; the effects spread far and wide. Upon Ahimelech is brought destruction, upon his family and the city. Yet wicked and cruel as Saul was, there is more than human revenge. He was the guilty tool of Satan's malignity against all who in any way befriended God's chosen king, and Doeg was the willing tool of Saul. And when the Lord Jesus came, Satan found other willing tools of his hate. The priests were his tools, and Pilate (though he was unwilling) the tool of the priests. In Saul's day the priests were the sufferers, for they were owned of God. In the Lord's day the priests, then disowned of God, are in the place of Saul, and urge, yea, compel the Roman governor to crucify the Lord Jesus.

Again observe how the typical man is interwoven with the failing saint. Historically a fugitive, and flying for his life, and weak in faith, yet connected with this he appears a type of the Rejected One who gives to His disciples the bread of heaven. The showbread was priests' food. Believers are priests unto God; and we live on hallowed bread. In the circumstances of that day the sanctity of the show-bread was annulled, for God's king was cast out. Of what use the ordinances, or even priests' offerings, from a nation that rejected the man of God's choice? All became void. The bread is in a manner common. The Lord refers the Pharisees to David's act, when He was in the cornfields with His disciples. He, rejected, declares that the Sabbath had lost its legal sanctity, and with it all else fell. But while to Israel, the Jew, the holiness of the showbread was gone and was become common as any other bread, it has become to the church the symbol of a blessed truth. To eat together is the sign of communion, and we, made priests to God, have fellowship one with another, as we eat of the bread from heaven. And there is more than fellowship one with another; it is holy, hallowed bread, and in it we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This bread is to us "common," the common privilege of all believers. But the enjoyment of this high communion with the Father and the Son cannot be without separation from the world. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," are the last words of the aged apostle. Are the young men pure? ask the priest. They are, said David. It was not enough to follow David (in profession), but is there practical holiness? To such the bread is "common." But this looks rather to the church than to the kingdom.

David flees to Achish. Here are three things so closely linked together as to be like cause and effect. Indeed, failure in trusting God is the root of all departure, now as then. There was deception attempted upon Saul, a bolder aspect of untruthfulness to Ahimelech, and now degradation before Achish. And in this backsliding course the fear of man grows, and trust in God seems quite gone; for how else would he seek refuge with Israel's bitterest foes? It was as giving up his inheritance in Israel, forgetting his anointing, forsaking his God. David sinks very low in the presence of Achish. A saint seeking refuge from fear of trial by going into the world is sure to increase his difficulties and sorrows. So it was with David. Is fear removed? Nay, it only takes a different form, and he is now in real danger of his life; for he had no right to claim the protection of the God of Israel. But mercy is above all, and his great danger is the means of driving him back to the land which he ought not to have left. God even uses the Philistines to remind him that he was the anointed king, and how he was honoured in the memorable fight with Goliath. "And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David, the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in the dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" They recognise him

as the "king of the land," and well interpreted his triumph over Goliath, and the song that greeted him when the women of Israel met him with music and dance. David was ten times greater than Saul. Is it not strange that enemies — the world — are better interpreters sometimes of circumstances than saints? Ought they to be? Alas! how soon believers forget in whose keeping they are. Faith is both the most hardy and most delicate plant of God in the heart, most hardy where unhindered, most delicate where fear of man or other phases of the flesh appear. Both Saul and the Philistines were enemies. Saul said, "I know thou shalt reign." The Philistines call him "king of the land." The only effect of their word is to make David sore afraid. Want of faith leads him to attempt a human means of escape. God in sovereign grace overrules, and Achish sends away a "madman."

Unfaithfulness brought David into a position where his enemies called him mad, and he gave them cause for so saying. Faithfulness and truth brought upon the Lord Jesus the same reproach, mingled with blasphemy. His enemies said, "He hath a devil and is mad." Oh, what a contrast between the type and the Antitype! And why wonder? Here is the Perfect One, there the failing saint. Here is the Christ in all the power of grace and truth, there the saint overcome with fear, and feigning madness in order to escape, the degrading sight of a man scrabbling on the gate. Achish had reason for what he said; the Pharisees knew better, they blasphemed because they hated.

David escapes and finds a temporary shelter in the cave of Adullam. In his own country, and hiding in a cave! Never so low before, he never felt more the effects of Saul's hatred; but it is the moment when his brethren and all his father's house come to him. They would share in his sorrows. Doubtless it was no small comfort to the hunted man. Again we turn to Him in Whom all was fulfilled, Who felt far more deeply both the sorrow of rejection, and joy in the few that followed Him. These were to Him "brother and sister and mother," they were of His Father's house and did His will. It is when David is manifestly a fugitive that his brethren join him; and when the Lord is seen as the rejected One, publicly and with scorn by the rulers (Matthew 12:1-50 :), He, in words that exclude the nation, declared who were then in nearest relationship to Him. But there is more to be seen in this cave of Adullam. If the brethren and the father's house be taken as the remnant that now are hidden through the love of their Messiah until the fury of the oppression be quenched in His judgment, who are the outcasts that find refuge and shelter with David in the same hiding place? Israel in the coming day will be as outcasts, but they are also brethren and of His house after the flesh. Is there not here the intimation of the coming in of Gentiles while Christ is yet hidden above? David's brethren and the outcasts become one company, even as now grace makes of the twain (see Ephesians 2:11-15) one new man. Christ the head; a much closer tie than being Captain over them, as David was to his company. The distressed, the indebted, the discontented, in the cave of Adullam is a striking though imperfect figure of the grace of the Lord Jesus, Who received sinners and did eat with them: the lepers, paralytics, blind and impotent, publicans, and sinners, all that came were received, none refused.

David's followers were not those whom the world called respectable; in the estimation of the wise and prudent, it was a disreputable company. Quite true, and there was but one redeeming feature among them. But that was everything in God's sight: they were with David, and he was their captain. The disciples of the Lord have since borne similar reproach. For the most part they were numbered with the base things of the world before they were chosen, and afterwards had to bear the world's contempt. This we accept: it was His while here. Even men of position (though not

many wise, mighty and noble, are called, 1 Corinthians 1:1-31 :), having a place in the world, have been content to become fools for His sake, whether in following Him then in view of the kingdom, or now in view of heavenly glory. To Nicodemus they said, "Art thou also of Galilee" — art thou one of that base company? But in the cave of Adullam were found the precursors of those to whom the Lord said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

14. 1887 241.

We may but briefly note the remaining events of David's life, and those only as they prefigure the Messiah. In all there is much for profitable study, much instruction for our walk as saints. Indeed there is nothing either before law or under law that does not take the form of admonition or of encouragement for saints now. And all point to Christ, though some less directly than others. The wisdom of God has made prominent in David's life those events where we may trace a likeness (only in measure) to the sufferings and grace of Christ, and thus would lead our thoughts to Him Who was before the mind of the Spirit when He inspired the historian to write the life of David. Christ was the Object; it is He whom we see, and David, interesting as is his history, is but secondary in the mind of the Holy Spirit.

David is brought out of his difficulty which he created for himself in fleeing to Achish, and now in the land, his true place, becomes the centre of all that God owned. The priest and the prophet come to him and join the feeble company, and he becomes captain over them; and, above all, the power of Jehovah is with him. But what a scene is presented to us! Saul with the might of the nation, the acknowledged king of Israel, and here the leader of the religious world, the opposer of God's counsels, the enemy of God's king on the one side; and on the other God's anointed one persecuted, his life hunted, in distress fleeing from one place to another; yet with him the power of God which in due time seated him on the throne, and raised the despised ones with him to be princes, and honourable, and mighty men of valour.

Saul said to his servants, "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds?" He had distributed his favours among the men of his own tribe, but now he appears to distrust them, and appeals to their self-interest. Would the son of Jesse enrich and honour them? No, not the followers of Saul, but his own who followed him and shared in his sufferings, whatever their former condition and character, these David appointed to the honourable places in his kingdom (2 Samuel 21:1-22 :). Again, we turn to the words of our Lord, which He spake to His suffering chosen ones, "Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). And again, but including the church's more blessed portion, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

Though he had sought refuge among the Philistines, David's heart was true to God and to Israel. He hears that the Philistines are robbing the threshing floors of Keilah, and he immediately prepares to go against them. But he first enquires of God. And here, as ever, when faith seeks to know and to act according to the mind of God, it is met with objections and doubts. How natural the fears of David's men! Human wisdom and prudence endorsed their objections. The effect upon David is to send him again to God, and his faith is confirmed, and victory assured. Saul —

religious Saul — hearing that David is in Keilah, hastens to destroy him, saying, "God hath delivered him into my hand." He thought there was no escape for David, and said God had done it! What a fool man becomes when he attempts to understand the ways of God with His saints, he himself being an enemy! Yes, God did bring David to Keilah, but He also knew how to bring him out of it, not for Saul, but for His own glory and for Saul's confusion. The base men of Keilah would have delivered him to Saul. But he again seeks and finds direction. God led him both to befriend the men of Keilah, and to flee from their ingratitude. The Lord Jesus met with the same ingratitude from those that He befriended. Among them is the impotent man (John 5:1-47) whom the Lord so graciously healed. He told the Jews "that it was Jesus who had made him whole." It was the spirit of betrayal, only he had not the opportunity. The hour was not yet come. This base man was of the generation of the men of Keilah. Doubtless David felt keenly when assured from God that the men whom he had delivered, forgetful of his kindness, would deliver him up to Saul. But how much more did the Lord feel from a baseness and an ingratitude still deeper! Listen to His words of sorrow, "Yea I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy" (Psalms 7:4). And yet a more touching cry when the betrayal is accomplished: — "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalms 41:9); words of which the historical occasion was the defection of Ahithophel, but which pointed onward to the greater sin of Judas (John 13:18).

Then follows a glimpse of the grace which without interruption marked all the life of our Lord. Circumstances, which seemed to have brought David into extremest peril, in reality put Saul in David's power. But he will not avenge himself, on the contrary he appeals to Jehovah; let Him "therefore be Judge and judge between thee and me, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand." So also the Psalmist where we see the Spirit of Christ, of Him who would not save Himself, but committed all to God, "Plead my cause, O Jehovah, with them that strive with me; fight against them that fight against me," etc. (Psalms 35:1-28 :). The same cry for help and deliverance again, "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man" (Psalms 43:1). Saul's better feelings prevailed for a moment, but deceit in some form or other always has marked the persecutor; perhaps even deceiving himself, for not long after a very similar scene occurs (see 26:). But there was a transient effect produced, for even the cruelest heart may have its seasons of relenting, though generally succeeded by the same old, if not a greater, hatred. It was so with Saul, in whom we see the persistent enmity of the natural heart, spite of known truth. "I know well that thou shalt surely be king." Yet after this he sought David's life. A different picture is presented now (1 Samuel 25:1-44 :), which, while not dis severed from the kingdom, looks to a higher thing which is called into existence when every outward link with Israel is broken. And so this chapter fittingly opens with the fact of Samuel's death. He was the visible link of the people with God, after the death of Eli, the priest. There was a new link preparing, but he was in the wilderness of Paran, as yet not received by the nation. While still the rejected king, the Holy Spirit brings before us the story of Abigail and her ultimate blessing. She is not the type of the church as a whole, but seems to prefigure church position during this present time. In her we see those of the remnant who as a kind of firstfruits were joined to the Lord, and were added to the church (Acts 2:1-47 :), soon to share as the Bride in the exaltation and glory of the Bridegroom, though now for a season despised. Some of the characteristic marks of the church are found in her. She renounces her own position, whatever it was after Nabal's death, to share in the sorrows of David, whom Nabal

(Israel) despised, but whom she knew to be chosen of God. David's present circumstances has no weight with her. He was suffering because God had called him to the throne, and that was enough for Abigail's faith. To partake of the sufferings of Christ is our privilege, though how little our measure. We all, more or less, fail individually to follow in His path of sorrow; shrinking from the cross, but loving the blessing.

If Abigail represents the few that clave to the Lord, before the great apostle of the Gentiles carried the word to them, Nabal, making merry in his own house and refusing David, is a symbol of the despising Jew, boasting of his riches, vaunting his own righteousness, resisting the grace of God, and denying the title of Jesus, the Messiah. Abigail acknowledged and bowed to David as the King. She is as it were reproduced in Nathaniel, and in the thief on the cross, who both confessed Christ as King of Israel. Nathaniel's confession went farther than the kingdom; the omniscience of God was there in the Person of the Lord, and he bows before Him as Son of God; but He was also King of Israel.

There is a remarkable "touch" in the supplication of Abigail to David, and in the prayer of the thief. Their common thought is, the kingdom and the coming king, but the faith of the dying thief is higher than that of Abigail. For though David was at that moment a persecuted man, derided by all the Nabals in Israel and hiding from Saul, yet he was at the head of six hundred men, and able to chastise the churlish ingratitude of Nabal. If Nathaniel saw Jesus to be Son of God as well as King of Israel, the thief saw quite as clearly that the question of death had nothing to do with the certainty of Christ exalted as King (save as the appointed way). Abigail saw not a dying man, but one with energy and power, and she says, "When Jehovah shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid." David's answer is not, I have accepted thy gifts, but thy person.

There was no external circumstance which could have given the remotest probability to the mind of the dying malefactor that "Jesus of Nazareth," on the cross — as he says "in the same condemnation" — was the true King; but there was a divinely given faith which pierced the covering of sorrow and shame, and saw His glory, and he says, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." Neither Abigail nor the thief had to wait for the kingdom, there was immediate honour and blessing for both. She became David's wife before he came to the throne, and to the thief the Lord said, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." How beautiful to see in the briefest recorded circumstances how the grace of the Lord was prefigured ages before He was manifested.

Yet with the resemblance contrast is intimately connected. David had vengeance in his heart, his purpose was not to leave a single male alive. He was arrested in this by the submission of Abigail, and vengeance was delayed. When the Lord accepted the person of the thief, and promised him more than he asked, His heart was full of love and pity, He was accomplishing redemption. His errand was grace, not judgment. Vengeance will come, will overtake the murderers and despisers of God's King, when He appears the second time. But first He came to save, not to judge. David's purpose was set aside by Abigail, the Lord's purpose of grace was abundantly proved and manifested when He accepted the thief.

Two facts are now given (1 Samuel 25:43-44) which, if the Holy Spirit had merely meant to show how wonderfully David had been delivered from all his foes, might have been omitted without detriment to the record of God's grace and loving-kindness. But the primary object of the Holy

Spirit is not David but Christ. And every event must be brought into His life if we would learn the thoughts of God. "David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti, the son of Laish, which was of Gallim." Abigail and her attendants may represent the remnant of Israel which clave to the Lord before the church began. What then is Ahinoam, for she also was wife to David? I judge they both together (two witnesses) point to the remnant in the days of our Lord, and to those converted by the preaching of Peter, before the special position of the church was declared. For though the church was formed on the day of Pentecost, Peter's preaching goes not beyond the gospel of the kingdom. Upon their repentance Christ would bring in the times of refreshing and restore all things. It is Paul who begins with the foundation truth of the church, Christ the Son of God; nor is the union of the church with Christ set forth by David's union with Abigail and Ahinoam. For they are two, the church is one. The church is called the Bride, the Lamb's wife, but she has not yet made herself ready (Revelation 19:7). The church is as yet a chaste virgin. David's two wives cannot typify the church's present position, for the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, neither are they typical of the future position, for Christ will then appear in His glory. David was still a wanderer when he took them. They are the remnant, the few which followed Christ when here, and swelled to five thousand through Peter's preaching (Acts 4:1-37 :) and then, losing their special standing as "godly remnant," are merged in the new thing — the church of God, at that time declared, but again to appear as a remnant when the church is gone, and to pass through great tribulation, till they come, forth as the restored nation, 1:e., Michal brought back to her first husband.

Ahinoam was of Jezreel, a place early associated with the enemy (Judges 6:33); afterwards prominent for iniquity, being stained with the blood of Naboth, nor less marked by the judgment of wicked Jezebel. The prophet Hosea declares the gladness of the land in the millennial day; the blessings that come from Jehovah the source reach the utmost, even to Jezreel (see 2: 22). This seems to put Jezreel in the lowest place; but the blessing descends in the same way as the cry went up, and Jehovah and Jezreel are again connected. For His blessing will reach the limits of Israel. Ahinoam is not the figure of this fulness of blessing, but she and Abigail give the position of the remnant before the king reigns, and more than anticipate the joy and glory of the kingdom, inasmuch as they shared in his sufferings (see 1 Samuel 30:5). So the line of believers that runs through Israel share in the sufferings and rejection of their Messiah, though the same sufferings have a higher character, as of the church, and therefore higher glory awaits them, as awaits us all.

Hence the words of Abigail (1 Samuel 25:24-31) go beyond the thoughts of the remnant in the latter day. There is the deprecation of revenge, taking the iniquity upon herself, the blessedness of simply trusting in Jehovah, and of being bound up in the bundle of life. All this partakes of church character. Abigail shows the faith of those joined to the Lord before He reigns; the Jezreelitess the moral condition out of which they were taken. During this time Michal is given to another; the outward link between Messiah and Israel is broken, but only for a time. When the blessing from Jehovah reaches Jezreel, Michal — the separated wife — will be brought back (Hosea 2:19, etc.).

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Up to this point David has given us a glimpse of the path trodden by Messiah when He was presented to the Jew. And the remnant that then believed in Him, separated from the nation, sharing in His rejection, but to enjoy a more blessed position, were taken out of the natural position

of Israelitish remnant, and with believing Gentiles, after the cross, form one body, the church, where they that are nigh, and those who were far off, the middle wall of partition broken down, are made one "new man." This position of the godly ones of Israel — for God always maintained a testimony for Himself in Israel whether in the former or present dispensation — Abigail and Ahinoam represent. During the time that this body is forming by the Holy Ghost, Israel as a nation — Michal the first wife being separate from her husband — become Lo-ammi. The chapter that follows gives the trial of David's faith as a saint. For honoured as he was, he was but a man, and his faith must be tested as that of every other believer: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7). But, besides this proving of David's faith, is there not an analogy between his forsaking the land and making a home among the Philistines, and the professing church forsaking its true place, forgetting its standing and making for itself a home in the world, so as to avoid the consequence of the cross, hatred and persecution from the enemies of Christ? Many of the true children of God are carried away through false teaching, the fruit of unbelief in the word of God. God has kept for Himself a few faithful ones; but the mass of profession is mixed with the world, and rapidly sinking into Laodicean apathy and pride, notwithstanding the seeming zeal seen in the highest and lowest aspects of profession, which is comparable to the unhealthy, because feverish, energy of a sick man. As a whole the professing church is living contentedly in a kind of spiritual Ziklag, until God permits the enemy to overthrow it. Ziklag is burnt not by the Philistines — the world within the pale of profession — but by the Amalekites — the world outside profession. The Amalekites did not burn a city of the Philistines but the refuge which saints had made for themselves in the world. It is righteous judgment, but withal great mercy. For God will bring His people, those true in heart to the person of Christ, out of every false position. The church though broken will be compelled to return from their Ziklag to their true place, individually if not corporately. For us it is waiting for the Son from heaven. For David it was returning to the land of Judah.

David's failure in faith, and Saul's inability to withstand temptation, are the two things next before us. And we learn that not only is the natural man powerless against temptation, and therefore incapable of ruling well and presenting in his high vocation an image of the Great King, but even the saint fails, and in the first principles of trust in God. David's failure brought him into circumstances which well nigh proved fatal. It was only the intervention of God in grace, that opened the door for his escape from the dishonouring position in which lack of faith placed him. One aspect of God's dealing with him at this time is His mercy. Of course we may say, looking at God's purpose in him, that he must be delivered; but this in no ways lessens — nay, rather increases — his sin in going again to seek refuge among the Philistines. But this all the more exalts the compassion and grace of God. For his going over to Achish and settling down in the country of the Philistines, and pressing his service on the Philistine king when marching against Israel, was putting every possible hindrance and doing all he could, against his ever sitting upon the throne of Israel. Could he be the one chosen to be king? As a responsible man he forfeited all the privileges and honour of his anointing. But when did failure in responsibility ever turn aside the flow of God's grace to His saints, or bar the fulfilment of His purpose? God had spoken, and neither David's fear of Saul with its consequences, nor Saul's active opposition, could set aside His word. In Saul we see the natural man's attempt to forsake evil and his sure failure. There may be an appearance of having succeeded, and so long as no temptation assails him he may

maintain the appearance. But when the opportunity comes, the power of evil breaks down every barrier of good resolves and intentions, all which are found to be as tow touched with fire; and with increased impetus the undelivered slave of sin rushes into the same courses from which he seemed delivered. This is the history of many a soul, and it by no means proves the want of sincerity. Many a circumstance may happen to make a man review his past ways with shame and disgust: with such a feeling it is an easy matter to resolve to abandon them. A reformation that has no deeper root than the mere accidents of human life afford, or what man calls gratitude, cannot endure when the tempter and favourable opportunities combine. It may be the reproaching of conscience, for the natural man has a conscience which sometime will speak until it be seared as with a hot iron. In such cases there is no real sincerity; and if there were, sincerity is not power. It is simply self-delusion, and the man is the victim of his deceitful heart. This was the case with Saul. He recognised (ch. 24:) the kindness and forbearance of David; and it so touched him that he "lifted up his voice and wept." He is convinced that David will be king, and prays him to swear that he will not destroy his name out of his father's house. David gives the required pledge, and Saul returns home — doubtless with the thought that he would no more seek David's life. But Satan does not leave his captives alone. A little time may elapse, so that Saul's sense of gratitude and his good resolutions may evaporate, when he would be as ready as ever to follow the path in which Satan was leading him. His hatred was only smouldering till it was fanned into a flame as tierce as before. For here is very much more than Satan accomplishing the ruin of a soul. Saul was his tool in his enmity against Christ. Saul only saw David. Satan saw in him the type of Christ who is the Son of David. If Satan could only destroy David, where would be the Son and all the promises bound up in Him? not only the future blessing of Israel and of the earth, but the bruising of Satan himself, and wresting from him the world of Which through sin he had become the god and the prince? It is Satan's antagonism to Christ which alone fully accounts for the persistent and unnatural desire of Saul to slay his daughter's husband. It began with jealousy, but David's submissive conduct, so invariable, was quite sufficient to have removed all such feeling so unfounded (but therefore with deeper root), had that been all. Satanic wisdom discerned in the youthful slayer of Goliath the power of God, and the progenitor of Him who was to be the bruiser of his head, and the conqueror of Death and Hell. Therefore it was that Saul's jealousy ripened into Satan's hatred. And all through the scenes the real contest is between the opposing forces — if we may thus speak — the power of God on one side, and, on the other, the power of Satan. This opposition dates from the garden of Eden. To the serpent, God said, The seed of the woman should bruise his head. From that moment, Satan's constant aim was to destroy the woman's Seed, whenever He should appear, and if possible to prevent His appearing. To this end he made Cain a murderer. Eve thought he was the man; perhaps it was also Satan's thought. A mightier effort followed: he corrupted the whole race, and the deluge came. Satan did not calculate on the race being continued through Noah. Nor was there any clue given (save vaguely in "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem ") till long after to show in what line the promised seed would come, till Abram was called, and upon him Satan immediately fixed his eye. He essayed on three different occasions to swamp the separated line with the nations outside. Twice was Sarah exposed, first, in the house of Pharaoh (Genesis 12:14), then in the house of Abimelech (Genesis 20:1-18 :). His third attempt, for the same object, was with Rebecca (Genesis 26:1-35 :), only that God would not permit her to be taken into the Philistine's house. Isaac's sin was the same as Abraham's. If Satan succeeded in corrupting the old world, why not in corrupting also the chosen line? All this was to

prevent the coining of the true Seed.

Again, Satan knew that the line ran through Jacob; therefore he led Isaac to give the blessing — in intention — to Esau. The sad story of Dinah shows the hand of Satan for the same end. When Jacob's children were in Egypt, he instigated Pharaoh to decree the destruction of every male child, i.e. to destroy the race. Again, he sought the corruption of the chosen people when he brought the daughters of Moab into the camp (Numbers 25:1-18 :). David appears, and Satan quickly discerns that the promised Seed will come in this line. The sphere of his plotting is narrowed and his efforts are directed against this chosen man, and Saul is his willing instrument. All these are Satan's attempts to frustrate the purpose of God; for if he could prevent the advent of the promised Seed, he would remain undisputed master of the world. But neither man's sin, nor the saints' failure, nor Satan's opposition, can set aside or annul God's decree. From this point of view — God's purpose — there can be no doubt as to the issue. Satan may seem for a moment to drive the chosen man to the last extremity; and the chosen one himself may fail in faith, and in despair give up all. But this in the end only makes the interposition of God more pronounced and the discomfiture of Satan more complete.

Saul goes home, and apparently relinquishes all intention of pursuing David any more. Satan bides his time, and at the fitting moment finds means to re-awaken the slumbering enmity in Saul's heart. "And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gilead, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? Then Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph" (1 Samuel 26:1-2). Possibly he would never again have gone after David but for the Ziphites. Poor soul! no master of himself. Again he sets out with the same hate, the same purpose, and with the same select force of three thousand chosen men. But a deeper humiliation awaits him.

David does not forget his place in presence of Saul whom he constantly honoured as the anointed king. David says of himself, only "a flea"; that to pursue him is "as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains." What need of such an army as Saul had to seek David with his little band of at most six hundred men! So great means to attain so (apparently) small an end! How very determined the will of Saul against David, yea, against God! He who sits in the heavens has man in derision. He sends a deep sleep upon Saul and his army; and they are all in the power of David, whose reverence for the order of God alone stays his hand. But is there not also a touch of sarcasm in David's words, "The king of Israel is come out to seek a flea"? For the "flea" had been in the king of Israel's camp and had taken away his spear and the cruse of water; i.e. his means of warfare and the necessaries of life. In a word, Saul was powerless. What greater proof than this, that Saul was the "flea," and the power of God, the strength of Israel, with David? Did he think to come unawares upon David? David knew Saul better than Saul knew himself, and he "sent out spies" and understood that Saul was come in very deed. Appearances might seem fair at first, but David did not trust them, and he sent out spies; and soon proof was given that no confidence could be placed in Saul. And now the interposition of God is very plain. The sentinels who should have watched while the king slept are themselves asleep. God thus, as it were, prepared them for David's nocturnal visit, and led by the hand of God he in the boldness of faith goes straight to the sleeping king. In this moment of triumph his dependence upon God is tested and not found wanting. His follower advises the slaying of Saul. This would have been sin. He would not avenge himself. Saul might be a wicked man, but he was Jehovah's anointed, and David would not take

the matter in his own hand. "Jehovah liveth," he says, and that is enough for David. "Jehovah shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish." Would it not have been a continual reproach that he had slain the king while sleeping? Faith committed it to God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves." But how manifestly the craft of Satan is defeated! Whether Saul slew David, or David slew Saul, either way would have suited Satan's purpose, and have been a hindrance to the purpose of God. The object of David's visit to the camp was accomplished in taking the spear and the cruse of water; and proved unmistakably that a power above Saul was David's guide and preserver.

Saul wakes up to find a further proof of his folly and his impotence. He is compelled to make a confession with deeper shame. "I have sinned; return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day; behold, I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly." He would no more do David harm! Too late, he never again had the opportunity. His race of evil and enmity was run. The Philistines are gathering their armies for battle, and to bring ruin upon his house, a judgment which, if delayed, is sure, the fearful end of man's chosen king. As David had said, "he shall descend into battle and perish." The hour was come, the battle imminent. Visibly forsaken of God who answered him not, "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets," he thinks of Samuel and employs Satanic agency to bring him, as if Satan had control over departed spirits — a delusion not unknown in these days. But now, as then, the apparition of the departed spirit would terrify the cunning rogue far more than it would the poor dupe. In despair Saul seeks through the familiar spirit the answer God would not give. Samuel appears, far more to the terror of the witch than of Saul. To her, he was unexpected; Samuel was not her familiar spirit. He appears, not to give counsel, but to pronounce the king's doom. This is the end of the king whose beginning was so promising. The living prophet anointed him with oil, the dead prophet — but sent of God — pronounces his doom. He sought aid and counsel through an agency that he formerly sought to destroy. What will not despair bring a man to? Saul puts himself in the hands of Satan, for well he knew her source of power. Conscious of his inconsistency in seeking counsel of one whom a little before he would have put to death, he disguised himself, and would see her secretly. But the truth is brought out, and the king becomes an object of pity to the witch of Endor. Could he fall lower? And mark, that notwithstanding his former zeal to extirpate witchcraft, its practice still existed, and his immediate attendants knew it, and they hid it from the king. For when in his dire extremity he asks where a woman with a familiar spirit may be found, they are able at once to say, "Behold there is a woman who hath a familiar spirit at Endor." What an index is this to the condition of Israel!

There was a dark fear of his impending doom weighing down his soul. No doubt he wished to see Samuel; but the means he used were, none the less, enlisting the power of Satan to withstand the purpose of God. Conscience told him that God's judgment was near; and he would if possible turn it aside, not by repentance, but by the aid of Satan. This carries our thoughts onward to the day when the Beast will make war with the Lamb. The difference is that the future antagonist of Christ will not disguise himself; he will have no need to seek Satanic aid in the gloomy recesses of a witch's cave, under cover of the night; he is the bold and open enemy endowed with power and authority from the dragon. He is the only man — up to that time — ever clothed with power not from God; for the powers that are now are ordained of God. Saul and the Beast are alike in this, that they are personal antagonists to the Anointed of Jehovah, and also that both fall by special

judgment from God: the Beast, by the direct power of Christ when He appears; Saul, by the Philistines who are the executors of God's wrath.

What a scene of despair when the inhabitants forsook their cities and fled! All hope was gone; their king slain, and David in exile, their only prospect was continual bondage to the Philistine. What a judgment upon them when the Philistines came and dwelt in the cities that God gave to Israel! All that they could read in these outward signs of God's feeling was that He had departed from them; and the dying words of the wife of Phinehas would be remembered only to confirm the despair of the hour, "Ichabod, the glory is departed from Israel."

We have dwelt upon Saul ignominious end, not because it marks the downward cause of a soul always rebellious, and increasing in iniquity till he died by his own hand, but because the ruin that he brought upon Israel was a necessary preparation for the advent of David as the type of Messiah; foreshowing the still greater ruin and worse condition of Israel when Christ comes to reign over them. And from this point of view it is no question of individual salvation. Clearly Saul was a wicked man; and he was a wicked man possessing power and using it against God's anointed One. Like Pharaoh centuries before, he was raised up for the purpose that the power of God might be seen, that the flesh in the fairest form, with every advantage, could never be a channel of blessing, and least of all of the promised blessings of God. He was as those who having stumbled at the truth are appointed to a certain niche in the framework of the dispensations for the fulfilling of God's purposes of glory (1 Peter 2:8).

Another point is that when a king took the place of the link between God and the people and displacing the priest, the prosperity of the people depended upon him; and such a king, who can stand ever before God accepted and beloved, must be a man of God's own giving and preparing. Saul was a choice specimen of humanity and nothing more, till he became king, and then he was an enemy. David in type is the man accepted and beloved. In reality, and in substance, it is Christ the Man of God's right hand.

We have said that this ruin of Israel was as necessary for the coming kingdom of David, as the sufferings and sorrows of David himself. If the man must be disciplined to sit upon the throne, so must the people to rejoice in him. And as the world will be prepared for the kingdom of Christ by passing through tremendous judgment — the vials of His wrath poured out upon them who have rejected God's chosen king, so is Israel prepared for the kingdom of David by passing under a judgment heavier than any before. The triumph of the enemy however was very brief. It is measured by the rapid rise of David from the condition of an exile, first to be king over the house of Judah, and soon after of all Israel. It was just long enough to show that Israel had lost all power and was ruined, that their ruin was through and owing to the man of their own choice, the fruit of their rebellion against God, in wishing to have a king like the nations. No circumstances could be imagined affording stronger proof of this; and this misery of guilt is brought upon the people that the sovereign grace of God in raising them up might be gloriously manifest, and Israel raised to a higher position than before.

It is characteristic of God's ways at all times with those whom He is about to bless abundantly. The fruits of sin are allowed to ripen; then when all is apparently lost, God appears and gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. How astonishingly all this will be the experience of Israel when re-established in the land! David's

kingdom with all its renown is but a shadow of the future kingdom under Messiah, the Son of David. From every tongue shall be heard in praise to Him the words already prepared for them. "Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen and Amen." But where was David during this crisis in Israel's history?

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Dark was the day for Israel. The king, terrified by the doom pronounced upon him in the cave by the prophet, goes with its impress upon his brow into the battle, with despair in his heart and with a nerveless hand. A day whose last hour would behold him dead, and his sons with him; a day when the power of Israel would be broken, its armies dispersed, fear and dread upon all! Wondrous prelude to the glory and power of the coming king and the peaceful supremacy of his son. It was God's wise way of bringing in His chosen king and of preparing the kingdom, so that all Israel might acknowledge Him to be the source of all power and glory. But if the kingdom be thus prepared for David, the same God must also prepare David for the kingdom. The way to the throne is open: nothing now remains but for David to take possession of the crown that has just fallen from the head of Saul. Yea, God has something more to say, and has been saying ever since he went to Gath, before he wears the crown. The man called to occupy the throne of Israel, and to present to us in the wisdom of God an image of the circumstances which would usher in the day of the coming king, must be disciplined according to the requirements of the wisdom of God, and of his own need. And he had a deeper need than he had yet learned. Thus, while God is dealing with Israel and their rebellious king, David is in a foreign land, under the influences of the place, and sinks to the level of his surroundings. When hiding in the cave of Adullam or elsewhere from the fury of Saul, he never thought of joining in war against his own people, but, having chosen to dwell in Gath, he breathes the Philistines' spirit. If this is the time of a sad fall, it is likewise the time of grace. For here David was taught a lesson concerning himself which had laid bare his own personal unworthiness. Nor was the teaching of grace without discipline; yet was the discipline — the loss of all his possessions — the stepping stone to the restoration of his soul to renewed communion with God, where he could but learn that the recovery of wives and cattle then, as the possession of the throne afterwards, was the free gift by God. What lower depths could he fall into, anointed for the kingdom as he was, than to fight against Israel? Had such a thing been presented to him in his most trying times, he would doubtless have repudiated the thought and said as Hazeael said to Elisha, "But what, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" Some saints have to go down very low before they reach the depths of self. But what a mercy, when the lowest is reached, by grace leads them to abhor and judge as did Job. For then God appears in the power of restoring grace. It was degrading to feign madness before this same Achish. It was far worse than madness now to feign willingness (if it was pretence) to go up against Israel. David had to learn that he was in himself only a broken reed, and his call to the throne simply according to the grace and the purpose of God. Do we not learn from this that the honour God may put upon His saints cannot be taken invariably as the gauge of their faithfulness? The honour of being king of Israel was little compared with being a type of Christ both in the kingly dignity and in the previous suffering. Blessed as David was, his faithfulness did not rise to the level of this high honour. When God calls a saint to any special post of honour, It may be the honour of suffering for Christ's sake, He gives special grace to bear, and to meet the responsibilities of the place, and to walk worthily therein. But when did any earthen vessel fully respond to the grace it contained?

Let us note also that trust in God is not put to such a test when engaged in the activities of faith as when in comparatively quiet obscurity we have simply to wait, to stand still and see His salvation. When openly and actively withstanding the forces of Satan in the world, we are in danger of not duly estimating the enemy's power which it is unwise to forget or depreciate. On the other hand when it is only to endure without any energetic action, the danger is to overrate his power, or to forget the power of God. This latter condition, 1:e. patient endurance, is far more characteristic of Christian life than the former and more prominent one. God truly has His servants whom He places in the front rank to bear the shock of the enemy's onsets, and the brunt of the battle. But endurance, quiet patience under contempt and suffering, is more or less the common lot of all. The saint who may be used for the display of faith's energy is not thereby exempted from the common lot of suffering and endurance.

It not infrequently happens that the endurance of faith is tried immediately after the most wonderful deeds wrought through the power of God. The public act of faith may be brilliant and may excite the wonder of men; but God looks into the heart for the strength of faith, a place which the eye of man cannot reach. Perhaps no more remarkable instance of the collapse of faith than is given in David at this time. He had just won a grand moral victory over Saul; he heaped coals of fire upon his head. David's trust in God raises him above the hatred of the king, David is superior to his opportunity and the king humbles himself in his presence. What an impressive scene is before the whole army! Suddenly aroused from their slumbers, they hear David talking to the king. Why not rush to take him? Nay; the power that held them in deep sleep when David entered the camp holds them in check while David and his attendant standing on the hilltop challenge the general and taunt him with carelessness. Saul at the head of three thousand men owns himself conquered. Who is the hero here? Yet not by his own power: "through faith he wrought righteousness." Jehovah was on the side of David. Was there one in Saul's army that bowed in heart to the Jehovah of hosts?

Yet immediately after this the victor sinks into despondency and forgets God. He says in his heart, "I shall surely one day perish by the hand of Saul." The heart is the birthplace of unbelief; but also the place where God creates true faith; "if thou shalt believe in thine heart." He gives way to dishonouring fear; then in forgetfulness of God he looks about for a place of safety; and a sorrowful choice he makes! In his judgment the best; there was nothing better than to flee to the Philistines! The heart that distrusts God naturally turns to the world and inevitably makes the worst choice. Mark it well, dear reader, the evil began secretly in his heart, and ended in taking the position of an open enemy. When his heart first yielded to fear, there was no thought of fighting against Israel; but see the result! Is not the heart deceitful and desperately wicked? The chosen king is ready to fight against his own people. What solemn teaching is here for us! The antitypes of Saul and of the Philistines encompass us on all sides; to whom shall we flee for security? Let us jealously watch the issues of our own hearts.

David's victory and succeeding failure stand side by side with those of Elijah, who in the power of God and in faith so mightily triumphed over the prophets of Baal; and immediately after fled from a woman who threatened his life on account of that deed wherein he had so gloriously vindicated the name of Jehovah; and in his despondency he prayed for death. Not so great a sin as rushing into the arms of an enemy, but an equal want of faith. For David in effect says that the Philistine king is a better protector than God. Is not this the true character of his act, and therefore a great sin? Not

so heinous in man's eye as Uriah's matter but more dishonouring to God. The latter crime was falling through sudden temptation, but the fleeing to Achish was with deliberation. For after a seeming calculation of the best means to escape from Saul, he looks apparently at both sides of the question and comes to the conclusion that the best thing was to go to Achish the Philistine. Is this mere history? Is it not practical teaching for us in this day? In fleeing to Achish, David is no type of Christ; our thoughts turn to the Perfect One, but to see the contrast between Him and the man honoured to be the type. All through his life he was pre-eminently a vessel of grace but an earthen vessel, and the quality of the vessel appears. As a type he is carried through scenes according to the purpose of God, but as a man, a saint, his faith must be tested. Wonderful combination of foreshadowings of Christ and the walk of faith! But here, in this matter, it is failure, the last and the greatest in his life of exile. There was on earth but one perfect MAN; but He was not a mere earthen vessel, only made in men's likeness. He was a sinless humanity, not merely that He did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth, but His human nature was intrinsically holy. He was incapable of sin. God sent Gabriel to testify to Mary concerning the "holy thing" that it should be called the Son of God. God's delight in the sinless Man He declared at His baptism and repeated on the mount of transfiguration, when even the brightest of Old Testament lights vanish in presence of His supremacy and of the Father's infinite good pleasure in Him; and Jesus was left alone. There is nothing of which God is so jealous as the glory of the person of His Son. The person of the Lord has ever been a mark for the attacks of Satan, and of man instigated by his malice. The Pharisees at last head the list of blasphemers; but there have been some since their day who, with the additional facts of death and resurrection, have dishonoured His person, not with Pharisaic blasphemy but with errors equally fatal. An early attack upon Him was the denial of His true humanity, the Gnostic philosophy, which well nigh swamped the early church, asserting that His body was simply an appearance, a phantom. Then there was no real death, nor real resurrection! Thus the apostle (1 Corinthians 15:1-58 :) is a false witness and we are yet in our sins! If the Lord's body was a mere shadow, and therefore intangible, the foundation of salvation is gone, and, what is of far greater moment, the righteousness of God is not declared. But compare Luke 24:39, with 1 John 1:1-10 : "Handle me" says the risen Lord; "which we have looked upon and handled," says the glad disciple. This deadly and stupid heresy, even if it yet exist, is hidden away in the dark corners of Christendom; but the kindred blasphemy of denying His Godhead is shamelessly advanced in open day. The reader may call this a digression. Granted. But is there not a cause? In the present day a peculiar form of dishonouring the Lord is found with some who call themselves Christians. They do not oppose the Deity of the Lord, nor His humanity, but say that as man He was born under the curse! that it was only by prayer, by a holy life, and by His baptism in the Jordan, that He emerged from that condition! It is now asserted that He was — at one period of His life — a leper! In a word, all these really deny His Godhead and humanity. These antichrists admit the holiness of His life in word and deed, but affirm that He had a nature capable of falling!! I venture to say that a man with a nature liable to fall, and notwithstanding perfectly holy in word and deed, is an impossibility. But supposing it were possible, Jesus son of Mary might be a man without an equal, but how could He be God? Jesus is God the Word, the Son: not only was the fulness of Godhead pleased to dwell in Him, but also that "holy thing" which was born of Mary should be called the Son of God. Manhood in Him was united to His divine person. The apostle (Hebrews 10:33) exhorts those who were the companions of suffering saints, he commends them; the sufferers and their companions formed one company. As we should now express it, they were

in fellowship together. In like manner the companions of — in communion with — those who are tainted with this evil doctrine must share in their judgment. It is of no avail to repudiate the evil personally; the question is, Are you a companion of such P Brotherly love for godly brethren is the plea for such companionship. I deny real godliness and true divine love in any assembly where the truth of Christ's person is not the first, if not the only, ground of communion. If brotherly love (so called) is preferred to His honour, such brotherly love becomes sin. It is no less defiling to sit at the Lord's table in company with a fornicator, a drunkard, or a thief, than with a "companion" of such evil; it is even more a deadly affront to His person. To return to David. His unfaithfulness finds imitators in those who shirk the fight of faith and seek shelter where there is no trial of faith. Our faithful God always breaks in upon the quiet of an unfaithful saint, so that the staff upon which he leaned pierces his hand. Saints have attempted friendship with the world as well as sought its protection; yet this in no way modifies the enmity of the carnal mind against God, or of the world against the people of God. David's presence did not prevent Achish from making war with Israel. It may have been an incentive. But saints that have fallen into this position have even joined with the world in persecuting those who have remained faithful. David was ready to do this thing. The exigencies of his position into which he was entrapped through his fear of Saul, and from which no worldly wisdom could deliver him, demand that he should follow Achish. Was David sincere in his pleading to follow the king? Why not? He had forgotten God; to forget Israel was small in comparison. Having committed the greater sin, he would without any conscience easily fall into the less. The one is the natural consequence of the other. He had neither the power nor the will to free himself. But God was watching over him, and used the natural jealousy and not unreasonable fears of the Philistine lords to deliver David from his evil position. There is no recorded instance where the overruling power of God is more seen, accomplishing His own will both in object and manner, yet not interfering with the responsibility of the saint, or with the apparent freedom of man. It was impossible that David should be present in the battle now imminent either with Achish or with Saul. With the former he would be fighting against his own people; if with the latter, the Philistines could not have had the victory, for God would not permit the enemy to triumph over His chosen one. And if the Philistines had been defeated, where would have been God's righteous judgment upon Saul? What of the divine testimony that Saul was rejected of God? Israel would have been confirmed in their choice of Saul, and David still an outcast. The overruling hand of God is manifest. The hour was now come for Saul to go into battle and perish, and Israel that followed him must share in his judgment. This is the result of man desiring a king and rejecting God. No other result could be righteously. The special question at this juncture was between God and the rebellious king, and so David was kept aloof. But David's will and the human motive which led him into seeking shelter in Gath — the apparent reason why he was away — was not according to the mind of God Who knows how to make the unfaithfulness of man subserve His purpose.

What a wonderful drama has passed before us in which Saul and David are the two principal actors: such hatred in the one, and dutiful submission in the other, as leads one to ask — What does it all mean? For there is more than human hatred, though it has its seat in a human heart; and a loyal submission is exhibited not found in any other mere man. God Himself was behind the scenes; and every movement of the actors was controlled and shaped to carry out His purpose. It is the religious world's hatred of a rejected Christ that we see in Saul (who was a religious man); in David a picture (though faint) of a greater Sufferer to appear in due time.

17. 1887 289. In bringing these papers to a close let us take a glance at the establishment of the kingdom. And it can be but a glance, such as is afforded by the might of David and the splendour of Solomon, which are but shadows in comparison of the power and brightness of Messiah when He takes the kingdom. The fullest type necessarily falls short; He must be present before we can see His glory. Even as in the past, David may have felt the sorrow of being hunted by Saul and in the end driven to seek shelter among enemies, far more than any that were with him sharing his toils; but what were his sorrows compared to the sorrows of the Lord? And as His sorrows were deeper so will His glory be greater. But here we are met with the fact that when looking at David the type of the rejected Messiah, we had Messiah Himself before us in the Gospels, and so could read the type in the Antitype; for it is He Who throws light upon the type, not the type upon Him, and the contrasts stand out in sharper outline than the analogies. Indeed the closest analogy is never without proof that the image of the coming King was looked at through a defective medium; yet enough remained to His glory to call forth our praise. For it is Christ's life in the Gospels that throws a halo around the wanderings of David. In looking still at David now on the throne as type of Messiah, whose kingdom is not yet established in the earth, we have not its glorious reality whereby to judge of the type under David's reign. All that we know of the future kingdom of Christ must be gathered from the prophetic word, the lamp which we must use to read of David the King. We must wait for the advent of the kingdom to see the application and the importance of many things in David's reign, and also in Solomon's; for, as typifying the kingdom, David and Solomon must be considered as one; and indeed they are so presented historically, for Solomon was on the throne and crowned before David died. For not as a mere historical fact is it recorded, but to give one complete picture of Christ's kingdom on the earth, in one unbroken reign, David's death not interfering with its unity.

Though many a detail may be dark as to its typical application, the great truth is clearly read, that all enemies shall be destroyed, and that Messiah will begin to reign before peace is brought in; — that there will be in fact a David, and a Solomon aspect of His reign. In the history, the kingdom of David immediately succeeds the death of Saul, which involved the ruin of Israel. A greater ruin has now befallen Israel, and the kingdom of Christ is not yet established. There is nothing between Saul and David that points to the lapse of nearly nineteen centuries during which Israel remains ruined and scattered beyond the wit of man to say where. In this interval, unnoticed in type or prophecy, the hidden purpose of God is revealed, and the exhaustless wonders of grace made known in the church. The church was revealed only by its presence when the Holy Ghost was given at the day of Pentecost. Even when the risen Lord ascended from the mount of Olives, it was the kingdom that filled the mind of the disciples, and to the kingdom the answer of the two white-apparelled men alone refers. Not the least allusion do they make either to the calling or to the rapture of the church. Prophecy overlooks this long parenthesis, and therefore in the typical presentation of Christ as rejected, and then reigning in power, the one follows the other without a gap. The church of God is no part of the course of the ages which carries the idea of government either direct from God, as when He ruled in Israel, or when they were dispersed and government entrusted to the Gentile, where the intervention of God among men was by no means so marked as when Israel was publicly His people. Both Israel and the Gentile are now thrust aside — both having failed — to make room for the church; the times of the Gentiles still run on, but modified through the calling of the church. When the church is gone, God will resume the government of the world, in spite of the dragon and his slaves, and by judgment will prepare the earth for the advent

and reign of His Son, to Whom Jehovah has said, "Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool." Then He comes. Meanwhile He is waiting. The sufferings and the glory are in the prophetic word joined together. Grace to the lost, and going beyond all previous revelation has placed an interval between the sufferings and the kingdom glory, and has formed a sphere outside the limits of prophecy and above its range. "They are not of the world," said the Lord. This is true of us dispensationally, it ought to be equally true of us morally. We do not belong to the ages of the world, but are a separate people. Nor is there, in the history we are looking at, any foreshadowing of the judgments of which the prophetic word is full, and which will take place at the close of this present age after the church is caught up; that is, before His appearing. While these judgments are being poured out upon the earth, Christ is still hidden until He appears for the destruction of antichrist, "the king." There is nothing analogous to Christ's sitting at the right hand of Jehovah in the history of David, who with one step rises from the place of rejection to the throne. When Saul is removed, David immediately is presented to the nation; unless Saul be considered as a type of "the King," for then Christ begins to act in power. When He appears, it is not by one great victory that peace is brought to the earth. He rules in the midst of enemies till they are all subdued, and this is the characteristic of David's reign. As it is said, "Jehovah shall roar out of Zion." After "the king" is destroyed, there will yet remain nations to be subdued, and a rearrangement of them according to God. For the landmarks and divisions, which the pride of man and his lust of power have made, will be annulled, and the original divisions, as God divided the nations, will again appear (see Genesis 10:1-32 :). And by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood (ver. 32). The world is marked by families, and nations, and races, and in this day each is asserting itself according to its power; but the final settlement will only be when Christ reigns. The first effect of Christ taking His power will not, be peace. He will in fury tread down His enemies. This is the preliminary or David aspect of war, not the Solomon display of glory which is properly the millennium. It is not according to His purpose by one stupendous act to put down all authority and power — which of course He could do if He pleased — but during a certain limited period, after the sudden and instantaneous judgment of the beast and of the false prophet, and a little later of the Assyrian, to use Israel as His instrument in breaking to pieces the opposing Gentile power. But Messiah will Himself personally appear in the judgment of these three at least. The brightness of His presence, and the breath of His nostrils, slay the wicked, but these are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:20). He will also personally meet the king of the north, the Assyrian, whose doom overtakes him in the same terrible manner as it fell upon the western beast and upon antichrist. The Assyrian falls not by the sword of a mighty man, nor by the sword of a mean man, but by the voice of Jehovah shall he be beaten down. That is, his will not be the destruction which falls upon his armies whose bones Israel will be seven months in burying, but he shall be cast alive into Tophet. To an Israelite no more appropriate word could be used, or so significant of his end. Tophet is the place where the Israelites burned alive their children to the god Moloch; the word is closely associated with, and carries the idea of being burnt alive (2 Kings 23:10). Tophet was prepared for him and also for "the king." "The breath of Jehovah like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it" (see Isaiah 30:27-33; also Ezekiel 38:1-23 :, Ezekiel 39:1-29 ;; Zechariah 14:13).

Messiah rules in Zion before His kingdom is established over the whole earth, not as sitting upon His throne, but His power will be manifested, and will proceed from Zion as from a central point. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron" (Psalms 2:1-12 :). "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy

strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Psalms 110:1-7 :). His enemies shall be broken to pieces as a potter's vessel, but His people, "thy people," shall be a willing people. See also Psalms 118:6-16, which so clearly expresses the condition of the inhabitants of Jerusalem when the hosts of the king of the north are besieging the city. It is the introduction to the reign of peace by the noise of war, by the sword and the spear, not by the soft and persuasive voice of the gospel. The rebellious Jew with the Gentile share in that destruction. "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). This period answers in general to David's reign who was a man of war from his youth, and on that account was commanded to leave the building of the temple to his son. It will be when all Israel are gathered and all nations subdued, that Ezekiel's temple will be built, and the healing waters flow. When the heathen know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, and after they have borne their shame and are dwelling safely in their land, and Jehovah's word is given that He will no more hide His face from them, for that He has poured out His Spirit upon the house of Israel (Ezekiel 39:23-29), then comes the description of the temple, in which Jehovah will dwell, Whose 1 presence will be its glory. When Judah comes back in unbelief, they will build a temple, but the abomination of desolation will stand in it. Of the temple of Ezekiel, yea, of the whole city, its very name from that day shall be, "Jehovah is there."

David reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty three in Jerusalem, together forty years: — a number always used to express the sufficiency and completeness of that of which it is spoken. And Messiah's rule in the midst of enemies will be till all are put down. But how to divide the era of judgment, from the first seal to the last mighty act of vengeance upon the Assyrian, is not revealed. To diligent faith God will give intelligence; but any attempt to arrange them so as to make the events of David's reign, and the course of judgment in the future dovetail into each other, will inevitably result in mistakes. The light of Christ in His lowly path shines upon the previous life of David; the light of Christ's exaltation in the earth is not yet come. We have as yet as regards the kingdom only the lamp of prophecy. which though only a lamp, as compared with the Day-star, distinctly foretells a time when Christ will rule out of Zion before the millennium begins. When that time comes, Christ in glory will rise upon the world. The Day-star risen in our hearts now reveals our heavenly position in the coming kingdom and glory. But neither David nor Solomon points to the place grace has prepared for us.

It was the Philistine, Israel's most persistent and formidable enemy, who felt more than any other the weight of David's arm. Again and again were they smitten, and it was over them that David's mighty men won their renown. Only among them were the giants found. But all, great and small, pay homage and tribute to David, and to Solomon, for David's reign is blended with that of Solomon. The "David" character is not quite gone when Solomon begins to reign. David yet lives till after the last struggle of the enemy, as seen in the attempt of Adonijah to possess the kingdom, and with him are found Joab. the chief of the army, and Abiathar the priest, up to that moment head of the priesthood. But he is now thrust aside, according to the word spoken to Samuel long before, yet historically owing to his own act and deed; so marvellously does God blend man's responsibility with His own counsels. Zadok is called to anoint Solomon.

Adonijah said, "I will be king." Did he not know that Solomon was the chosen of Jehovah? (1 Chronicles 28:4-6). Here is wilful rebellion, and, considering him typically, he is an antagonist of Christ. It is said of "the king" that he shall do according to his will. Does Adonijah in any measure

present "the king" to our eye? We discern one or two of the same features in each, yet scarcely sufficient, taken with other circumstances, to say that Adonijah is a type of "the king." The similarity is that both do their own will, and that neither is an external enemy: they are both in Jerusalem. But there is this difficulty, that "the king" as Antichrist is destroyed immediately at the appearing. The conspiracy of Adonijah, Joab, and Abiathar is at the close of David's reign just before his death, 1:e., before Solomon, the man of rest reigns alone, and, as to time coincides rather with the judgment of the king of the north, who has the same mark of will upon him. It may be that the session of judgment closes with his being cast into Tophet. For at the time that Jehovah lays His rod upon him "in battles of shaking," there will be with Israel "tabrets and harps." The inhabitants of the unwall'd villages where they dwelt in peace, at that same time, "shall have a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept" (Isaiah 30:29, etc.). The Assyrian, looked at through his type, Antiochus Epiphanes, who is the king of the north in his day, does "according to his will" (Daniel 11:16). Was the Holy Spirit looking at the future Assyrian through Adonijah? At most it is but a faint shadow, for self-will is the common mark of all that oppose Christ. Adonijah is spared for a brief moment till a more subtle attempt is made against the authority of Solomon, which brings judgment, and Adonijah is slain. In these three men we see, in Adonijah the authority of the world, in Joab the executive power, in Abiathar the religious power, all combined against Christ. They are the representatives of the three great moral forces of the world. In the midst of their revelry the shouting of the people is heard; sudden fear seizes them, and destruction soon overtakes them. So it will be at the end. The next prominent event we notice is the building and dedication of the temple. The glory of Jehovah fills it. It is a picture of the millennium. Solomon's prayer looks onward to it, but takes up also the intervening time. He, as it were, counts upon the coming glory, and pleads for mercy in view of it; he sees the scattering of rebellious Israel. His prayer is a divine forecast of their history, couched withal in the language of supplication. Grace will restore the nation to the rule and glory of Christ. And even as it is grace, so it will not be limited to Israel, but the glory will be displayed to the world. The queen of Sheba — as representative of the nations — comes to learn the wisdom and see the glory of Solomon. And thus it will be when Christ reigns, not only King of Israel, but also King of kings and Lord of lords.

Moses said, "Show me Thy glory." To us as to him, our faces are covered with His hand till the glory passes by; then we as he, shall see the back parts. When the glory of the kingdom shines over the whole earth, we shall be able to trace as we cannot now the lines of purpose and glory, the responsibilities of man and the dispensational dealings of God with him, all converging upon Christ. God has been pleased to foreshadow the coming glory for Israel and blessing for the world. We adore though seeing dimly. The church of God has not to search amid types for her peculiar glory. It is summed up in this — with Christ; and like Christ; and for ever. R. Beacon.

S. Jesus Christ come in flesh

"Jesus Christ come in flesh "

1 John 4:2

It is probable that J.N.D.'s rendering of this verse is more exact, and a more adequate presentment of the original than the translation as it stands in the A.V. or the R.V. No doubt both the latter give the force substantially, though, as I shall endeavour to show, less forcibly than the Greek has it. For there can be no doubt that the stress is not so much on our Lord's coming per se, as on His coming in flesh. This is of supreme consequence, and the participial construction adopted by St. John charges the words with the profoundest meaning. For the all-important truth of the blessed Lord's true humanity was even then, thus early after His departure from the earth, being weakened and denied. And even still the enemy has subtilly sought to swamp this truth, though the more prominent error of today may be the denial of His deity. Either denial is fatal. Happy they who hold to both these cardinal truths without essaying to understand the inscrutable mystery of His Person.

Now here the apostle is insistent in pressing upon us that the incarnation was a most real, as also a most vital fact. It was essential that the Lord should so come, if the human race was to have a Saviour. It is true that our Lord might have come in some other way. The limitations that bind the race of Adam were not obligatory on Him. He had appeared of old oftentimes in angelic form, a subject to which we may presently return. We, of course, could not have come in any other way, as is somewhere forcibly remarked by the late Editor of the Bible Treasury. The Lord Jesus condescended to come in this way. And every spirit that owns Him thus come is of God.

"Jesus Christ come in flesh." Remark that nothing is here said of the atonement, or of any other capital truths. The apostles had none of what I must call the feverish anxiety that some excellent people betray to give all the truth in every discourse. Not so. There are times for insisting on special lines and aspects of the great circle of revelation. We have the profitable example of the apostle Paul, who fed the Corinthians with milk, not with meat, whilst to the Ephesians he could say, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:1).

"Jesus Christ come in flesh." It is striking to note that the form of the word for "come" in the original is that very expressive participle of which the apostle John is so fond, viz., the perfect. Again and again he uses it in this Epistle, notably at the beginning of it, e.g., "That which we have seen and heard." It has to do with the propounding of doctrine, a view confirmed by the fact that when historical retrospect is in question, the inspired writer uses the aorist. Most noticeable is the conjunction and contrast in 1 John 1:1-10 in the employment, surely neither accidentally nor indifferently, of both tenses in this sublime chapter. And how interesting to contrast the "We have seen and heard" (heorakomen kai akekoamen) of 1 John 1:1-10. with the "We saw and heard" (eidomen kai ekousamen) of Acts 4:20. The former is doctrinal, the latter testifies to the reality of

their historical experience. And one may note, too, the special emphasis on the pronoun. "We (hemeis) saw and heard." How beautiful, too, is the way in which these two passages, in Acts and in 1 John, corroborate one another. For, though Peter be linked with John here (that also a noteworthy fact), we have the latter holding the same language as a young man and very soon after the Ascension, as in that later day when, full of years, he wrote down under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that wonderful Epistle (1 John), which, in profundity of meaning and majestic calm, almost eclipses every other portion even of Holy Writ, always excepting his own Gospel.

"Jesus Christ come in flesh." As we have said, what is here asserted is the cardinal truth of the incarnation. But this also involves and carries with it all the rest. These concise statements are ever in the manner of St. John. He does not unfold and elaborate doctrine in the highly logical and systematic style of the apostle Paul. As another has said, we find in the Johannine writings not so much sequence of reasoning (though that also be surely there), but succession of contemplation. At least the latter is what most strikes the devout reader. Yet this apostle again and again contends for truths that are only rightly apprehended when held in concert with all the highly developed doctrines of Paul to which we have alluded. It were easy to give instances of similar statements, as profound as they are luminous, as comforting as they are searching, scattered through the pages of this most spiritual epistle. The apostle, as it were, gives them as so many marks, characteristics, cachets, if I may be allowed this rather mundane word, of the true believer as of every Christ-honouring spirit. The word of God, needless to say, would not have been complete without this special presentment of the truth, of which John was the chosen vehicle, and for which he was so admirably fitted by nature, life, age, and experience — the Holy Spirit, of course, dominating and purifying all. In him, as much as in Paul of Tarsus, is the fine saying of J.N.D. exemplified, viz., that while the same divine water flows through all the vessels that were the channels of revelation, that water takes the form of the vessel through which it flows.

"Jesus Christ come in flesh." He had come before in the semblance of flesh to many a favoured patriarch of old. In particular, as bearing specially on our present subject, we may recall the story detailed in Genesis 32:1-32. And this brings us to the name of God, which our blessed Lord came expressly to declare — "came in flesh" — to declare so that it should no longer be a secret.

And, though it be a digression from the main point of this little paper, yet the linking it on to what has gone before will not be arduous, and may be both comforting and edifying to the reader.

"Jesus Christ come in flesh." We go back then to that wonderful story, and will recollect how when Jacob set out to meet his deeply-wronged brother the essential worldliness of Esau, it is needless to say, was no justification of Jacob's deceitfulness he sent on flocks and herds in front to propitiate him, but now something transpired far beyond his calculations. For he was met by a mysterious visitant who assuredly was none other than the Son of God, afterwards incarnate, and Jacob asked Him His name. But not then was the name revealed. We may surely say, with reverence, that God's name, in its fulness of blessing and mercy, could not be revealed then. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to come in flesh. It was necessary for the gospel story to be written down "for our learning," for the word of God to be completed. Thus may we happily link together the former and the later oracles. Not to Jacob could the fulness of God's name be declared, although his blessing was not a slight one. Was he not a prince with God, and had he not prevailed? And we read, "He blessed him there." Like all the pictures of this wonderful book, there

is in it a perennial freshness, and I suppose no portion of the Old Testament is more attractive to the heart than these utterly veracious, because divinely-given, histories of the fathers of Israel.

"Jesus Christ come in flesh." Yes, it was necessary for the Son of God so to come, if we were to be blessed according to the high purposes of God. For so only could His name be declared by Him in whom all the fulness dwelt bodily (Colossians 2:9). For the name of God connotes all His attributes, His mercy and His judgment. And, if the gospel light is so much more vivid than that granted in the old dispensation, we may not wonder that the shadows are so much darker. Even in natural things, as we know, the brighter the light the darker the shadow, May the light that is in us be not darkness." R. B.

S. Jesus and the Resurrection.

Jesus and the Resurrection.

Acts 17:18.

"He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." That is to say, the apostle preached a person and a fact — a supreme Person and a supreme fact about Him. And he coupled the two together in a way that modern preachers sometimes fail to do, but which is characteristic of all the summaries of the apostolic discourses recorded in the Acts. Clearly God's way of putting things must be infinitely wise, and the order of the presentation of the truth by the first inspired preachers may well serve as a model to speakers of today.

Christianity then is a religion of facts, having a Divine Person, yet man, for their centre. Merely human religions give us theories, speculations, philosophies; sometimes ingenious, sometimes foolish, always vain and unsatisfactory. They can give nothing else; though they can darken wisdom by a bewildering maze of words. They may couple with the system its founder, or promoter; such serve only as distinguishing labels, so to speak, and affect in no degree the value of the religion or philosophy in question. But in Christianity how different! How impossible to separate Jesus from the truth that He proclaimed Himself to be. Hence when Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, he preached the central truth of the Bible, and the seal God had put on it.

Another point to note is that our Lord was preached unto the men of Athens by His most personal name — Jesus. In truth everything — all the glory of God, all the blessing of man — is summed up in that name. In the power of (en) that name every knee must bow, of cultivated Greek no less than of rude Scythian. It was useless for Paul's hearers to boast of their great men, of that long roll of poets and philosophers, of artists, and heroes. They were less than nothing when compared with One Who had lived obscurely in a remote corner of the great world-empire of that day, yet was the only Saviour and Lord of all. Such truth, no doubt, can hardly have been welcome to the fastidious taste of these Greeks; though as long as their curiosity was diverted, and the strange preacher seemed to be merely commending two new divinities to their notice (for in their ignorance they took the "Resurrection" for the name of a god, or rather goddess), they probably accorded him a ready, if somewhat languid, hearing. It was really refreshing to their blase minds to hear something so singular. For these Athenians were the product of a decadent civilisation, and like many of the present day, who, having abandoned the faith, are ready for any novelties, however dangerous or absurd; as in fact, like many today, their chief occupation was "to hear or to tell some new thing," something newer than the last (for this is the full force of the very expressive phrase in the Greek, *ti kainoteron*). But now they heard of what was novel indeed, yet God's sober and solemn truth, which would judge them in that appointed day, of which the apostle subsequently told them in his sermon on Areopagus. And so St. Paul preached unto them Jesus, the infinite and eternal Son of God. They of course were not unfamiliar with stories of gods becoming men; such fancies were the theme of many a classic tale, and formed the stock-in-trade of much of their poetical lore. But how different was this talk! Their gods had not seldom appeared in human form

for purposes, of which most even of them would have been ashamed. But God becoming man to die; God veiling His glory and manifesting His love; God in the Person of His Son, walking on this earth in stainless purity! Here was a new thing, which must have seemed strange to these philosophers, so proud of their country's wisdom and so scornful of others. Alas! but few received the truth, and, as has often been observed, the Lord had more people in dissolute Corinth than in intellectual Athens.

But, turning from those who were the immediate subjects of Paul's addresses at Athens, it is not difficult to perceive why the resurrection was singled out for presentation among other important facts in our Lord's life. For, as said above, it put the seal on all that had gone before, as necessarily presupposing the Saviour's death with all its weighty consequences. In fact once establish the truth of this stupendous fact, and everything else follows by implication. Nor indeed is there a fact in history so well attested. We know how a learned divine, who flourished earlier in the century, showed that there was better evidence, on merely human grounds, for the truths of the gospel than for most of the readily accredited facts of secular history; and that the story of so recent a celebrity as Napoleon I. might be better doubted, if the same methods of criticism were employed as men bring to bear on the sacred history. No doubt the believer in Christ has far higher grounds of trust than the soundest of critical canons. He has the witness of the Holy Spirit. No syllogism, can persuade one who sees the light, that he does not see it. That which makes manifest is light. But in fact all is wonderfully bound up together the wonderful works, as one has said, and the wonderful words can only have proceeded from the wonderful Person. Was not His very name of "Wonderful" predicted of old? And how blessed that it is a Person Who is preached: so emphatically is this the case that scripture never says, "Whosoever believeth in the atonement shall be saved," though it is by Christ's "death" alone that any are saved. It is "whoso believeth in the Son." For to acknowledge and have the Son is to have the Father also. And he who believes in His person will believe also in His work. This is in short to believe in "Jesus and the resurrection." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." R. B.

S. Joh_16:28

John 16:28

Before looking at this verse as a whole, I would briefly point out the distinctive force of three Greek prepositions, meaning "from" in a general way, and occurring frequently in this Gospel in connection with statements by our Lord Himself as to His divine glory before the incarnation. Such statements are found in chaps. 8, 13, 16 and 17. The Greek words referred to are apo, ek, and para. The first means "away from," the second "out of," and the third, "from beside." Also the first implies separation or distance, the second points to Christ's identity of essence with the Father, while the third puts in strong relief the temporary break in His session by the side of the Father in heaven. Of course the Lord never ceased to be "the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). Both statements are divinely true. It is only when they are superficially or unspiritually viewed that there may seem to be antagonism in the various aspects of divine truth. Moreover, all the coloured rays, to put it figuratively, blend in one complete beam of white light. But we shall now see which of the three prepositions are used in the verse before us.

I follow the text approved by Bishop Westcott, whose remarks in loco are as instructive as they are luminous. In the previous verse (27) the Lord had said that He came forth from (para) God or the Father, as Westcott gives the text. In ver. 28 Christ adds, "I came out from (ek) the Father." If this reading be correct, the force undoubtedly is that not only did our Lord, in becoming flesh, temporarily vacate His seat of coequal honour by the Father's side, but would impress on the disciples the fact that in essence He was identical with the Father. It would almost seem that the disciples, though expressing themselves as grateful for the plainness of their Master's speech, hardly rose to any realisation of the heights from which He had descended. This is perhaps indicated by their use of the word apo in verse 30, which, as we have said, looks simply at the separation involved in the incarnation, and might be used, one may venture to say, in regard to a merely angelic visitant to this earth.

But, whether indicated by the preposition apo or not, we know that not till after the resurrection had the apostles a due conception of the incomparable dignity of the One who had tarried with them. Then at length they knew likewise that "he that descended was the same also that ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10). But now they simply say, "We believe that thou earnest forth from (apo) God." Thus all three little words are used, if not in the text, at any rate in the context. Truly such diversity is not without design. The Evangelist was not a mere lover of varying phrase like our King James I. This must suffice for what I hope may not be considered too microscopic a scrutiny for the ordinary reader. Now for the verse itself.

Truly nothing more majestic can be found even in this Gospel than the words we are seeking to consider. They are, as one has said, a complete summary of our Lord's mission. Note how the Saviour's declaration is bounded by the words "the Father." They are the poles on which it is not fanciful to say the entire statement turns. We may read it a thousand times, and yet merely touch the fringe of its profound significance. Yet will it become growingly luminous as the Holy Spirit

takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. To such verses as these it is said that devout souls have been known to shut themselves up, closing their ears for a time to all other sayings of the Bible, except of the Lord Himself, if so be they might more adequately drink in something of their inexhaustible fulness. And whatever may be thought of such exclusive heed, when listening so attentively to the Master's voice, the discordant words of men, ay, sometimes of saints, will be less audible. Moreover, to return to a figure used above, the cloven rays are inseparable, if momentarily divided — in short, all the truth hangs together, and one aspect calls up another. The disciples then thank the Lord for the plainness of His declaration, and that He no longer spoke in parables. In fact, the Lord spoke as they could bear it, as He still speaks to us through His word. But by way of contrast with the clearness of revealed truth I would quote the language of an illustrious poet of the Victorian period — and I quote it because the words came to my mind the other day in reading our verse — who, in describing the passing of his mythical hero, says, "From the great deep to the great deep he goes" — words not deficient in majesty, but, spite of their large impressiveness, vague and indefinite. Probably they are intentionally so; for high poetry loves the element of mystery and universality. Often indeed such language conveys a sense of immensity and infinity, nor would it be fair to pin down the poet to a denial of the faith because of this line in the Arthurian idyll. Yet it is by way of contrast I quote the line, as said above, and to mark how its shadowy vagueness differs from the lucid words, like clear shining after rain, of the inspired page. There is definiteness, needless to say, in all Scripture, for it is the Holy Ghost who speaks; and what He says about the Son must be definite indeed. And so, as the Lord came forth from the Father, He goes to the Father. The circle is complete. But it is not only the prepositions that are noteworthy in this verse; the verbs are equally striking. "I leave," "I am come," "I go." Note the difference of tense. The force is this. Though the Lord was about to leave the world and go to the Father, yet the words, "I am come" imply that the world could not be, after the advent, the same as it was before. The statement, "I am come" implies abiding consequences; indeed it is only one word in the original Greek, the tense used being that which invariably and most emphatically, and in a way beyond the powers of English, signifies present and perpetual result. It undoubtedly points to responsibility on the part of men for what they had seen and heard; also, too often but superficially, when there was not hatred and antagonism. Again, the word "I leave" (*aphiemi*) has the undoubted force of "leaving a thing to itself, of withdrawing a controlling power, exercised before" (Westcott), and is seen strikingly in the fourth chapter of this Gospel, where we read, in ver. 3, "Jesus left (*apheke*) Judaea." I do not say how far we should press this latent meaning in the Greek term, but it is discernible by every scholar, and felt to be just by every spiritual mind conversant with the story. Lastly, the word for "I go" (*poreuomai*) carries with it the sense of proceeding solemnly, deliberately, and steadfastly to a destined goal.

I have spoken of the definiteness of Scripture in contrast with the vagueness of man's surmises as to things beyond the natural sphere. Here human ideas must be vague; nay, they are not seldom of that character even in human science when men attempt to pierce behind phenomena into the causes that produce them. But it may be granted that science in other respects is often marvellously definite, and admirable for the affairs of this life. Nay, so definite is it, that a distinguished English R.C. has very forcibly pointed out the difference between the definiteness loved by scientific men and the haziness which they, and alas! not a few so-called theologians affect when speaking of the Bible. But I had better give, as a penultimate paragraph, Faber's thoughts in his own eloquent words: —

"In our own times it is the fashion of men to develop, as they phrase it, the human features in Christ. They talk, in the empty, pedantic grandiloquence of the day, of exhibiting and producing the human element in Jesus. Thus to an unbelieving people religion has neither facts nor doctrine in the strict sense of those words, but only symbols and views. In astronomy men delight in making the dubious nebula resolve itself into the lucid separateness of individual stars; but in theology they reverse this process. Thus they are fain to superinduce vagueness over what has once been clear, so as to make theology a shapeless nebular light, about which they can theorise and conjecture as they please, finding in its huge spiral convolutions or the lineaments of its rugged edges such fantastic likenesses as made the men of old give their names to the constellations. Now whence this love of vagueness in the matter of religion, joined with a craving for definiteness in all other departments of human knowledge, but from a desire to evade the yoke of faith without the inconvenient boldness of publicly rejecting it."

Such is the remarkable language of a distinguished divine, who, I believe, left the Church of England for that of Rome, and extracted from a work called "Bethlehem." But it is not so much his righteous denunciation that one desires to be uppermost in the mind as these words of our Lord Himself in the 28th verse of St. John's Gospel — words full of sublimity, and uttered with serene calm just before He suffered. R.B.

S. Joh_16:28.

John 16:28.

While scripture as a whole forms a complete circle of truth, a single verse may present, as it were, a "perfect round." Notably is it so with the passage under consideration.

After commending His disciples for having believed that He came forth from beside (para) God, or the Father, as some give it, our Lord enlarges the statement and utters the wondrous words, "I came out (ek) from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." The whole of the Saviour's work on earth is thus divinely summarised, and the wheel, if I may be permitted the expression, comes full circle. Let us note one or two points of contrast. There is, to begin with, the well-known antithesis of the Father and the world, not less absolute and vivid than that of the Son and the devil, the Holy Spirit and the flesh. The Lord says, "I leave (aphiemi) the world, a word that certainly suggests the abandoning of that which had so utterly failed to appreciate Him. So in John 14:19, the Lord says, "The world seeth me no more."

Next, we have the identity of essence of the Father and the Son in the expression "out of the Father" (ek tou Patros) in marked contrast with the para tou Patros or para tou Theou of the previous verse. This last, of course, implies the session of the Son at God's right hand, to which He returns. "I go to the Father" (pros ton Patera). Again, the tense (exelthon) employed to describe where our Lord came from, denotes the act of coming forth, while in the statement, "I have come" ('elelutha) abiding results are as clearly thrown into strong relief. The Lord has come into this world, and so the world can never be as if He had not come. Momentous are the consequences for believer and unbeliever. And, lastly, we have in "I go" (poreuomai) a word suggestive of solemn, ordered, and stately progress back to the Father. R.B.

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1912 132 It has been said of some that they wrought, of others that they wrote or spoke better than they knew. Doubtless even Abraham only vaguely entered into the far-reaching, mysterious import of the words with which he calmed the anxiety of Isaac with regard to a sacrificial lamb. God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8).

How these words have echoed down the ages, and what a striking exemplification we have here of the admirable saying of St. Augustine that the Old Testament enfolds what the New unfolds! So do nicely adjusted mirrors with their opposing beams materially enhance each other's radiance.

Next, we may note the remarkable way in which the Patriarch enters into God's side of the question. "God will provide himself a lamb. So Simeon, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Sometimes we think too exclusively of our salvation, though doubtless the sinner must begin with the sin-offering. But God's portion, so to speak, must come first, as we learn in the opening of Leviticus. And in beautiful accord are these worts of Abraham. R.B.

1 John 2:6

1912 192 "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." The italicised pronoun is in the original Greek a word of vivid force. The English reader naturally is unaware of any special emphasis. But it is there, and that in a marked degree. Several times indeed St. John uses it in this Epistle in reference to our Lord. And it has been beautifully observed by the late Archbishop Alexander that the thought of his Lord, and of the perfect life which he himself had portrayed in the Fourth Gospel, the scroll of which, may be, was beside him as he wrote, half hushes the apostle's voice, and so instead of mentioning the revered name, which all who loved it would easily supply, he consequently merely says "that One" (ekeinos), that great, that adorable One. This comment is as just and well-warranted as it is exquisitely beautiful.

"He that says he abides in him." Have we not here in brief the concentrated doctrine of John 15:1-7 And then the tense in which the apostle refers to the Saviour's walk sums it all up, as it were. It is the aorist (periepatese), and presents that spotless life as a perfect whole. Contrariwise, and most appropriately, in the admonition to the professor he enforces the necessity of ever walking as He walked. In short it is the present infinitive, peripatein.

What endless beauties, "lights and perfections "(may one not say?) are to be found by the reverent student of the holy word! R.B.

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1912 192 In Enoch translated to heaven before the deluge, and in Noah preserved through it, we have typically the rapture to heaven of the church previous to the Apocalyptic judgments through which a people is preserved for the earth.

"Bearing Twelve Fruits"

Revelation 22:2

1913 352 Although the precise force of the original be doubtful, 1:e., whether we should interpret the words that literally signify "bearing twelve fruits," as meaning merely fresh fruits, or, as we would fain take it, if not too precarious a conclusion, twelve manner of fruits, as the Authorised Version gives it, in either case a wonderful richness of Divine blessing is promised for the millennial day. Undoubtedly there will be perennial freshness, but it would be only in keeping with what we know, each in our measure, of God's lavish largess, may we say, to His children, if the words (poioun karpous dodeka) point to a full circle, as it were — a most opulent variety in the spiritual food that will be administered on the renovated earth. And, if so, or, rather, since it is so, how much greater will be the fulness of fruition in the heavenly scene! Truly, as one has said, it will be, "Taste after taste, upheld with kindlier change." But indeed the very fact of the almost bewildering variety of flower and fruit, with which the goodness of Providence has blest even this transitory scene of human life, points to at least as great bounty for the millennium, and, as we have said, how much more for the consummation of that which is heavenly. R.B.

S. John the Baptist.

John the Baptist.

It is evident that John the Baptist holds a unique place among the outstanding servants of God of whom we read in the Bible; there was no greater born of women. So says the unerring voice of our Lord; but also the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Clearly not because such a one is in himself greater than that strenuous missionary, but because of the wonderful position that grace was about to confer upon the simplest believer who has part in the "kingdom of heaven," and of all therein involved. But John was great in his individual position, as were Abraham and Joseph, Moses and Elijah. In short the Baptist was the link between Judaism and Christianity. He was also (and this was a still higher distinction, though bound up with the former one) the Forerunner of the Messiah, His Messenger, as he is styled in Malachi, and duly appeared in Judaea to herald Him to whom all the prophets had borne witness, and whose shoes' latchet John says he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose. This, we know, was the office of the humblest slave. Such was the reverence paid by the Baptist to the Lord Jesus. Whatever the grace shown us (and faith loves to appropriate in proportion to its vigour), still we can never be too reverent. An intelligent appreciation of Christian liberty is not more becoming than the humility that would veil the face and the feet (Isaiah 6:1-13).

Now this reverential attitude on the part of John the Baptist was displayed on the occasion of the Lord's baptism, when He, in lowly grace and desiring to fulfil all righteousness, took His place with the faithful remnant, and submitted to be baptised by His servant. It was indeed natural for the latter to demur, nor did such diffidence in the least indicate a weak character. There is no necessary connection between reverence and weakness, any more than there is between weakness and affection. Rather is it the other way. At any rate John was habitually stern, as the burden of his mission was a vehement call to repentance. No doubt he did not then enter very clearly into what lay before his Master, spite of many a pointed prediction and pathetic forecast in psalm and prophecy. It was his to warn solemnly of coming judgment as he told of Him Whose fan was in His hand, and Who would thoroughly purge His floor, burning up the chaff with fire unquenchable. Yet the same John was the first to point to the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. This is in keeping with what we often find in Scripture, viz. the union of opposites. It was one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues that showed to another John the Holy City.

Thus, although the general purport of his message was judgment, the Baptist bore striking and comprehensive testimony to grace, and to the Saviour's work. Afterwards, it is true, he was fain in a moment of dejection to wonder whether after all Jesus was He that should come, or whether another was to be looked for. Some expositors, we know, anxious for the credit of this most honoured servant of Christ, have explained his question as asked on behalf of others rather than his own. But such carefulness is unnecessary. One only was perfect, who always said and did the right thing and He was more than man, though most truly man. At the same time we need not

wonder if John was depressed. Think of the gloom of his surroundings in Herod's prison. Thence it was that he sent two of his disciples to our Lord to prefer the question alluded to above. But earlier how nobly the same John had answered those who told him that all were flocking to Jesus. Did they think it would fret his spirit? At least they seemed not to understand this desertion on the part of his disciples. Probably there was honest perplexity in their minds. So John tells them that far from feeling slighted, he was glad, and his joy was thereby made full. He had told them he was not the Christ, and he gladly retires that the Christ may be all. What if he had to decrease day by day, while Jesus increased? This was but the heightening of his joy. He was the friend of the Bridegroom, and he rejoiced greatly to hear the Bridegroom's voice, not to hear his own. What a lesson for us! Still the Lord deigns to speak through the faltering lips of His servants. R.B.

S. Luk_12:50 and Joh_19:30

Luke 12:50 and John 19:30

There is a very striking link between these two passages which is disguised, as far as I know, in all English versions at any rate. Not but what the Greek is forcibly and most correctly translated, whether by the word "accomplished" in Luke, or "finished" in John. But the fact is that the same word, though in different tenses, is used by both Evangelists. Hence it seems to me, that if we rendered the sublime word in John 19:1-42 (for it is only one in the original), "It is accomplished," instead of "It is finished," we should gain appreciably thereby. The Lord shrank from being "made sin" — that was, may we not reverently say, the bitterest ingredient in His cup of suffering, that and the consequent hiding of God's face? But there were other ingredients in that awful cup, and our Lord, in His perfect humanity, could not but be straitened to the utmost. "How am I straitened!" He says. At length, on Calvary, comes the triumphant cry, "It is accomplished." But indeed the link is but imperfectly established unless we note the force of the change of tense alluded to above. That in the verse in Luke is the aorist, and the emphasis is on the transaction, as taking place at, and in, a definite time. In the Johannine verse it is the perfect, and as all scholars know, the force is "the work abides accomplished," its consequences are everlasting. Such is the indubitable force of these two passages. There is no precision like that of the Holy Scriptures. R.B.

"It is the greatest of all comforts to know that God did thus come down and become a man — reveal Himself to us so near us. I know God in knowing Christ, find Him grace and love, and cannot in any other way know Himself,"

S. Mar_9:15; Mar_10:32.

Mark 9:15; Mark 10:32. The Gospel of Mark abounds in vivid touches. He is the most graphic and pictorial of the four Evangelists. And, though it is well to bear in mind that style per se is a very minor thing, at any rate when compared with the truth presented, yet the Spirit of God knows how to make use of natural gifts to promote the ends that He, as the real author of "every scripture" has in view. It is but an exemplification of the general principle, one that applies, too, to lowlier departments of Christian service than the writing of inspired books, that gifts are given "according to the several ability" of the recipients, as we learn from Matthew 25:15. Thus, as one has said, the same divine water flows through all the vessels, but it takes the form of the one through which it happens to be flowing. So does the Lord deign to acknowledge the mental endowments of His servants. For this is abundantly seen in a John, a Paul, and a Peter, pre-eminent among the apostles, as here in this most precious Gospel, which portrays our blessed Lord in His servant-character, though all the time He is seen also as the wonder-working Son of God; and that by the pen of one who had once drawn back from the work, but was subsequently deemed "useful for ministering," as well as in more exalted ways.

Now, among all the vivid touches referred to as so characteristic of St. Mark, none are more striking than those in the verses that head this paper. Let us turn to the passages, and first to Mark 9:1-50. The Lord had just come down from the holy mount, and it would seem, on comparing the account in Mark with those in the other Synoptists, that the Saviour's aid was sorely needed in view of an aggravated case of possession. This apparently had caused the collection of the crowd. Then, when Christ appeared, they were at once struck with amazement, and so powerfully affected that they ran to Him and saluted Him. It is clear there must have been something unusual in the Saviour's appearance. For while the wonderful glory of His person must always have been discernible to faith, and a divine brightness in His glance in no wise conflicting with the concomitant of a sorrow-marred visage a divine brightness, certainly not a nimbus, as Jerome intimates by his "something starry," and which painters love to depict yet the gay and the thoughtless, the busy and the engrossed passed Him by as having "no beauty that they should desire Him." But at this moment all is changed. The multitude is eager to greet Him. Doubtless the glory that had been so dazzling on the Mount of Transfiguration had not wholly faded; and, while it lingered, there was that which could not but attract the wonder and homage of men. It is the more noticeable as being in marked contrast with the case of Moses when he descended from Mount Sinai with the tables of stone, and that, too, not the first time, but the second, when grace was somewhat mingled with law. But law prevailed — stern, majestic, and inexorable — and we read the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh Him." Truly there is one splendour, one glory, of law, another of grace. I do not enter now into another interesting point, viz., the fact, emphasised by St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 that the old dispensation was merely visited by glory (shall I say?), whereas the new is established in glory. In other words the one, that of law, was rather a paradox, the other, of grace an enigma. The point to emphasise now is that the brightness connected with law alarms, while that of grace attracts. Yet only three had been permitted to gaze on its full

radiance. Now not apostles only, but the humblest believers, are privileged to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The second passage, in Mark 10:1-52, is not less vivid, but how different? True, that on Mount Hermon (for the weightiest opinion is in favour of this more northerly hill, lofty and apart, which Mount Tabor in no sense was), as we read in Luke, the subject of converse had been His decease, His "exodus which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (chap. 9). But now the time was drawing very near, the shadows were deepening, and the Lord was actually on the road. And He walks before the disciples, who instinctively fell behind, awestruck, and, we read, "as they followed they were amazed." They, like Bartimaeus, "followed Jesus in the way," now emphatically the way of the cross; truly the way of light ultimately, but meanwhile of awful horror and the "power of darkness." A sad hour for the disciples, too, so slow to understand what lay before their Master, though before this He had apprised them of it. But they had not heeded. So again, the Lord tells them of what was before Himself. He had a baptism to be baptized with, as we read in Luke 12:50, and, He added, "how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" It is well to note the word, for it is the same, with difference of mood and tense only, as is rendered "It is finished" (one word only in the Greek) in St. John an altogether unexceptionable translation, of course. But if we say, "It is accomplished" an interesting link is established. For, while no doubt what I may call the doctrinal and more theological significance is paramount in that triumphant cry of the dying Redeemer, yet may we not reverently think of the infinite relief most blessed, most longed for, with which the divine Sufferer, who had been so straitened, said, "It is accomplished"? It may be remarked, before passing on, that in the passage from Luke, already referred to, about the Lord's exodus, the word for "accomplished" is one that means to fulfil (pleroun). But in the verse, "The things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22:37), the word for "end" is telos in short, from the same root as the verb rendered "accomplished" in Luke 12:1-59. and John 19:1-42.

We may also observe that the word meaning "amazed" in Mark 9:1-50 is somewhat stronger in force than what is substantially the same word in chapter 10, and is rightly given "greatly amazed." It is the same word in the last chapter, where we read of the women being "affrighted" in the A.V. But the R.V., as in so many instances of this kind, gives the stricter rendering "amazed." In fact, no English word could express better the very forcible original, being itself most forcible. To one more passage I may allude, and this, if possible, even more solemn than in Mark 10:1-52, where it is said — another most striking instance of this Evangelist's vivid description — "He began to be sore amazed and very heavy" ekthambeisthai kai ademonein; this in Mark 14:33. The latter verb is rendered "sore troubled" in the R.V., and this, too, is closer to the original. The word ademonein is what may rightly be called a pathetic word, and, according to a very possible derivation, denotes the homeless feeling of one who is away from country and friends. Hence the employment of it accords well by reason of its energy with what we have been endeavouring to show is so characteristic of Mark. Yet it should be noted that it is found in the parallel passage in Matthew (Matthew 26:37), but only once more in the New Testament, viz., Php 2:26, of Epaphroditus. Needless to say, the word is charged in the Gospels with a quite unique intensity of meaning: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." In these two passages, taken thus by themselves, we have the reverse of the usual order, not the sufferings first, "and the glories that should follow," but first a most interesting incident bearing on the coming glory, a side-light, so to speak, or rather, we may say — comparing the Gospels as a whole to some colossal architecture majestic and sublime — a bit of exquisite tracery; in short, of fine carving, as one has called it,

showing that in every detail there is the infinite perfection that it is only natural to expect in the records God has given us of His Son. And, as of the first passage in chapter 9, so in the next may we speak of the graphic portraiture of the divine Lord, followed by His trembling disciples, and stedfastly setting His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). R.B.

S. Mat_11:28.

Matthew 11:28.

These are not the words of a mere man, but rather of One, Who, however lowly, always spoke as befitted Him, Who is both God and man. They are in short the words of a divine Person speaking with divine authority. There are no words like them save His own, search where we will in the records of antiquity. And it is needless to say that the same may be asserted of the sayings of all moderns. No doubt we are in less danger of overestimating those who have lived near our own time, with whose foibles too we are perhaps somewhat acquainted. Such do not loom large to the imagination through the mists of time. But for all their detachment from our familiar scrutiny, and our consequent tendency to put the very highest value on their words, no statements of the great men of old can match, nay, even approach, the divine definiteness, the calm majesty, of our Saviour's utterances. It is not that poets and philosophers, particularly the poets, did not say wise and true things sometimes; but obviously their whole attitude was different. Their language was speculative, tentative, and unauthoritative, whenever it went beyond a doubtless often eloquent lamentation over man's impotence.

Such were not our blessed Lord's words. Nay, while it is undoubtedly true that the writings of a Paul or a Peter or a John are, as parts of scripture and inspired by the Holy Ghost, equally authoritative, at the same time every believer must feel the peculiar charm that attaches to the words of our Lord, even over the rest of the Bible. One might add too that the peculiar solemnity of His warnings must be similarly felt. In truth, whether it be words of gracious entreaty or of solemn warning, all is, so to speak, "raised to the highest power," if one may be permitted a mathematical expression. "Never man spake like this man." Hence the exceeding perplexity of such as cannot but own the majesty of our Lord's words, but yet refuse to bow to Him as God manifest in the flesh. Hence the appellation of "Enigma of the ages" that some thinker has given to Him. No enigma is He to those that believe, that acknowledge Him to be "the true God and eternal life." Rather is it an enigma that men should hear such words, should be told of such a Saviour, and not bow to Him. Truly life itself is an enigma apart from Him. He alone unlocks the mystery of what a great poet called "this unintelligible world." He proves Himself, as one as said, the true key because it fits every ward of the lock. He also lights up what were otherwise so dark, and "makes life a lucid story."

Now nowhere are our Lord's words loftier than in this very verse. He holds language that no mere man might dare adopt. I am aware that an able writer, recently deceased, whittled down the words to mean a mere receipt for taking life calmly — as if Christ had said, "Take life as I do; do not worry; do not resent circumstances." No doubt all this will result practically in proportion as the Christian follows his Master, and takes His yoke upon him. But it is absurd as well as profane so to limit the meaning of this sublime appeal. Nay, it is a divine call as serious as it is gracious and blessed: blessed for him, who accepts; most serious for such as refuse. Remark that we have not here so much the divine Mediator. Indeed that all-important function of the Lord Jesus, so infinitely

august, and the basis of all, is not the special point; but our Lord bids the weary and heavy-laden to come to Himself. "Come unto Me." For to come to Him was to come to God. The whole meaning is there. And so He goes on, "And I will give you rest." There is a special emphasis on the "I," impossible so to give in English save by the living voice, but which by a simple device of language, familiar to every scholar, is apparent in the Greek original. There is the same stress, eight times, I think, repeated, in the well-known "Sermon on the mount," where the Lord contrasts the limited spirituality of the Mosaic dispensation with His, with God's, uncompromising holiness. The details of the gospel are not here of course. Cavillers, alas! have not been slow in trying to represent apostolic doctrine as an after-thought, and as not in the mind of Christ. Never was there a greater mistake or a more serious one. The answer is simple. I give it in the words of an able divine, "Christ did not come so much to preach the gospel; He came that there might be a gospel to preach." R. B.

S. No man knoweth the Son but the Father

"No man knoweth the Son but the Father"

Matthew 11:27.

1908 88 These words should be an end of controversy. They are a sort of signpost, warning the traveller not to proceed on a dangerous path. The subject is foreclosed for us. The inscrutability of the Person of the Son must ever baffle the ingenuity of man, even of pious and erudite men. Nor is its solution to be gained by some rare spiritual attainment. On the contrary, the most spiritual will be the first to bow before the ineffable mystery, and to say, as did one of old, after stating the scriptural doctrine of the Christ, "So much we know; the seraphim veil the rest with their wings."

Yet the subject has a singular fascination, and has had in all ages. The annals of Christendom are strewn with the wrecks of venturesome and ingenious theories, the heresies of Arius, of Apollinaris, of Nestorius, and others. Hence the origin of at least two of the well-known creeds, the Athanasian and the Nicene, which most undoubtedly declare the facts as to our Lord's Person with admirable point and emphasis, as they were composed with that object. But nothing can equal the precision of Scripture. Here alone we get the truth in its fulness. No doubt in this verse it is given somewhat negatively, though immediately after the admonitory words as to the Son, we have the positive statement that they know the Father to whom the Son reveals Him. The knowledge of the Father therefore is moral; the want of knowledge as to the Son is in a wholly different category. Even when we most heed His word, and learn of Him, as He bids us, we can make no progress towards comprehending the mystery of His Person. We are not meant to do so. But the Gospels are full of the revelation of the Father. All that our Lord said and did perfectly expressed Him. So He gently rebuked Philip for having failed to realise during his privileged intercourse with Himself (strikingly characterised by Him as "so long time"), that He had been manifesting the Father. But what disaster has been wrought, not in ancient times merely, to which allusion has already been made, but in modern, by inquisitive prying into, and often confused and confusing analysis of, the sacred mystery! Some try to buttress their theories by appealing to the undoubtedly Scriptural doctrine of the kenosis. Yet surely that "self-emptying" points to restraint of power, not to limitation of knowledge. Better to heed the warning of Scripture. No doubt these adventurers flatter themselves that they mean well. They wish to elucidate the obscure; and metaphysics, theological or other, have a singular attraction for some minds. But no; it is a perilous quest. The divine and the human, like gold and silver threads in some precious work of art, wrought by deft fingers, are indissolubly blended and defy dissection. "God and Man are one Christ." But let us hear what follows. He who has just uttered words of awe-inspiring majesty, goes on to speak in gentlest accents of love. "Come unto me; learn of me (on which we have already touched), encouraging us to realise that, though we may never grasp the mystery of His Person, we can and should grow in knowledge of His love, of His goodness, His power, and His works. We learn of Him in all His perfect ways, how "He does," as one has truly said, "what is most human, but lives absolutely in the divine, ever the Son of man which is in heaven." Never was there such a marvellous blending

of majesty and humility, severity and tenderness, burning zeal and supreme calm, so that, in the words of another again, "There is the meekness of the Lion of Judah and the wrath of the slain Lamb." So believers gladly testify, but we may quote one who, alas! apostatised from the faith, a brilliant writer of the last century in a neighbouring land. This man described the words of our Lord in the Gospels as "characterised by a flashing brightness, at once sweet and terrible." This witness is true, but the terribleness is only for the rejector.

"No man knoweth the Son but the Father." Such is the doctrine of the first Gospel, and we have the same impressive words in St. Luke. For vain is the contention that only in Johannine scripture do we get the superhuman claims of Christ. Nothing can be farther from the fact. Take, for instance, the words in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church." Insufferably arrogant, had He been only man; most comforting as well as sublime when we hear in mind who He was and is that uttered them. And, again and again, the blessed Lord held similar language, yet coupled with the most complete self-abnegation and approachableness. No wonder some (unbelieving I fear, but thoughtful) mediaeval writer said that Jesus Christ was the enigma of the ages. Yes, surely, if we deny His divine glory. But if we bow to Him, if, while fully conscious of our inability to fathom the awful mystery of His Person (which will ever remain unfathomable), we own Him to be God manifest in the flesh, then He ceases to be an enigma. He commands our adoration. No doubt along with this will ever go the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and conscience, and all that this involves, when the soul learns that not even that precious life can save from sins, apart from the "precious death."

"No man knoweth the Son but the Father." These words are in the Synoptists, not in the Gospel of John. Doubtless the fourth Gospel differs widely from the others, but the harmony of all is perfect. And here in this eleventh of Matthew we have a statement as absolute and profound as any in John, in whose writings, however, we have longer and more elaborate unfoldings of the truth. It is not fanciful to consider how the beloved disciple must have mused on what he had "seen and heard" of his Master. He says indeed, "we contemplated his glory" — conviction sinking deeper and deeper into his heart through the mellowing years. He begins his Gospel with a peal of spiritual, thunder, as Augustine finely said. Anyhow, he was no weakling, nor ever had been. As more than one has observed, nothing can be more mistaken than the supposition that St. John was a mild-eyed, perhaps somewhat effeminate visionary. Nay, he was a son of thunder, naturally a robust soul, as always are those who strongly love. For very sufficient reasons, we may be sure, the Lord called James and John "sons of thunder," and Peter "a stone." None of the rest were so honoured. We may not forget the exceeding greatness of Peter I mean, of course, greatness when compared with other men, even with other apostles. It is needless to say that in one sense, the highest sense, none are great, but the Master alone. Yet, as disciples, as apostles, Peter, James and John, and subsequently Paul, are great, we know, beyond the measure of any others. And administratively, at any rate, Simon Peter was greatest of all. Was he not given the keys of the kingdom of heaven? But to return to our main point. We may be sure that Peter and John and Paul would have loved to enforce these words, spoken as they were by the Lord Himself, and written "for our learning" by the erstwhile tax-gatherer. For negatively they define the divine glory of the Son of God as absolutely as the terse declarations of St. Paul, or as did the apostle John with his contemplative calm. R.B.

S. Notes of an Address on Heb_1:1-4.

Notes of an Address on Hebrews 1:1-4.

It is no doubt the calm, measured, stately, almost rhetorical, style of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that has led many to conceive that it cannot be the work of the great apostle of the Gentiles. They compare the balanced sentences of this Epistle with the rugged and impetuous language so characteristic of the Pauline writings. But even on this ground the argument is by no means convincing. For what can be more measured and stately than the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, or than The eleventh chapter of the same Epistle. The fact is that a great writer adapts his style to his subject-matter, quite apart from the question whether he is inspired or not. As one, J.N.D., has beautifully said, the same divine water is in every vessel, be it a Paul, a Peter, or a John, but it takes the shape of the vessel through which it flows. And, we may add, the shape may vary in the same writer with the occasion. There is the tumultuous fervour of indignant upbraiding; there is the calm and ordered flow of eloquent exposition. Hence they are evidently right who judge that Paul, and no other (spite of those who ascribe it to the eloquent Apollos), is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And this opinion is powerfully buttressed by the words of Peter in his Second Epistle (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Now there is no more majestic statement even in this Epistle, or indeed in the whole of the Bible, than is contained in the wonderfully balanced sentence with which this treatise (for such it strictly is, rather than a letter) opens. For you will see that it really is one sentence only from ver. 1-4 inclusive. And the part of it most emphasised is the main part. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Other truths, of equal, possibly of greater, moment (one most certainly is so, where the Son is spoken of as being the brightness of God's glory), are grouped around it, adding strikingly to the grandeur of the whole, but yet subservient to the point that the apostle is pressing, viz. that "God has spoken in His Son." He reminds his readers how God spake of old by the prophets (here no doubt a general term and taking in all the O.T. writers); but that now it was no longer a question of hearing prophets however venerable, lawgivers however sage and discerning, nor psalmists however tuneful. It was imperative to recognise, what was not so obvious to them as Hebrews, as it happily is to us, that the final messenger had come, and that he that is of God would hear Him (John 8:47). Each prophet had contributed his quota to the grand total, and the apostle in no way seeks to weaken the weight of their testimony. Quite the contrary. Just as the Lord Jesus, on a memorable occasion, actually placed Moses' writings as testimony above His own spoken words (John 5:47), so the writer urges that their acceptance of the sublime truths that were now being unfolded would be the proof that the Hebrews really held and understood and believed all that lawgiver and psalmist and prophet had written of old. If they believed that God had spoken in His Son, this would show that theirs was no merely national and patriotic clinging to their ancient oracles. They would own the Crucified as both Lord and Christ.

God had spoken. This is the only book of Holy Scripture that commences with the sacred name, so august, so comprehensive and incomprehensible. How easy to utter it! How often it is taken in

vain by profane men! How lightly even Christians may use the word! Everything is wrapped in it, so to speak. It is God, the Son, as we read in this very passage, who upholds all things by the word of His power. And by Him were all things created (Colossians 1:16). The mind may proceed to lose itself forthwith in mazes of perplexity, as we contemplate the immensity of creation, and the insignificance physically of this tiny earth, which faith knows, on God's sure warrant, to have been the scene of nothing less stupendous than the Incarnation. For here "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and," says St. John, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Here the believer rests, while he who trusts to his own keenness of perception is baffled and dismayed. But it is the fool who says in his heart, There is no God. Yet there are but few after all who do not acknowledge His eternal power and divinity (Romans 1:20.). But how sad if we stop there! or, as has been so pathetically described, be as one who could only "beat his ineffectual wings against the void;" or, as another has said, be conscious only of this, that "man is a being with just sufficient conscience to know he is vile, and just sufficient intelligence to know that he is insignificant!" Nay, believers know much more, nor do I mean to insinuate that the clever writer who so described man, meant that that was all we can know. He was simply referring to what we know apart from revelation. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding (1 John 5:20). We know that God has spoken unto us in His Son. There are difficulties in the Bible, things that must be left and taken on trust. Not such the knowledge of God's love in Christ, which makes known God's righteousness lotto all, and upon all them that believe. This is the true God and eternal life. R.B.

S. On Biblical (O.T.) Criticism.

On Biblical (O.T.) Criticism.

1890 79 My Dear —,

I wish it were possible to discuss face to face the momentous questions involved in Biblical criticism. As it is, we must resort to writing, which has however this advantage, that thoughts can thereby be perhaps more calmly weighed as well as more exactly recorded. I agree with you that the subject is most momentous: all others in comparison with the authority of God's word are insignificant.

You may know that characteristic sonnet of Cardinal Newman's, in which he sighs forth the words, "I dreamed with a passionate complaint, I wished me born amid God's deeds of might." That is, he sighs for evidence to his reason, faith being weak. One can sympathise with the feeling, having experienced it, without the eloquence of that distinguished man. For him, as for us all, there is but one remedy — the word of God, the written word. If we have not that, we have nothing. Bear in mind that now-a-days that word is being surrendered piece-meal by apologetic friends. Hence many for tranquility of mind are going to Rome, where Dr. Newman sought repose long since in the bosom of a soi-disant infallible church, that "beauty ever ancient and ever young" which has charms for poetic minds. He had better have gone to headquarters, and rested on the divinely perfect word. This is the ground men of faith take, believing that providentially the word has been preserved of God by Christendom as a depositary. Hence we have them everywhere holding on to the integrity of the word, while the men of tradition receive it on the testimony of the church merely. Doubtless many Anglicans as individuals accredit the Bible on its own evidence, and dissenters too; but the fashion now is to sit in judgment on that word, and to accept just so much as scientific men will permit. Hence two "streams of tendency" (to quote a renegade): to Rome on the one hand, to infidelity on the other. This is the present serious position of affairs. These Oxford essayists are simply playing the sceptic's game. I do not wonder you feel it acutely. It is right that one should, especially with regard to the person of our blessed Lord.

Now as to Archdeacon Denison, I do not read his words as necessarily those of a man deprecating investigation; for I agree with you that such a position would be foolish and utterly untenable. Whatever is of God, it goes without saying, must be able to stand the most exhaustive scrutiny. A defender of the faith could never intelligently take up such a position. But what the Archdeacon, having read "Lux Mundi," bewails, seems what I, who have not seen that book, bewail, viz., the apparent readiness, not to say alacrity, on the part of professed believers to accept all the conclusions of modern thought, to be dogmatic as to them, and at the same time — a natural concomitant — to surrender all, if need be, that has been cherished for ages, to regard nothing as vital, nothing as essential, to squeeze out the wine, so to speak, from the grapes, and to proclaim them blood-red still. This appears to be what the Arch-deacon deplures. I judge so because the essays of the late Canon Aubrey Moore, one of the contributors to "Lux Mundi," gave me this impression. Suppose all that which this destructive criticism alleges were proved true,

surely (to quote a statesman in another connection) "the decencies of mourning might have been vouchsafed to so irreparable a loss." But no! there is a self-complacency, an almost arrogant boastfulness of tone, a general loosening of ill beliefs, and a superior judgment that disestablishes anything or everything at the bidding of latter-day criticism. The grapes are squeezed, but they are to be called grapes still. Our blessed Lord was incarnate God, but He did not know He was making a profound mistake when He attributed Deuteronomy to Moses (for the other surmise that knowing He accommodated Himself to the popular view is too profane to be entertained)! He had not the advantage of living in the closing years of the nineteenth century, of reading the "higher criticism" of the Oxford Essayists or their German leaders, themselves led by our old English Deists!

No, my dear —, half measures will not do. I can understand logically the position of a Huxley or a Herbert Spencer. They do not believe in the Incarnation, nor in the Fall; we do, through God's grace, and we dare not allow that the blessed One was not infallible in all He said. Nor is it on isolated passages that we have to rest as to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It is asserted again and again by Christ. Take one striking instance. "For he (Moses) wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" (John 5:46-47). And here we have more: Christ actually puts the written word (by Moses) as testimony above the spoken word, albeit by Himself. Again, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets," etc. These instances could be easily multiplied. Hence on the Mosaic authorship rests the credibility of Christ. I know you do not put it as an actual assertion, but rather as a supposition, viz., that the divine character of the Pentateuch remains intact if Moses were proved not the author. This however is but the thin end of the wedge with which Christianity is undermined. On the other hand, how can they prove that Moses was not the author of the books bearing his name, or anything else of the kind; unless, as seems to be the case, reverent acceptance is less forthcoming for the truth than robust credulity for whatever destructive criticism may hazard?

It is agreed that we cannot understand how the human and divine could be indissolubly blended in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is just the mystery of His person. He reveals the Father, but the Father is not said to reveal the Son. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matthew 11:1-30 :). There the Lord stops. Those passages you quote refer most significantly to His wondrous humiliation — that deep descent (cp. Ephesians 4:9-10; Psalms 68:18), His partaking of all human conditions apart from sin. The perfect child became perfect man. He could be hungry, thirsty, weary, though, as you say, He could fast for forty days, and afterwards He hungered. Nay, in Mark (as you quote) we read that the Son knew not "that day" (Mark 13:32). Do you not think, by the way, that there is a peculiar appropriateness where it occurs, and in the fact that it occurs here only? Our Lord takes the place of the servant in this Gospel, and as such, fulfilling His service, He knew not. But whenever He did speak, surely He spoke "with authority" (Mark 1:27; Mark 2:10; Mark 4:41; Mark 6:2; Mark 11:18). Thus even as a dependent man, a perfect servant, all He said was "with authority." Again, "He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God" (John 3:34). If, when our Lord speaks, He is not to be trusted in one instance, how do we know that He is to be trusted in another? Is one to wait and see what the next budget of higher criticism will allow us to believe? This is rather rambling, but you will excuse it. In short, the position is, Positively, we must accept the words of Christ, and that absolutely, or we embark on a shoreless sea; negatively, why should we believe all that the scientific men tell us about dates, etc.? Nor am I the more disposed to it because certain professed Christians are characterised more by "bated breath and whispering

humbleness" in the presence of destructive criticism than avowed sceptics, whose trade is to destroy.

Jonah is not touched upon. Suffice it to say here that our Lord refers to Jonah's experience (Matthew 12:40) as an actual fact, and as a type of His own death and resurrection. What need of more?

Very sincerely yours, R. Beacon, Jr.

S. Power, Religion, and Commerce

Power, Religion, and Commerce How They Act Against God.

R. B.

1895 216 In this world are three active and potent forces, each contributing to its pretensions as it now subsists, or will shortly expand, and embracing every motive or incentive to action, that has, since the fall, marked its course.

These three forces are Power, Religion, and Commerce. And because the whole world lies in the wicked one, power has begotten oppression, religion has developed into idolatry, and commerce is energised by covetousness. By power is meant the authority, however acquired, of man over man; and by religion, not God's revelation, but the outcome of man's nature, which is essentially religious. For, even if man is a infidel, he still bows to a superior, and pays homage to a being — real or imaginary — above himself. Even Antichrist, who exalts himself above all that is called God, will pay homage to the god of forces (Daniel 11:38-39). It is commerce that now seems to have the sway of the world, not that the love of power is extinct, or commerce of recent development. There were merchant princes in Tyre nearly fifteen centuries before Christ. But the spirit of traffic is now more widely spread, and other things are for the time yielding to it. The first expression of power among men, after the deluge, was an attempt to be independent of God — to build a tower and make themselves a name, and a gathering point lest they should be scattered. And if they could have succeeded, their power would have been limitless. God Himself declared that now nothing would be restrained from them which they imagined to do. There was mercy mingled with judgment when men were scattered into different groups and tongues. Had they been permitted to remain with one language, the world would have been, if possible, even worse than it is; for man has given proof of what he could do. When God put power into his hand (as we see in Nebuchadnezzar), he used it to establish idolatry, and to burn out the confession of the true God. Although Babel was not ostensibly built to support idolatry, the spirit that prompted its building was the same as was soon seen in the universal spread of idolatry, viz., the exclusion of God. If violence and corruption filled the earth before the flood, idolatry overspread it immediately after.

It was a fallen world before man acquired power. Magisterial authority was given to Noah by God. But man soon found what a great auxiliary to power it was to have a centre, and so the attempt at Babel; and when dominion was given to Nebuchadnezzar by God, he endeavoured to consolidate his authority by establishing idolatry. (Indeed there is no force equal to the religious element in human nature to strengthen or overthrow any power on earth.) Egypt abounded in idols; but we do not read that the king enforced their worship with penalties if disobedient. But from Babylon the threat issued, that all who worshipped not the golden image set up should be cast into the furnace. Satan had no need to oppose the stupid idolatry of Egypt by idolatries elsewhere. But against the worship of God he stirs up Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards Darius the Mede.

It was the failure of Israel, and of the city of Jerusalem as the standing witness for God, that was the occasion of investing the Gentile with supreme authority: the wickedness of Israel was greater than that of the Gentiles, and Israel was given up to their hatred. The hatred was against the testimony of God rather than against Jerusalem, and at last the Jew joins with the Gentile against it. The chief priests and Pilate, Jew and Gentile, are together in condemning the Lord. But while Jerusalem stood a witness to the government of God, it was the object of the enmity of the surrounding nations. But God was compelled (if we may so say) to judge it; otherwise He would have appeared indifferent to sin, and to His own truth and majesty. But though the nations be His instruments for chastising, yet are they punished for their own sin, and in proportion to their enmity to Israel. But while all show enmity, some are more expressive of the spirit that now dominates the world — the spirit of Mammon. A special phase is commerce. Commerce is influenced by covetousness, and covetousness is idolatry. For the sake of Mammon war is decreed. At the same time is it not worthy of the Christian's notice that war is cultivated as a science, and standing armies are maintained in christendom where the gospel of peace is professed? What a proof of the rule and power of the prince of this world! The crust of peace spread over the civilized world is very thin. Underneath are armed millions and new warlike inventions. Nations are saying Peace, peace, and yet preparing for war, and rumours and signs of it are not wanting. How blessed that amid all the commotions and strifes of this world, believers can look beyond and say, "we, receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved!" But, whatever the dominating spirit, all men who have not the truth are hoping and seeking to maintain the present system of the world. And they dream that they will perpetuate it, and they will continue to dream, until the judgment of God awakens them. Then in their alarm they will call on the mountains and rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. But let us see how these forces are represented in Scripture, and what places or cities are used as illustrative of the world's sin and judgment. And there in the forefront of all we find Babel with its tower and defiance of God. It was the first place after the flood where the exercise of the world's power brought down judgment from God. Though all joined to build the tower, yet the race of Ham, in the person of Nimrod, was the first to acquire power, which is continued in different characters throughout the old history of the world — through Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and, we may add, the seven-hilled city Rome. This also will be the last force in exercise when Gog and Magog are led against God after the millennium. It would seem that the power of the world had been restrained by God till Israel had falsified His testimony to it. Then, as we may see in Babylon, power was joined to idolatry, and the saints were subjected to persecution. Tyre is presented where the world's religion succumbs apparently to commerce, as the love of gain becomes paramount. But if the phases of wickedness in Babylon and Tyre be different, they are both in opposition to God. Egypt early rose to prominence but did not enforce idolatry as did Babylon; though the Lord declares that He will judge the idols of Egypt. And in the plagues of Egypt the Lord's judgment was as much upon their gods as upon the people themselves.

But, as we have seen, the first place was Babel; and there was a wilful ignoring of the power and judgment of God. The height of the tower was to reach heaven, as if man could make a refuge for himself should any succeeding deluge overtake him. This same defiance of God was brought out in Egypt too; for it was Egypt's king that said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him"? He learnt who He was at the Red Sea — then too late: and when Egypt lost her place as a leading power in the world, it passed to Assyria, and Nineveh became next prominent, and the object of the Lord's judgment (see Nahum). Assyria, which was noted from the beginning, has its name carried on to

the end, and given to the last earthly power in opposition to God. So that the power of the world, seen at the first in Babel and Nimrod, and for a time diverted to Egypt that the purpose of God in and for Israel might be accomplished, is found again at the close wielded by the Assyrian. But all through it is antagonism to God; and as His purpose for the earth was wrapped up in Israel, it is against them that the hatred of Satan is chiefly directed. He knew that the truth and testimony for God was somehow connected with Israel, and that the Bruiser of his head must come through them. He well understood the import of the sentence in Eden. He instigated Pharaoh to command that all the male children should be cast into the river. It was he who led Amalek and the inhabitants of Canaan to dispute Israel's passage into the land He stirred up all evil amongst themselves, as well as their enemies against them. And when he found the line narrowed to David and his house, he roused Saul to destroy him. Failing in this he apparently succeeds in destroying the kingdom, and the king of Assyria carries ten tribes into captivity. To David's house only two tribes remain, which could not be a true picture of God's kingdom. But these also he seeks to destroy, or expatriate. For the purpose of God in David's house was in some measure seen by Satan, although Israel was blind.

Thus Nimrod, Pharaoh, Saul, Sennacherib, and the future Beast are all found arrayed against God. The same unseen foe guides them all in the same opposition. And when he leads the Assyrian in his last phase before the millennium, a greater destruction awaits him than befell Pharaoh at the Red Sea, or Sennacherib's army when destroyed by the angel of the Lord. And even after he has been bound for a thousand years, and then loosed for a brief space, he gathers again Gog and Magog to the battle, "and they" in the vision (Revelation 20:9) "went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them." All the unconverted whose number is as the sand of the sea are led against the saints then on the I earth. This is his last effort — the immediate prelude to their eternal blessedness.

Yet not Satan's efforts, but Israel's sin seems to delay the fulfilment of God's purpose (Psalms 11:1-7 :). Nevertheless, God overrules all to subserve His counsels, and in due time will establish His decree. Meanwhile Satan, as it were, takes advantage of Israel's sin to include the whole world in idolatry. And the religious nature of fallen man affords a force when supported by authority which is almost irresistible. It would be quite so only for the grace of God overcoming nature.

It may be that men clothed with power wishing to consolidate their authority by religion used symbols of Godhead to aid the people in general. But men had sufficient evidence of the Godhead in the things that are seen. They did not wish to retain the remembrance of God (Romans 1:20). Therefore it was easy for Satan to convert the symbol into an idol; and to it the idolaters bowed. When Joseph is carried into Egypt, we find idolatry systematised, having its high priest (Potipherah), in a man of note. Not that this is its first appearance.

It was in Laban's family; nor does Jacob appear to have been shocked when Laban accused him of stealing his gods (Genesis 31:1-55 :). And the ancestors of Abraham served other gods (Joshua 24:1-33 :). Idolatry seems to have spread rapidly. Yet years must have elapsed before Egypt, and the idolatry which marked it, could have attained to the position she had among the nations; for she had traffic with other countries, and even slave-markets. But in the midst of all her prosperity she sunk in the depths of a debasing idolatry. How the great foe must have derided the wisdom of

the Egyptian to see it accompanied with such folly!

2.

1895 235 Two of the places which mark the career of power are also representatives of the world's idolatry, viz., Egypt and Babylon. The former shows its folly and debasement; the latter its enmity. For in Babylon the persecuting power is developed, and is first noticed in Scripture as such. The Israelite in Egypt beyond doubt was persecuted by the idolatrous king, and this may have been part of the cry which God heard (Exodus 13:9). But Babylon enforced idolatry by law; hence persecution. This gives to that city an awful pre-eminence in sin, so that its very name is given to the worst iniquity that ever defiled the world. In Babylon the world's religion and power are combined against the confession of God; and Satan appears to rely for success in the terrors of a fiery furnace, besides making idolatry attractive with the world's music (the music continues to this day, if the furnace be gone). When the Gentile king set up his idol at Babylon, the world's religion was supreme. Doubtless he thought to strengthen the bonds between the various parts of his many-tongued and discordant empire. And he was wise in his generation. But Satan's aim was not merely to bind the empire into one homogeneous whole, but to unite all in idolatry, and persecution of those who confessed God. And though the fiery furnace became a scene and triumph for the witnesses of God, yet he so far succeeded that the worshippers of the image afterwards drank wine in praise of their false gods from the vessels taken out of the temple of the Lord. Nor is that the sum of the iniquity of the guilty city: for the Mede dares to take the place of God and forbids worship to any but himself. Idolatry, sacrilege, and pride are united in Babylon. But neither had the den of lions greater terror for the witnesses for the truth than had the fiery furnace in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. If in his day idolatry was rampant, it is pride that is prominent in the degree of Darius. This may not be so degrading as worshipping an image, but it is equally iniquitous. Darius may have been persuaded unthinkingly to make his decree but there were Satan's cunning and device behind it. The embodiment of all the sin and evil in the world is found in Babylon, and it leads on to the end: the deification of man as developed in Darius is of the world, or of Christendom as part of and supported by the world. When the name of Christ is altogether rejected, the climax of this deification will appear in Antichrist. Great Babylon follows in the wake of the first Babylon, and enforces its idolatries by the same means. There is this difference between them: in the first the secular power seems paramount; in the second it will be the religious corruption and persecution. The deification of man appears to have begun with Nimrod. He was a mighty hunter — a giant among men. He went to Assyria and built Nineveh, and several other cities. The modern Arabs ascribe all the ancient great works to him, and suppose him to have been worshipped at Babylon after death by the name of Bel. The exaltation of human nature has ever been a part of the world's religion. Paganism had its gods among the heavenly orbs, powers of nature, etc., and soon learned to put men among them — its heroes became deities. And Christendom follows in its track, and has its heroes (according to man's estimate and heroism) and in a sense deifies them. The worship of idols, of images, may have sunk into deserved contempt (though still bowed down to in the dark places of the earth) men attributing to their intellect the light shed by the Bible. But the exaltation of man goes on now, and if altars are not erected, monuments are, and names of a past age are dug up to satisfy man's craving for hero-worship, all paving the way for the advent of him who will sit in the temple of God and say that he is God.

We find three pictures of the world's religion in the three kings of Babylon which Scripture presents: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. The first is pagan and persecuting. The second mingles the vessels of the Lord's house with his idolatrous orgies; as now the fables of paganism are mixed with some of the truths of Christianity, thus producing the amalgam which makes Christendom. The third is blasphemous; it does not yet fully appear, but will be in full bloom when Anti-christ claims also to be true God.

Satan could not burn out the truth, so he mixes fable with it, and here he has a measure of success so far as public profession goes. Christendom presents Belshazzar's feast on a large scale. For as he caused the vessels of the temple to be mingled with the vessels of his gods, so the old leaders in Christendom mixed revealed truth with fable on the one hand, and on the other persecution. For persecution did not vanish when the world became nominally christian. Rather it became more bitter than its pagan ancestor, the Pharisees and Sadducees were like the Ritualists and Rationalists of the present. Superstition and infidelity mark both the ancient and the modern, they make void the word of God by their tradition and the commandments of men. But the last or the Darius-phase of man's pride and unbelief is yet to come, though the seed is being scattered now, and the soil is well adapted to receive it. A man will take the place of God and say, "I am God and not a man." But this the worst form of human wickedness will not be till after the church of God is gone, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, yea, even after the false anti-christian church. Great Babylon is destroyed as it will be by the beast and the ten kings (Revelation 17:1-18 :). At this present time it is not the Nebuchadnezzar phase of gross idolatry which may yet cover Christendom; nor the Darius phase which is atheistic, though that too is spreading; but the Belshazzar phase where the truths of Christianity are mixed up with, and made to convey, the traditions of men. This is a transition from idolatry to atheism, from the worship of idols to the denial of God. This is the religious aspect of the world, although another force seems to have equal, if not greater, sway in this our time. Power was not sufficient for Satan's purpose, he brought in idolatry. But this too was not enough. For man's religion works on his fears; never on his love, and so he engages man in commerce. And all his hopes and fears, and all the love and hatred which engross his heart and fill it with care, are governed by the spirit of mammon.

Commerce which is presented in Tyre exercises a deeper and more engrossing influence than the abominations of idolatry, and may be as much opposed to truth in spirit. For he who directs the world's power and its religion also guides its traffic. The world and all its affairs are yet a little longer under Satan's control (within certain limits) though men will not believe it. But God has fixed a time which the prince of this world cannot pass. Commerce may not be iniquitous in itself (though it opens a wide door for the indulgence of unrighteous ways, and needs more grace to resist than the open sins of the world), and the arch-foe may have brought it in, not so much to excite or qualify the covetousness of man, as in opposition to God who had pronounced a curse on the earth. Satan tries if possible to make it a pleasant abode, notwithstanding its sin and rebellion — a pleasant place at least for some, even if others find more sorrow and toil. Ambition and hatred may be actively stirred by power and religion, but the secret and sometimes unsuspected covetousness of the heart is nourished by traffic. Commerce in its aspect now is the innate covetousness of the heart of man systematised with the science of buying in the cheapest, and selling in the dearest markets. the maxim that guided traffickers in Solomon's day is still the rule in the commercial world. "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer, but when he is gone his

way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14). Riches are the great object of man's pursuit, and all his energies are employed for their attainment — not thinking of his irreparable loss even if he gained the whole world.

Tyre gathered wealth. Her merchants were princes and kings; they were enriched by her merchandise. She does not show that bitter hatred that we see in others. Still she rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem and imagined that her own riches would be increased by it (Ezekiel 32:2). Was Jerusalem a commercial city? Certainly Solomon raised it to such a height of splendour that silver was accounted as nothing. Solomon traded with Hiram, king of Tyre, and had many ships with Tyrian sailors. He traded with Egypt also (1 Kings ix). It may be that Tyre was envious of the wealth of Jerusalem under Solomon, and would emulate her in riches; and hence the joy of Tyre at her fall. We know that Hiram was not pleased with the cities that Solomon gave him in reward for his services. But however the form of Tyre's sin may differ from that of Egypt and Babylon, they unite in hatred to the city and the testimony of God, and in arrogance.

3.

1895 251 When Jerusalem fell, the testimony to God's government was extinguished, and the prince of this world thought to put Babylon at the head of the religious system to take the place, as it were, of Jerusalem. Thus Babylon is first in the iniquity of the world, and in pride and persecution in its representative. Hence Jehovah says in the burden of Babylon (Isaiah 13:1-22 :), "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity, and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and the haughtiness of the terrible." But enmity is shown by Tyre as by other Gentiles, and she rejoiced when Jerusalem fell. Her immense traffic may have increased her enmity. Many, perhaps, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem sought refuge in the city of Tyre. But hope of gain caused Tyre to forget the brotherly covenant, and the fugitives were given up to the cruel Edomite. Tyre remembered not the brotherly covenant. This is the charge of the prophet against her (Amos 1:9). David and Hiram, king of Tyre, made a covenant; and it was confirmed by Solomon, whom Hiram called "my brother" (see 2 Samuel 5:1-25 and 1 Kings 5:1-18 — 9). The opposition that Tyre manifested has been perpetuated in modern times. The commerce so famous in that city has spread its wing over the cities of our day, which, following in the steps of Tyre, await with the same unrighteousness the same doom. The present age may not show the same arrogancy that the prince of Tyre and the king of Babylon showed, but the world's commerce in the hands of Satan leads to it. The spirit of Mammon rules the age, and under its influence the truth is perverted, and becomes the profession of covetous men, supposing that gain is godliness. From such we turn away. We look to the testimony of our Lord, and find that the cares and riches of this world, which commerce increases, are weeds which choke the good seed.

Power, religion, and commerce are controlled by the prince and god of this world, and all will be found against the testimony of God. The evil of the old Babylon is intensified in great Babylon; and this last, besides inheriting all the wickedness of the past — what an inheritance! — adds yet to it that she covers all with the name of Christianity. Even now idolatry and persecution, as far as Christendom extends, have their source in the seven-hilled city; and the system of which that city is the centre is extending its influence and ramifications over all. In the cup of the scarlet woman is found the power that began at Babel, the idolatry of Egypt, the persecution of Babylon, and the merchandise of Tyre. The pride that prompted Pharaoh to say at the beginning "Who is Jehovah"?

leads man at the end to say, "I am God." It began in independence and defiance of God, and ends in blasphemy and worse. The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel; and this commencement of man's power is marked by God's judgment (judgment being met in grace, but not removed at Pentecost). We next see the power of the world in Egypt, and there it becomes oppression (its natural effect in man's hand) and accompanied with degrading idolatry. But as the civilized world emerged from the slough of image-worship, it was caught in the net of traffic, and it became conscious of the riches that would accumulate by commerce. Tyre (envious at first, afterwards the rival, of Jerusalem) is used by Satan to show the glory and riches of the world, and thus becomes an instrument against God. By means of commerce Satan tries to make the curse ineffective. Thorns and thistles the earth was to bring forth, and man to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. Satan would obviate that sentence by bringing together the different products of the earth, filling the eye and mind with them; and would seek to hide the thorns by spreading a carpet of Tyrian merchandise over them. It is only carrying out the same plan that he began among the antediluvians when he taught them to handle the harp and pipe, with other things the world calls useful. So Tyre has a prominence which her merchandise might not otherwise have had. Not that in itself it was sin; for we read that her merchandise in the coming day is to be used for the Lord (Isaiah 23:17-18). Nor was her hatred of Jerusalem greater than that of Edom or of any of the Gentile cities; but the principle of her opposition was more subtle, and had a stronger hold on the covetous proclivities of fallen nature.

These places are selected by the Holy Spirit as showing prominently the condition and sin of the world, and by whom led (see Ezekiel 30:1-26 :-xxxii.). In the judgment, which is special to the countries and places named in Jeremiah 25:1-38 :, the whole world and its leader is included. There is a judgment common to all, "the wine cup of His fury." All are found together, the sources of all nationalities, in short, the whole earth; the kings in this scripture are the representatives of the different places. But Egypt, Babylon, and Tyre have each a prominent place in iniquity. Idolatry and commerce, though their path may be different, have each the same end, viz., blasphemy; and this is the climax of all sin, and may be the reason why the Holy Ghost had selected these places as the representatives of the great sin of the world — its enmity and defiance of God. Not that they are worse than others; for in Jerusalem itself was worse sin to be found than in the world beside: the name of God was blasphemed through its idolatry worse than Egypt's. And the truth of God afterwards given for man's salvation is perverted, by what bears the same name as the persecutor of old, to found and support the most horrible system of iniquity that the arch-foe could invent. And to show the connexion of this system with idolatry and persecution, it retains the same name; and we find the source of Tyre's wealth to be the same as of Egypt's and Babylon's idolatry.

Tyre, the prince of Tyre, and the king of Tyre, in Ezekiel's prophecy are distinct. The city is judged in common with other cities. But the prince and the king have each a lamentation apart from the city. So has the king of Babylon, so also has Pharaoh king of Egypt. In each the direct energy of Satan is seen, but in Egypt and Babylon Satan is not so distinguished from human agents as in Tyre. The language of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar show the same power over them as was over the prince of Tyre; and they are not merely the representatives of their countries as the kings in Jeremiah 25:1-38 :, but exhibit the complete control Satan had over the world. How true that it lay in him! The word to the prince of Tyre is what he has become in his pride after he is prince; to the king, what he was before he is king — before iniquity was found in him. The prince's wisdom

exceeded Daniel's; there was no secret hid from him. Who was Daniel? Chief of the wise men in Babylon. "No secret" is evidently an allusion to his revealing the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. The prince of Tyre, inspired by Satan, equalled and surpassed (in the world's estimation) Daniel in wisdom. Here is another mark of the power of the prince of this world, who would not only have Tyre to rival Jerusalem in wealth, but would also raise up a man to outrival Daniel; that he might persuade men that true wisdom was not the gift of God. By his wisdom the prince gained riches, and increased the wealth of Tyre; but because of it he set his heart as the heart of God. This is the charge against him: — "Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God." "Wilt thou yet say before Him that slayeth thee, I am God"? Although a prince, he was only a man; and the "terrible of the nations" — the Chaldeans — would be the executors of God's wrath.

4.

1895 268 In the lamentation of the king we have not the display of riches, but their source, or the means by which they were acquired. The king seals up the sum: all angelic, all created, glory was in him; and he is called the covering cherub, the anointed cherub, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, and God set (created) him so. "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth, and have set thee so; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee." Fulness of wisdom in the king, delegated wisdom in the prince. The lamentation for the king contains a description of Satan before he fell. And the power and wisdom which he retained after his fall are used against God and His truth, and to this end work in the prince of Tyre to accumulate riches so that this earth may not appear smitten with a curse. Satan is really the king, and the source of the wisdom and riches of Tyre. The prince is the human agent for the king to show his power, who, from his titles here, may have been the highest among the angels, before iniquity was found in him. In like manner the king of Babylon is but Satan's instrument, only the human agent is not so distinguished from the source of his power as in Tyre. In the judgment on Babylon we have not the destruction between the city and the judgment on its king: "the golden city is ceased"; and the king who said, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds" yet to be "brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." He is also called Lucifer (daystar) or son of the morning. And when he is laid low, the earth is at rest. Does not this look onward to millennial rest when Satan will be bound for a thousand years? (Isaiah 14:4-20.) The king of Babylon and the prince of Tyre use similar language. The king of Babylon said, "I will be like the Most High," and the prince of Tyre said, "I am God." But why the distinction between the king and the prince in the judgment on Tyre? and blending Satan with his human agent in the judgment on Babylon? Perhaps because idolatry and persecution which were developed at Babylon are more Satanic, and the human instrument more completely in his hand. Perhaps also another reason is that the riches of Tyre will one day be used for the Lord, whereas the judgment on idolatrous Babylon is that it will never be restored. The words addressed to the king of Tyre are inapplicable to a mere man, however clothed he might be with power. Some of the qualities here enumerated may be said of Adam; but there is a glory here which cannot all apply to Adam innocent. The king was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; and the gems, which adorned the high priest's breast-plate and which men prize, are used figuratively to express his covering. He walked in the midst of the

stones of fire; he had been on the mountain of God. But his he t was corrupted on account of his beauty: iniquity was found in him, and he was cast to the ground. This is not oriental exaggeration, but the Holy Spirit describing by means of human things and words the past glories and magnificence of him that now seeks to use his wisdom and power in leading the world against Him Who created it. But he was perfect once. He was adorned with every precious gem; as the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God is, in figure, similarly adorned. So, neither could Satan's primeval beauty, as beyond earthly conception, be described but by joining together incongruous imagery borrowed from the earth; though only a shadowy sense of glory may rest on the mind from his walking in the midst of the stones of fire.

Thus we see Satan using all the forces of this world — its rule and order, its religion and its commerce — to blind the eyes of the lost to its ruin. Only the grace that came by Jesus Christ can open the eyes of the blind. Infidelity and the absorbing power of Mammon are leading men on to destruction. But the worst form of idolatry is yet to be developed. The world is preparing for the man of sin. By means of commerce evil spreads, and the great manipulator of this world's forces brings all together and mixes or crystallizes them in the golden cup of great Babylon. But while Satan is heading all up that may conjointly oppose the manifestation of the Son, is there to be no divine testimony to the truth? was the prince and god of this world to have his Babel, his Egypt and Assyria, his Babylon and his Tyre in time past, and no place or city to be for God? Nay, not so. God had His city, His Jerusalem, which, though now under judgment for her sins, will rise again when all that expresses the power and malice of Satan will be judged and no more seen. From the root of Jesse comes forth a Branch Who vindicates the righteousness and judgment of God — the faithful and true Witness, for Whose sake God retains and watches over Jerusalem, and will yet make her the witness of His truth and glory. But before the earth rejoices in that bright day, a fearful manifestation of the pride and opposition of man will be seen; and God will send a strong delusion on the inhabitants of the earth which will bind them as with fetters — a judgment on the earth before the eternal judgment. All that springs from the world as a system is in opposition to God. Power (which was given of God) was strengthened by idolatry, and idolatry enforced by power. But the clay mixes not with the iron. Democracy and all the evil passions of men are rising: rule, and order, and men are like a troubled sea; and the rulers, fearing what may be, and hoping to stave it off, bow to them. Power is spreading among the masses, and all are becoming not less antagonistic, but more indifferent, to the truth. This, in its turn opens the door for infidelity; and then is the last phase of man — worship of man as God — the end of that pride and independence first seen at Babel.

Meanwhile to draw away man's attention from eternal things, the open instrument is commerce, and the lust of gain dominates the vast majority; and the denial of God, in various ways, like a black cloud, is settling down thick and fast on Christendom.

Yet, is there no testimony at this present time, in the increasing darkness? Yes, God has a city, a city which has the foundations. The past Jerusalem had not. Abraham saw one which had. Believers know Him Who is the foundation, and they are the living stones, and the city is from above, called the holy city, the new Jerusalem. There are faithful now, as there were righteous in the times of the prophets. The testimony is not without witnesses, feeble though they are. But he that overcomes shall be clothed in white raiment, and reign with Christ. R. B.

S. Prof. Drummond's "Greatest Thing in the World."

Prof. Drummond's "Greatest Thing in the World."

1890 127 It is painful to have to condemn utterly the writing of a man who claims to be a believer. But this essay, though taking as a homily on love or a meditation on that magnificent chapter – 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, is entirely vitiated by the thinly disguised assumption that such love, such practical "religion, is not a strange or super-added thing, but the inspiration of the secular life." It is with the writer a mere question of "practising." And so carried away is Mr. D. by his theories, imported from the scientific arena, that he even speaks of the Lord Jesus as "practising" love in the carpenter's shop! To such unworthy thoughts of the perfect and spotless One — "that holy Thing" — does a materialistic philosophy incline even a professing christian. No one disputes that our Lord "learned obedience." To obey was to Him a new thing. Yet it characterised the Son when He became man. As God, He had been wont to command.

Again, our author says that spiritual laws are as natural as the laws of nature; that they are both natural or both supernatural. St. Paul says, "First that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual." Our blessed Lord Himself says, "The flesh profiteth nothing." Again, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Has Prof. D. weighed the force of these words? or is he prepared to explain them away? They will not fit in with his theories. Must they be "re-crystallized," to borrow his own metaphor? As an eminent prelate (the Abp. of York) said the other day, "A revelation without the supernatural cannot be conceived; it would be merely a speculation." But if anything more were wanted to show the hollowness and profanity of Prof. D.'s views, the following remark from his address would demonstrate it. "We do not get the soul in different ways, under different laws from those in which we get the body and the mind." What plainer denial can there be of original endowment? It is a virtual negation of the truth of man's spiritual nature, and, though probably the Prof. is not aware of it, sheer materialism. Mr. D. is evidently bent upon riding to death his favourite hobbies of "environment and habit," borrowed as they are from the godless philosophy of Herbert Spencer. But is there nothing more than this in "religion"? Is man merely a creature of "environment and habit"? No one would deny the influence of surroundings and of good, as alas! of evil, habits. But Prof. D. shows where he is, when he makes it everything, and actually puts the Christ of God on the same level! And so, as everything spiritual is to be degraded to the natural, he labours to minimise faith, "without which (says the scripture) it is impossible to please God." How fatuous to set one grace against another! All grace is of the Spirit, and if love be undoubtedly the greatest, faith is essential as owning our evil, looking to God, and receiving Christ and His work, our only salvation, which flows from God's gratuitous love to us and alone produces love in us. Without faith man has no love according to God. As was remarked at the outset of this paper, Mr. —'s pamphlet may serve as a practical homily, and many simple souls who discern not the shadowy foundation may even be edified, and possibly stimulated to nobler practice and walk. All the same, the article is at bottom pernicious in the extreme. That this contention is fully borne out is plain from other remarks early in the address, where it is urged that commandments such as to love God, and not take His name in vain, are

useless, because a man who loves does not need them. Also that "it would be preposterous to tell a man not to kill if he were full of love to his fellow." Quite so. But is man full of love by nature, by "environment and habit? "What do we see on every hand? And how idle to speak and write as if there were no sin, no Fall, no death (part of the wages of sin), as if, in short, these were only nightmares, and what man has to do were simply to practise love and improve his "environment and habits?" Nay, Prof. D., the Spirit of God can and does (by faith in Christ and His redemption) produce love in the renewed heart, in the "new man" that is in him, "born of water and the Spirit," in the one who, recognising his impotence to keep God's holy law, whereby sin is shown to be "exceeding sinful," died with Christ and reckons himself dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. But these are the very points slurred over in the essay, if not indeed ostentatiously shut out from souls. In truth, while pleasingly written, like everything that comes from the Professor's facile pen, and with a wealth of pointed remarks (no ill whipping up for a true christian) the article is based upon the shallowest possible conception, and indeed ignoring of real Christianity in Christ. The writer is so enamoured of his evolutionist theories that he can see nothing else, and makes divine love merely a growth, to be produced as mechanically as a new colour in a tulip.

Nothing would be easier than to traverse many of the isolated statements; but the object is merely to point out the fundamental falsity of the writer's position as a warning to the unwary. A few statements, however, may be adverted upon. "We make a great deal of peace with heaven; Christ made much of peace on earth." Can we make too much of peace with or in heaven? Did not Christ "make peace by the blood of His cross"? Is not that work of His the basis of our peace, for heaven as well as on earth, of the rest to our consciences, of our "deliverance from the wrath to come"? Does Prof. D. believe in "wrath to come"? But again, did Christ, make so much of peace on earth? Angels announced what will infallibly be one day, its pledge even then in the birth of Immanuel. But did He not say, "Think you that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division": "I am come to send fire on earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" Hence no such thing as immediate peace on earth was contemplated, as indeed Luke 19:39 implies to the intelligent ear. It will surely reign in the millennial earth.

Again, we are told that "our heart is slowly changed." This is strange from a man who has written truth on the "new birth." But to the readers of that too popular volume, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," to such at least as had eyes to see, it was too plain that the author would drift still farther away. It seems strange, to make one more quotation, to say (though this does not bear directly on the question, but may serve as a specimen of Prof. D.'s hasty inferences) that love was not Paul's strong point! It was strong enough to make the great apostle of the Gentiles wish himself "accursed from Christ" for the sake of his brethren, and to give him "continual sorrow of heart." Did St. John go farther or as far, blessed witness though he was of the same divine love? The rationalism of the Professor is shown later in the pamphlet as his materialism is prominent throughout. For he interprets the "failing" of prophecies to mean that, having all been fulfilled (was this before they were uttered?), they have now nothing to do but to "feed a devout man's faith." And faith, according to Mr. D., is not of much account. Are we not abundantly justified in our strictures? Alas! one prophecy is being fulfilled, that "men shall depart from the faith." In conclusion, some of the closing words may be quoted. "The words which all of us shall one day hear sound, not of theology but of life, not of churches and saints but of the hungry and the poor, not of creeds and doctrines but of shelter and clothing, not of bibles and prayer-books but of cups

of cold water in the name of Christ." And Christ is spoken of merely as "Mae One Who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick!" Not a word of His deity while very man, not a word of eternal life in the Son, of His sacrifice, of His atonement, of Himself our righteousness. Nay, it is rather insinuated that he who feeds the hungry, he is also Christ! And this is the modern substitute for the "faith once for all delivered to the saints." R. Beacon, Jr.

S. Scripture and Science.

Scripture and Science.

1888 112 We hear a good deal in these days about the conciliation of science and faith —, of aids to faith. One attempts to prove that scripture is really scientific, and so on, but is not all this based upon a delusion? If we have a revelation from God, what does it matter whether science accords with it or not? If it do not, then so much the worse for science. But even pious men, who really believe the word of God, are often so much afraid of the fetish of science, that they make all haste to prove that the Bible is really, if those great of "light and leading" would only graciously allow it, the humble handmaid of science.

Now all this kind of thing will not do: the evidences of a revelation are altogether apart from science. 'He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." And if (as we KNOW is the truth) the Son of God has been in this world, that one transcendent fact dominates everything, and claims my immediate and absolute surrender. When once I believe this, science, marvellous as are its achievements, is after all a very small thing. It may be admirable for this life (though it be questionable how far torpedoed, for instance, are an unmixed advantage), yet it is only for this life; and the supreme fact of the incarnation and atonement of the blessed Son of God, even my apprehension of it, and bowed belief in it, and contrition of heart resulting from this belief, become the only important things. By faith we KNOW that the Son of God has come, and we are not careful to answer our opponents as to all that they allege, sometimes honestly, sometimes captiously, against the word of God, for that there are immense, perhaps inexplicable, difficulties in the Bible, no one can doubt. But the blessed book does not teach science. It is meant for the heart and the conscience.

It is notorious, on the other hand, that links are wanting in scientific processes. Dare any one affirm that were they all known and applied, science and the Bible would still be at variance? It is conceivable at least that the whole system of geological and physiological theory may have to be recast. Perhaps then fuller accord will be found between the Bible and science than at present obtains. But whether it be so or not, it can make no difference to the christian; for he rests upon the word of the living God, Who cannot lie. R. Beacon. Jr.

S. The Credentials of Christianity.

The Credentials of Christianity.

1888 160 (being an extract from a letter.) My dear —,

Though devoid of claim to argumentative power, I would submit certain considerations, which I pray God may be used of Him to show you that the Christ of the Gospels is indeed the Saviour of the world.

You will grant that the world is dark, that with abundant evidence of God's goodness, in His infinitely wise adaptation of external nature to our advantage, yet there is prevailing decay; not to speak of the bitterness and disappointment to which no human breast is ultimately, or indeed for long, a stranger. To my mind, if Christianity be rejected, or regarded as a mere development (which is of course its virtual rejection) in an interminable evolution, the riddle of life is inexplicable. No one would deny that Christianity offers a solution at least worthy of God; and oh, how suited to man! But before attempting to contemplate some of the positive characteristics of Christianity, I would call your attention to the immense difficulties involved in its rejection, and to the contradictions, so to speak, in which we find ourselves landed. We are loth, in our pride, to own ourselves fallen beings; yet we are tried and agitated by ten thousand cares. We will not own the divine authority and sanction of revelation; yet we are tormented with misgivings, lest after all the Bible may be true. And, by the way, no such misgivings seem to vex the soul of the Buddhist or Mohammedan sceptic. We are alarmed at the approach of death, not so much because of the wrenching of familiar amenities, but because it is "a leap in the dark." If unfallen beings, why do we not calmly and unquestioningly, when death is near, drop our weary hands, and sleep? Or, again, we try compromise, and set up as Unitarians, proving but half-hearted pleaders, uninspired to risk life or limb in the promotion of our passionless creed. If sure of our ground, why this lack of fervour? Why do nothing at any cost to ourselves? This is not the Christian preacher or confessor. The reasons of all this are not far to seek. We have all these cares, and fears, and misgivings, because we are fallen beings, whom academic surmises must fail to console. We yearn for something positive; and this Christianity supplies, and like the sun proves itself by lighting our darkness. It is positive; and hence it is the very creed to be preached with ready tongue and gladdened eye to every creature. It throws light upon, and holds out an ultimate solution of, the mystery of pain, which makes up human life. And, looking at it subjectively, in its renewing, transforming power, it carries with it its own credentials, for "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," and again, "He that doeth His will, shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Christianity in short sheds a divine light across my path, which judges me so effectually that I do not think of judging it. It reveals a Divine Person dying to put away sin, and no mere vain ideas and shadowy images, like false religions and philosophies.

But, secondly, the fact that Christianity exists is a most important factor in the question. It exists, and must be reckoned with. How can it be accounted for except as being what it claims to be? It has done for mankind what no culture has ever done. The value of culture, men say, apart from

God is potent. Let us look at ancient Greece, and thence form an estimate of culture. Beautiful and brilliant on the surface, it was horribly corrupt, as we know, beneath. It is forgotten what the darkness was before Christ came.

I would ask doubters to account for the fact, that a great imposture (as they suggest) has been the greatest blessing the world ever had! Many theories have been started to this end, notably those of Strauss and Renan in recent times, the mythical and the romantic. Who believes in them now? And what I must call the puerile theories of the author of "Natural law in the spiritual world" will go the way of all the "vain things" that men "imagine," either against or in apology for the word of God. But all this ingenuity so far clears the way. Each fantastic bubble bursts, and other interpretations must be invented by a necessary process of elimination. Will all possible explainings away of the Bible be exhausted in time? I fear not. Old weapons are often refurbished. Alas! the intellect tricks the soul, and thus hides the deformity of the alienated will. Indeed the chief hindrance to the entrance of the truth lies less in the intellect than in the will, though doubtless the head possesses a terrible leverage in preventing the heart from bowing to God.

Lastly, I see in the Man Christ Jesus, the Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, the second Head of our race. Scripture owns but two men: the first man, Adam, fell; the second Man, the last Adam, "restored that which He took not away." Jesus is "Christus Consummator." He is also the Head of the church, which is His mystical body, and by His blood He has made — is — propitiation for the whole world. "There is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved." "Ye must be born again," said the Saviour. How peremptory are the "musts" of scripture! But one pathetic "must" indicates the manner of the others. "The Son of Man must be lifted up." Yet was He the same Who had said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." What mere man might dare to utter such words? Certainly there is no rest apart from Him. But that there is rest in Him, let the myriads testify who have bowed at the name of JESUS. R. Beacon, Jr.

S. The Dream of Pilate's Wife

The Dream of Pilate's Wife

Matthew 27:19 This is a unique incident in the Gospels, peculiar to St. Matthew; yet, however slight it may seem, we may be sure there was a divine reason for its insertion in an inspired writing, where nothing is casual. Seemingly the verse containing it might be removed without affecting the sense or the sequence of the passage. The contrast between Pilate's better spirit and the envenomed malice of the chief priests would be equally vivid. But the statement anent Pilate's wife clearly shows that he was somewhat at least influenced by her. It is well known that such influence was often exerted by women, and naturally exercised as a rule on the side of mercy. Indeed, the Romans on this very account objected to provincial governors taking their wives with them, lest they should be deflected from the line of rigid justice. And we know how severe the Romans were, though there was much that was excellent in their discipline. Every student of Roman history is aware how conspicuously the manlier virtues stand out in the records of her chroniclers.

But, with dominion, luxury and scepticism had increased, and there was a condition of over-elaborated culture that is only too closely paralleled by not a little that we see around us now. It is always so in the history of nations: first, power; then, wealth and luxury; then, degeneracy. And of such overripe, exotic culture Pilate was probably a crucial type. His very question, "What is truth?" addressed to our Lord, indicated the languid cynicism with which he regarded the matter. For undoubtedly the interpretation placed on the question by Lord Bacon, usually so sage and shrewd, is quite wide of the mark. That great philosopher says in one of his famous essays: "What is truth, said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." But Pilate was not jesting at all; his question was simply the outcome of his despairing pessimism. Alas! he knew not that Truth embodied in a Person, in the Son of man, stood before him. But of this presently. Meanwhile, it is easy to realise how in his wavering mind the admonition of his wife must have reinforced the arguments suggested by his intellectual keenness, and perhaps some vestiges of compassion. But to return to Claudia Procula, the name (according to tradition) of the lady whose disturbed dream is recorded by the Evangelist. And, first of all, may we not surmise, for the reason stated above, viz., that nothing is casual or insignificant in scripture, that it was not merely superstitious feeling that prompted her action; that her heart, nay, perhaps her conscience in some measure had been reached in God's mysterious providence, and that, if not then, yet in the sequel she may really have bowed to Him who is the Truth, as He is the Way and the Life — the only Saviour? Of course, it would be unwise to dogmatise; the evidence is not forthcoming, and speculation, unsatisfactory at all times, is nowhere more so than when indulged in the things of God. We simply do not know; we can only recognise the numerous ways that the Spirit of God has of dealing with men and women, and that dreams at times have played a not unimportant part in spiritual experiences. But it is far from unlikely that Claudia may have seen our Lord. What more probable than that, on one or more of her comings and goings to and from her husband's palace, she may have come across Him during His visits to Jerusalem, or even elsewhere? There may have been a

great concourse, as on the day when the Lord repaired to the house of Jairus, and when He healed the woman with the issue of blood. We know how dense the throng was on that occasion, and on some similar one the litter, borne by numerous slaves, of the highly-placed Roman lady may have been, in modern parlance, "held up." Then she may have beheld that gracious Presence, and God may have first led her to see something awe-inspiring as well as holy in "that just man.", Either this, or it was revealed to her in the dream itself that He was something far above the common run of men. All this may have been. Now let us turn to the application.

I suppose this verse is not very frequently selected as a text. In the course of a fairly long life I have heard hundreds of sermons (some of the best by lips never more to be heard on earth), but never from Matthew 27:19 : "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." Nay, but with Him we must all have to do. Claudia Procula, and her husband the Roman Governor, and all mankind — as Saviour or as Judge. Of course, we know what she meant. She did not wish Pilate to take upon himself the responsibility of condemning an innocent man. Somehow she knew He was innocent; nay, just, for she does not use a merely negative term. Truly, if she knew little, and was still far from the kingdom of God, the Governor was much farther off. He certainly thought the lowly prisoner at the bar at whose claims to kingship he had half-contemptuously, half-pityingly marvelled, had to do with him, Pontius Pilate, the representative of the mighty Empire of Rome. "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee" (John 19:10). We all know with what divine dignity and calm the blessed Lord replied. No wonder the Governor was more and more perplexed. Yes, all of us must have to do with "that just man." Blessed are they who have to do with Him now, who bow to Him now, and prove the value of His precious blood that cleanseth from every sin. Is it not striking how unconsciously Pilate's wife deprecates what is imperative for all of us, if we would be saved? Of course, she was right from her limited point of view. But, how terrible to have no link with Him! This poor woman little knew how far it was from being merely a question of common rectitude in a ruler; little knew that the terrible thing would be, if Christ let her alone! if God said, as once of old, "Ephraim is joined unto idols; let him alone." Nay, that were the most dreadful thing of all — to be let alone now, to be judged in a future day! For "all things are naked and opened before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Let us have to do with Him now.

Pilate's indecision brought, it would seem, additional suffering on our Lord. Avowing that he found no evil in Him, yet he had Him scourged, and what he proposed as an alternative to the crucifixion was really an aggravation of the Saviour's bitter pains. For after all, and against his better judgment, the Governor, spite of his wife's remonstrances, was craven enough to yield to the wicked importunity of the Sanhedrin. He had, we know, very cogent reasons for giving way to the Jews, inasmuch as he was in very bad odour in Palestine because of his misdeeds. He was therefore, as St. Mark tells us (Mark 15:15), "willing to content the people." He did not doubt for a moment that his prisoner had to do with him as duly appointed judge. Poor, unhappy Pilate! His was a sad record, and tradition has it that he committed suicide in Gaul. Legend also became busy with his history in connection with Mount Pilatus, in Switzerland. A small thing for him that his name is immortal with unenviable notoriety by reason of his association with that very One whom he doubtless regarded as merely a Galilean peasant. Yet but for this connection with the Saviour of mankind he would probably have been no more famous than any other governor of an (in Roman eyes) unimportant province. It is singular to think how his name is daily heard in the creeds

of Christendom. Alas! no mere outward link avails. The Roman Governor was confident that our Lord had to do with him; he did not know that he and all mankind have to do with Christ. And so he gave orders that it should be as the chief priests required. And in the energetic and most pathetic language of St. Luke 23:25, "He released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will." For, as we read, they asked for Barabbas, whose name, by a singular coincidence, means "son of the father." The true Son of the Father was crucified. But to return to Pilate's demand, "What is truth?" This is a question that is asked now-a-days often enough, sometimes half languidly, or half cynically, as Pilate asked it. Others say we must ever pursue after it, but never imagine we have got it. And if by truth people mean mere knowledge, they are undoubtedly quite right. For is not science ever having to revise her judgments? A notable instance of this occurred only recently, when the discovery of radium and radio-activity threw much suspicion on the soundness of a long-established chemical axiom, viz., that each element is essentially differentiated from every other. Yet long ago Sir William Hamilton, a noted Scottish philosopher, declared that of things in themselves we could know nothing. Even so; and that spite of the marvellous and, in themselves, most admirable discoveries of science. But "the truth, where is that?" Only in Christ, even as grace and truth come by Him. "God," scripture declares, "is light," and "God is love." Love and Light revealed to guilty sinners take the shape of grace and truth. And as our Lord reveals, nay, is "the truth" (i.e., He reveals God to me, shows me what I am, and what God is; also shows the remedy for me, else it were sad indeed), what is revealed is fact. Christianity rests on the bedrock of fact. The well-known creeds of Christendom were attempts to embody these facts, at least the main ones, in succinct language; and with all their defects, they have doubtless been a help to very many. It need hardly be said that no formal recitation of a creed, however correct, can save the soul. Moreover, they are not inspired; the scriptures are, and we must ever refer all to the "word and the testimony." Probably in the past, when few comparatively could read, the salient facts of Christianity were by such means conveniently committed to memory. And Christianity is either fact or fiction. We cannot have it both ways, as so many, alas! in a vague and indifferent fashion, are content to do. The resurrection, in short, may not be spiritualised. As one has said, "unless we believe as literally in the resurrection of Christ as in His death and burial, we are not Christians at all." Thus wrote many years ago the late Bishop of Durham. But the majority of the readers of this magazine will rightly regard this most important statement as too obvious to need emphasising. Christianity requires no vehement protestations in defence of its supernatural origin. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). And may we not say, in conclusion, that all who believe thank God for opening their eyes, thank Him that they have had to do with His Son in this day of His grace? R.B.

S. The Four Witnesses.

The Four Witnesses.

John 5:32-40. The Lord Jesus, as a Divine Person, was His own adequate witness: "Though I bear record of myself," He says, "yet is my record true" (John 8:14). But here He presses on the Jews the important fact that, apart from His own, the testimony to His paramount and exclusive claims is fourfold. In truth, it was not possible that the testimony to Christ should proceed from Himself alone. The record of such as could produce no corroborative witness must be, He tells us in this chapter, self-condemning. And then the blessed Lord informs His hearers who His witnesses are. First the Baptist, then the supreme testimony of the Father, thirdly the Son's works, and lastly the scriptures the three last, needless to say, unfaltering; the first marked by the short-coming inseparable from men. But this was at a later day, when John the Baptist apparently yielded for a moment to the depressing influences of his prison-house, and sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He really were the Messiah. This seems indubitable, and the words of our Lord in reply, "Go and tell John," do not bear out the surmise of some that he sent his disciples to Christ for their sakes alone. Yet had his testimony been most clear and cogent, befitting one who was a burning and a shining lamp, as the Lord (reversing the position, and bearing witness to His "Messenger") calls John in this chapter. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29; John 1:36). Is it not striking that the one who was sent in Elijah's spirit and power, in a spirit of judgment and condemnation of evil, should be the first to point to the Lamb of God as the Sin-bearer? So it was "one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues" that showed to another John the bride, the Lamb's wife. So the Christ, the King of Judah, came "meek, and sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass": there is, as one has said, "the meekness of the Lion of Judah, and the wrath of the slain Lamb."

Next comes the greater witness of the Father, notably evidenced at our Lord's baptism, where indeed we see the three Persons of the Trinity manifested, and likewise at a later day on the Mount of Transfiguration, when a voice came from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." But no doubt our Lord was alluding to His baptism on this occasion. It was not the last voice from heaven to sustain Him for we read in chapter 12. of this Gospel how there came an answer to His cry that the Father would glorify His name. That cry was answered; the immediately preceding one, "Father, save me from this hour," was, one might almost say, recalled by the Holy Sufferer; and so the Father witnesses. The works constitute the third witness, or "signs," as they are so habitually called in St. John's Gospel. And this naturally links them with testimony. Jesus did a beginning of "signs" in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory. The other words, used in scripture to describe our Saviour's mighty works, viz., "wonders," and "powers," point to certain essential characteristics of His operation. It is natural that He whose very name is "Wonderful" (Isaiah 9:6) should do "wonders;" as also that "power" should proceed from Him who is the Mighty God, as we read in the same passage of the great evangelical prophet. When Christ speaks of "virtue" going out of Him, in the case of the woman with the issue of blood, the word in the Greek means "power" (*dunamis*). It is not the same word as

in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." There it should be "authority." So likewise in John 1:12, "To them gave he authority", or title, etc. But though our Lord's works be both "powers" and "wonders," neither of these characteristics seems to be what the Holy Ghost would bring most prominently before the believer's mind, but rather that they be regarded as "signs" (semeia). The Latin-English word "miracle," as is obvious, directs attention more to their strangeness and surprising character, and it is somewhat unfortunate that Christ's works should be habitually designated by so inadequate a term.

It is interesting too, and somewhat confirmatory of the above reflections, that when the Holy Spirit characterises the evil works and miracles of antichrist, they are called "lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9), though "signs" is also among the designations. More corroborative is the verse, "all the world wondered after the Beast." At any rate, though Christ's works are sometimes called "signs" alone, and "powers" alone, they are never called "wonders" alone. "Signs" then they are pre-eminently, signs of the presence of One greater than Moses, greater than Solomon, and greater than the temple. They were the suited, appointed, and inalienable concomitants of the Incarnation.

Here a wide vista opens out, for all those works of beneficent healing (two only of Christ's miracles were destructive, of the fruitless fig tree, and of the unclean swine, for which there were wise and right reasons — contrast the many judicial miracles of Moses) have each their special place in setting forth the varied glories and the different aspects of the work of the Divine Redeemer. And they are living now.

Lastly, we have the testimony of the scriptures. At a later day the Lord, unto the favoured two who journeyed to Emmaus, expounded in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. "All things had to be fulfilled that were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms" concerning Himself. We, happily, need no assurance that so it is, and that both in O.T. and in N.T., implicitly or explicitly, all points to Christ — sacrifice and sacred vessel, an Abel, an Isaac, and a David. In short, the scriptures testify of Him, and, as the Lord bore witness to John the Baptist (who ought even to have borne unwavering witness to Him), so He vindicates the holy scriptures with the finality of His word. The Pharisees admitted they told of eternal life, yet neglected them in all but a superficial and mechanical interest. It was but an otiose acceptance, not an honest belief. Had they believed Moses, they must have believed Christ and believed in Him too, which is a further thing.

Moderns (sad to say, but alas! the too notorious fact) are bolder than the Jews; for they (professing Christians) deny that the Bible contains words of eternal life. The spirit of criticism has become a craze, almost a mania of unbelief. There is legitimate criticism, no doubt; but how little of this latter-day variety is such? It was strikingly remarked in a recent defence of God's word, that no spirit is more unlike the spirit of the Bible than the modern critical spirit. This witness is true. The critics seem incapable of seizing the vital force and divine beauty of the scriptures. But it is strikingly in accord with what is written, that the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. . . . because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Meanwhile the hungry sheep are not fed, while those who take the place of teachers, if not shepherds, would reduce God's word to the level of a literary phenomenon. But, as was finely said by a preacher recently deceased, "Jesus is not a phenomenon; He is bread: Christ is not a curiosity; He gives the water

of life." And in the scriptures alone is the truth concerning Him, and they, not the church, nor the creeds (useful as these may be when sound), are the sole and authoritative standard. Thus as they have a double function (for directly they do bear witness to the Christ), they also contain the record of His wonderful "signs," and of the supreme testimony of the Father. "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27). R.B.

S. The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture

"The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." In the April number of a popular periodical an article appears bearing the title of "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." It comes from the pen of one who is unquestionably a leader of men in the sphere of politics, no other than Mr. Gladstone, the glamour of whose name is sufficient to dazzle the minds of many, and to clothe his remarks with an air that would silence most objectors. As the subject of his paper is of the highest importance, and has relation to man's eternal interests, I do not think it unbecoming, or presumptuous, to offer a few words upon what so vitally concerns one. This paper which purports to be the first of a series has for the faithful a pleasing and high-sounding title; but we have not to wait for the last to know that the promise is only to the ear and eye. The reality offered is rather "the sand," and utterly subversive of the truth of a revelation from God to man. For if imperfect comprehension, and imperfect expression characterised the "vehicle," 1: e., the man who received the first communication from God, then we certainly have not God's word to man, but only man's word about God. Of the title "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture" Mr. G. says "it sounds like a challenge." And the challenge is to accept the scriptures, on the moral and spiritual and historical ground of their characters in themselves. What all this means, or the latent thought wrapped up in it, comes out soon. The challenge is as high-sounding as the title, but, when stripped of its wordy garment, it stands before us in its naked repulsiveness as a challenge to accept the Bible as a Divine Revelation, after the critic has deprived it of all its. real and peculiar authority and value.

Mr. G. would contend for the scriptures "as corresponding by their contents to the idea of a divine revelation to man." This idea is then outside and independent of the scripture. For to attempt to prove the correspondence between the scripture and an idea is valueless. It would seem that man has it through the "known divine operations in other spheres" (I suppose, the material creation, and providence). How does man know apart from the Bible that there are divine operations in other spheres? The ancient pagans saw these self-same operations, but looked at them as the operations of nature, and concluded that nature was eternal. If he admits — as he must — that these divine operations. in other spheres are only known through the scripture, his reasoning amounts to this, that by the Bible-we know that these operations in other spheres are divine; and then, by a change of front, these same operations are proof that the Bible is a divine revelation. Is this logic? Is it not rather arguing in a circle? There must be a fixed point to begin with. That fixed point every believer has by faith in God's word (Hebrews 11:1-2). All this illogical shuffle is because he says holy scripture is a divine revelation, in which nevertheless we see the imperfection and failing memory, etc., of man. But if he does not admit receiving this "idea" from the Bible, we can only ask where did he get it? Was it from the prehistoric documents of other religions, or from himself?

There is no need to notice more than one or two points; the aim and infidel character of this article (I grieve to say it of a professedly religious man), is patent. His point of departure is this, "And yet on the very threshold I embrace, in what I think a substantial sense, one of the great canons of modern criticism which teaches us that the scriptures are to be treated like any other book in the

trial of their title." Mark it well: the Bible (he talks of venerating it) is brought down to the level of any other book! If he really believed it God's word, would he dare thus treat it? That one of the shameless and morally despicable Oxford Essayists so spoke is the fact: but does the Anglican Mr. G. accept that rationalism as the truth? The holy scripture reveals to us man's sin and ruin, God's judgment, grace and redemption through Christ. Is that to be treated like any other book? But Mr. G. has applied "modern criticism," the shallowest quack of a day shallow in faith, which sits in judgment upon God's word, and leaves us — NOTHING! God's word proclaims its own title, and admits of no trial. "Thus saith the Lord." Mr. G., in charging the book with imperfections, etc., virtually denies it to be the word of God. This is Mr. G.'s "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." Is language only to be used to conceal thought and to deceive? This is intolerable enough in the House, or at the hustings: what is it when one takes the chain of divinity with God's word as the theme? It will charm freethinkers of every shade. "The many diversified [= contradictory] utterances it contains proceeded from man." Is this true or false? Is it so, a believer speaks of "holy scripture"? Man's copies, and translations is not the point; for "the question whether through supernatural guidance [i.e., whether they were inspired] they were for this purpose more than men is to be determined like other disputable questions by the evidence." So then it is a "disputable question" whether God has spoken through men or not! Is it harsh to call this paper infidel?

"Thus the accuracy of the text, the age, and authorship of the books open up a vast field of merely literary controversy." How he confounds "holy scripture" with human copies and translations and external or subordinate questions! He owns his ignorance of Hebrew. Therefore the "accuracy of the text" is for him the accuracy of the translation, so far as the Old Testament is concerned. But it is enough for him that the chronologies of the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch are variant, to doubt the accuracy of the text, that is "holy scripture." Who says that the versions of the Bible are inspired? "And such a question as whether the closing verses of St. Mark's Gospel have the authority of scripture must be determined by literary evidence, as much as the genuineness of the pretended preface to the Aeneid, or of a particular stanza in Catallus." How utterly absent from his mind is the thought that he is speaking of God's book! The pretended preface, the stanza, and the close of Mark's Gospel to him stand side by side. If the close of Mark's Gospel be not scripture, prove it if you can, but know that your canon of modern criticism is not sufficient. Can we wonder that infidelity so pervades the "masses," when the man who would pose as their champion, or advocate, can so write? The progress of infidelity is not more due to the lectures and writings of the avowed sceptic than to such as, professing Christianity, sap its foundation. But there is more which cannot leave a doubt in any right mind, that the Bible as the word of God is denied." I will remind the reader that those who believe in divine revelation, as pervading or as contained in the scriptures, and especially who accept the doctrine of literalism as to the vehicle of that inspiration have to lay their account with the following (among other) considerations, which it is hard for them to repudiate as inadmissible. There may have been," and then follow the considerations, seven in number, which treat the text and the copies as the same, that effectually denies "inspiration," and if there is no inspiration there is no "holy scripture." But what are these weighty considerations? "(1) Imperfect comprehension of that which was communicated. (2) Imperfect expression of what had been comprehended." Now these two are essentially a denial of "holy scripture" as a revelation from God. The remaining five points have their importance as regards copies and translations into different languages. But the accuracy of copies and translations is a small matter compared to the question in the first two considerations,

which is — If God was pleased to give a revelation to man, could He not, nay, would He not, enable the man whom He chose as His "vehicle" to comprehend perfectly, and to express perfectly, what He in love was pleased to communicate? To attribute possible imperfect comprehension or imperfect expression to the "vehicle" is a denial of God's wisdom, His care and love; of His wisdom in using an imperfect instrument; of His care and love for a lost world in not (for the time) fitting the "vehicle" to give without possibility of error His own thoughts and words. The word of God gives explicit answers to both these "considerations." As to imperfect comprehension "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Does Mr. G. suppose the Holy Ghost was not able to make them comprehend? Then as to imperfect expression "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth," read 1 Corinthians 2:13. In presence of these scriptures the two considerations above are nothing short of infidelity. But more: 2 Timothy 3:16 declares that "every scripture is inspired of God and profitable," or, if we take it as is possible, "every scripture, being inspired of God, is also profitable," it comes substantially to the like result of flatly contradicting on God's part this unholy canon. Scripture, observe, is the grand safeguard for the last days, for modern times. Would that Mr. G. and thousands like him laid it to heart! All holy writ is said or assumed to be inspired of God.

Mr. G. thinks it a legitimate question to discuss about the books of the Bible, differing so much "from the other documents of pre-historic religions, while they too [the other documents] are precious in various ways, as to make them witnesses and buttresses to the office of holy scripture rather than sharers in it, although in their degree they may be this also." What can this mean, but that admitting the "holy scripture" to be a divine revelation, these "other documents" may be such also in their degree. We shall soon have revelation stamped upon all the books of prehistoric religions ever known. "Prehistoric" is a convenient word for "modern criticism," which pretends to look back into the past, and surmise at least the existence of "other documents" independent of the Bible, and in their degree divine! What is the meaning of a measured divinity? The aim is clear: to lower the scriptures; to exalt ancient impostures.

We could smile at this, were not the theme so solemn. There is in the word of God a very serious "consideration" for those who make void the word of God by their traditional teaching; what about those who say that the Bible is in part a forgery? Mr. G. by the aid of "modern criticism" has come to that conclusion. "It has long been known, for example, that portions of the historical books of the Old Testament, such as the Books of Chronicles, were of a date very far later than most of the events which they record, and that a portion of the prophecies included in the Book of Isaiah were later than his time, etc." Well, the Books of the Chronicles go up to Adam no doubt and thus may be said to be very far later than the events! But it is false of the closing events recorded. Does the man expect a record of the events before the events themselves occur? Immediately, or even considerably after does not touch the truthfulness of the record. A child would know that the events must happen before they can be recorded. Is it a sly insinuation that the so-called record was invented? or that the events as given never occurred at all? This is worthy of a "specialist," of the most destructive critic.

There is no insinuation, but positive statement in what follows, "that a portion of the prophecies included in the Book of Isaiah were later than his time." So then we have quasi-prophecies handed down to us under a false name, endorsed by the Lord and His apostles as we see throughout the N. T.! "Modern criticism" knows better. Is this God's book? is it "holy scripture"? Is it an

"impregnable rock"? For if the Book affirms such and such writings to be the prophecies of Isaiah when they are not, the character of the whole book from Genesis to Revelation is gone. It cannot be holy scripture when there is a lie in it. Think of a man passing as an advocate for the impregnability of the holy scripture, yet affirming that it contains falsehoods! Mr. G. must have drunk copiously from the pool of destructive criticism before he could calmly make such an assertion. He must be much of the same opinion as T. Carlyle — who said of the English people, "mostly fools" — if he thinks that his readers can accept him as an advocate for the "impregnable rock" of holy scripture which he charges with falsehood.

Thus Mr. G. and the "specialist" (a euphemism for an infidel) come into the "open field" of literary criticism, as it were arm in arm, to attack the text, . . . the age and the authorship of holy scripture; and what do they leave us? Can we respect forgeries?

Mr. G. reminds his readers "that those who believe in a divine revelation as pervading or as contained in the scriptures." So then scripture as a whole is not a divine revelation after all, but only contains it! 1:e., you must take the divine revelation out of the scripture, as you take the jewel out of its casket; but he has not told us how, save by "modern criticism," which rejects jewel, and casket, and all.

He says that the form of the older books of the Old Testament does not correspond as a rule with their titles. We ask, Does the form of his paper correspond with its title? The true title of the Bible is found within itself, and we are sure that the form of the book, as a whole, and in all its parts, does correspond with that title. We know that the holy scripture is an impregnable rock; but this Mr. G. in complimentary terms labours to disprove and undermine.

Honest criticism (not of the modern kind) of what uninspired copyists have done is a helpful work to-maintain the purity of the sacred text. It has long been known that some German sceptics, followed by some credulous Englishmen, say that the prophecies under the name of Isaiah are not his, but the work of an impostor; if it were truly so, the book, however wonderful, is not the scripture of God. There is not the slightest need for "specialists" to waste time-and learning (!) upon a book that has long been known as an imposture. In the alleged case we may without fear let the true and the false Isaiah remain side by side within the same covers. How can these men explain that "the great unknown" rises if possible beyond the highest of prophets? (Yet set here and there in this paper are passages which lead one to think, yea to hope that the affections of the writer's heart are in conflict with the infidelity of his intellect. Incontestably there is nothing so sublime, nor such sustained sublimity, as Isa 40:-31 : Is there no key to such perversity of modern criticism? A simple, sufficient, and sure one. They start from the sceptical premise that there is no such thing as true prophecy. They can allow more or less the early chapters to be Isaiah's, as the times were prehistoric. For them the historians must be heathen, or the Jewish of no real value, as writers long after the events. But as the grand strain of Isaiah 40:1-31 :-lxvi., if genuine, is indubitable prophecy, prophecy not merely of Babylon destroyed by Cyrus, but, what is far more serious, of Christ rejected by the Jews, "modern criticism" will not have it. It is not Isaiah, but a pseudo-Isaiah! Q.E.D. But it was certainly even in Greek version long before our Lord was born and rejected by the Jews. How came a pseudo-Isaiah to write Isaiah 53:1-12? The "modern criticism" of Mr. G. is folly as well as infidelity, though he may stop short of its logical and necessary consequences. R. Beacon.

S. The Passover and the Lord's Supper.

The Passover and the Lord's Supper. The cross is the centre of the moral glory of God, the righteous foundation for the display of grace. Truly the cross is "by grace," but the display of grace is by the cross, and grace is God's greatest moral glory. All other revealed glories are subservient to it. There is a glory of creation; but creation, "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," was only the separation of a sphere for the display of the glory of grace. There were manifestations of glory all through from creation to the cross: the glory of judgment sometimes with warning, as the deluge, and Egypt; sometimes sudden like lightning flash, as Sodom and Gomorrah; the glories of patient long-suffering and government as in Israel. But whether we look at the glory of mercy or of judgment, the cross possesses both, and in each outshines all that went before. There was no outlet in heaven, so far as we know, for such a glory as this seen in the cross of Christ. Grace came by Him; when He came into the world, then grace came and was seen in all His words and works while here, yet was He straitened till the work of atonement was wrought. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! "So that not His coming into the world but the manner of His departure is the brightest and fullest display of the glory of grace and truth. The cross removed every righteous hindrance to its shining. By the cross a rebellious creation will be reconciled to God, and believers now are made the righteousness of God. It is the greatest proof of God's love; it magnifies His truth, and exalts His majesty also.

God did not wait for the cross without giving some typical information of the grace to be revealed — only shadows, dark and partial, even illegible till the true Light shone. Now all is clear and distinct. From Abel's lamb and onward every sacrifice previous to the cross contained the idea of life forfeited; even the burnt offerings in worship embodied the fact that man was a sinner and incurred the penalty of death. Otherwise Cain's offering would have been accepted. There was neither blood nor death in his offering; therefore he and his offering were rejected. Also in the offerings with blood there was a foreshadowing of the atonement made by the blood of Christ. But it was only at the passover that the initiatory truth and starting-point of all God's gracious dealings with man was set forth.

It was a question between a righteous God and a sinful man; and the first point was — If God wills not the death of the sinner, how are the demands of the Righteous Judge to be met? Mercy pleaded for the sinner's life; but there was a preferential claim, and the Judge was inexorable and would have the uttermost farthing, before any consideration of mercy could be entertained towards the guilty sinner. We know that the inexorability of the Judge affords the greatest proof of the infinite mercy of God. He gave the Son of His love that those who hated Him might live. And God commends His love to us (Romans 5:8) in Christ's dying for us while yet sinners. But it is God as Judge which is the prominent idea in the passover. Every blessing flows from it. Still on that night the word was "I will pass over:" not communion with God, but barring out judgment; God as Judge was going through the land, searching for sinners, not to save but to slay. Blood by His own appointment turns away His eye from the sinner, and the Judge passes on as if there were no

sinners in the house. "When I see the blood, I will pass over." While the blood upon the door-post prevented the entrance of judgment, other truths were typified in the house, truth beyond the intelligence of the Israelite. But God was setting forth truth for us as well as for Israel. Eating the lamb was a symbolic owning that the blood on the door-post was a substitute for their own. In some measure this is identification with the lamb; not the truth brought out after the cross, that we have with Christ died to sin and law, which goes with assurance of life (Romans 6:1-23; Romans 7:1-25); but that they as sinners were deserving of death, yet were sheltered by the blood of the typical lamb. This confession of having deserved death was not to be lightly made; there must be with it a realizing the bitterness of sin, "with bitter herbs" (that is, genuine repentance, a turning to God) to be eaten with unleavened bread. No allowance or excuse for sin can be: those who eat the roast lamb eat it with bitter herbs and under the shelter of the blood. With all this there is no assurance of life nor sense of justification. It is the moral and necessary preparation, typically, for God righteously to lead out His chosen people from the land of bondage. As there must be a divine and adequate reason why the sinner should live — the sprinkled blood, so there must be a moral preparation of the soul. The divine ground of deliverance was outside for the eye of God, the moral preparation was inside. Therefore not only the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, but they eat in haste, standing staff in hand and their feet shod. They were thus ready and fitted by grace to be led out of the land of bondage — of sin — by the mighty hand of God who had found a ransom. This moral preparation however would have been vain, had it not been for the blood sprinkled on the door-post. For if the Avenger entered, neither the bitter herbs nor the unleavened bread could save them: God is Judge first, then is Saviour. This marks the order of God's dealings with every soul brought to Him and it is seen in the word, Repent and believe. For what is repentance if not the unfeigned judgment of self in the presence of God? The repentance which does not turn to God is like the mere remorse of Judas. He hanged himself. His real state was the terror and despair of the lost, not God-given; for when God gives repentance, He also gives faith in His mercy through Christ. Where genuine, these are never separated though distinct. But in the order of thought is repentance, then faith, and so the word, — Repent and believe.

Many preach faith and put repentance in the background. No doubt the judgment of sin in our nature is far deeper after the knowledge of forgiveness; but this does not set aside repentance as faith's first step in coming to God. Faith in the Saviour is impossible unless there be a sense of condemnation. Faith (so called) if preached alone may produce joyful happiness; but there will be no deepness of earth, and what appears will soon wither away. Many sad proofs we know. The passover is the key to all God's ways with Israel. While they were simply under the blood (i.e. from Egypt to Sinai), there is not even a reproach from God for their sins. It was only after they put themselves under law that judgment appeared. But the blood of the passover, which God had seen, was still efficacious, although its full effect as to display was hindered by law. At the second giving of the law when mercy and its provisions for the involuntary transgressor are so largely blended with the requirements of righteousness, its sheltering power is seen. And its importance as the ground of forbearance and grace is such that the law, whose full effect upon the transgressor is restrained by it, nevertheless makes room for it, and enforces its observance with a penalty. Any soul not keeping it was cut off. The Israelite whether at home or on a journey was bound to keep it. Even in some cases when ceremonially unclean one could not neglect it (see Numbers 9:10). In the passover as well as in all the sacrifices enjoined by law there was the constant remembrance of sins. The blood of bulls and of goats was ever unable to give a purged

conscience (Heb. x); God waited for the cross to bestow this. There was an outward purifying of the flesh; but rites could not purge the conscience nor make the comers thereunto perfect. These sacrifices were only types and in themselves nothing. Hence men, though keeping the passover, were always subject to bondage through fear of death. David speaks of the blessedness of forgiveness (Psalms 32:1-11), but its presence was not known till Christ died. It was a new thing when the Son of man came with power to forgive sins on the earth, to give its assurance by His death. This was unknown to the saints of old. Nor can we say that they more than hoped for the knowledge of forgiveness. The Passover gives hoped for security from judgment, but not the peace flowing from justification. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4); even this was prophetic. After the cross deeper knowledge of His love flows freely, though the fear of God be ever right. The passover is the initiatory step for a forgiveness founded upon righteousness; it also marks the beginning of a new life. For since it is the ransom for their deliverance from judgment, they could not be left in the land where death reigned. And so God said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." No more Egyptian slavery; henceforward they were free. The power of Egypt was virtually annulled, and the proof was given at the Red Sea which is the necessary complement of the passover. The Egyptian foe lay dead upon the shore never to be seen again. This full result of the passover was before the mind of God when He said, "This month shall be the beginning of months." The passover was not a solitary act beginning and ending with itself; doubtless the first and most important truth in the work of redemption was there signified, but necessarily followed by other truth, and a new start for the ransomed is the consequent truth here. "The first month of the year to you." This comprehensive word was given to Moses and Aaron (Exodus 12:1); to the congregation the detail is given for the first observance, and afterwards as a memorial. Israel was slow to enter into the meaning of the sprinkled blood, and consequently did not apprehend the beginning of new life save in a carnal way. Believers now know it in its spiritual power; for we look not at a mere type but rejoice in the knowledge of the finished work of Christ, and therefore if any man be in Him he is a new creation. Nor does a soul when first apprehended by God learn this truth; it is after deliverance is realized and consciously out of Egypt, the Red Sea passed through — death and resurrection — that this new portion is known experimentally. The realized efficacy of the sprinkled blood was on that night limited to their condition. How could they take in all the passover foreshadowed while yet in Egypt? All then known was that the blood upon the door-post, barred the entrance of death, and preserved their first-born alone. They were not yet delivered, though they had the pledge for every one that looked beyond that night. This partial apprehension of the truth contained in the passover is indicated by "every man according to his eating shall make your count of the lamb."

Many who are truly born of God are as to spiritual condition and intelligence yet in Egypt, having a hope not unmingled with fear that God will pass over their sins and judge mildly. Assurance and settled peace are lacking. God as Father is unknown; and there is no communion so long as they are in this Egypt condition. There is faith in the blood as interposing between themselves and judgment, but even this often disturbed by doubt. Much of the teaching of the present day does not go beyond this, for the teacher has not advanced farther. How can he lead others? Not that those in this condition have no seasons of joy, for God is very gracious and draws them with the cords of love; but a full redemption is not enjoyed and their peace is according to their eating. This lack of intelligence and of faith cannot impair the intrinsic worth of Christ as set forth by the paschal lamb.

If man failed to apprehend, it was all there before God; and a fitting type is chosen to express the holy nature and immaculate purity of the person of Christ: "A lamb without blemish, a male of the first year." Israel afterwards was reproached with offering the lame and that which was torn by beasts. God selected that which was in nature the purest as the emblem of Him who was absolutely without sin. The angel said to Mary, "That holy thing;" and Christ, whose holy human nature was but imperfectly shadowed by the innocent lamb, lived apart from sinners though among them, and from nature's relationships (a lamb of the first year) though in truest sympathy with those whose hearts were wrung with nature's sorrows.

Then comes the order and manner of eating the passover. But it was not enough to eat, the flesh of a slain lamb: God orders how it must be eaten. "Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs and the purtenance thereof." Fire is symbolic of the judgment of God. Christ was made sin, and as such bore the judgment of sin. Now that all is done, we know that He is more than the roast lamb. He is also the bread which came down from heaven; but first for every soul brought to God He is the lamb roast with fire. So it is not merely a slain lamb that meets the sinner's need, but also roast with fire. "Eat not of it raw or sodden at all with water."

Yet there are those who make the incarnation of Christ of all importance rather than His death. But Christ came to die, to be sin-bearer, and as such to glorify God: how can His life or His coming into the world be the turning-point, and not His death? Can such teachers have ever realised their condition as lost and under condemnation? Surely the words "sin" and "atonement" are to them without meaning. They would feed upon an unslain Lamb. Christ in this world and not dying would only make man more guilty and hopelessly under condemnation and the law. It is the sentimentality of nature and nothing more to talk about the incarnation and life of Christ apart from the object for which He became incarnate. His life is truly the pattern, the model of holy living, obedience, and self-abnegation; but not to man until he has been under the sprinkled blood, and has "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." To die as an offering for sin was His purpose: otherwise there would have been no incarnation. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him, said our Lord with His death in view. The preciousness of the worth of Christ is indicated by the command to burn all that remained of the lamb uneaten. On that night each fed upon it "according to his eating." There was much more than any Israelite could then apprehend, for it was a whole Christ there typified. Was that to be vain which man in Egypt could not understand? Nay — gather up the fragments that nothing be lost. What remained until the morning was returned to God who knew its priceless worth. That lamb was God's feast, and what man could not eat went up to Him in fire. But "burnt with fire" tells too of the unsparing judgment of God; the whole lamb was roast with fire and all that remained was burnt in the morning. All that Christ was was offered to God, for nothing less than a whole Christ could hear all God's judgment.

Next comes the ordinance of the passover as a memorial. God is looking to the future: as each year rolled on, this self-same day was to be observed as a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It is called a feast to the Lord. Why is mention only made of unleavened bread for the seven days that follow? God was looking onward and beyond Israel to the church when the Israelitish branches of the olive-tree of testimony would be broken off. There is rest from the exercises represented by bitter herbs for a soul that has intelligence and faith in the already finished work of Christ. He bore our sins and judgment; this purges the conscience and there is no room for bitter herbs. And a purged conscience is so much the greater reason why we should

purge ourselves from all the contamination of leaven. Our whole life here below, typified by the seven days, is characterized by unleavened bread. In Leviticus 23:1-44 : where we have the feasts of the Lord, the seven days of unleavened bread are called a feast, and distinctly separated from the fourteenth day at, even when the passover is eaten. From the fifteenth to the twenty-first day inclusive is the feast of unleavened bread, during which all servile work is forgotten. Exodus 12:1-51 : prohibits leaven under the penalty of death. It is in keeping with the righteousness of God, that God's wrath is also revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Leviticus 23:4-8, though after Israel had broken the law which they promised to obey, yet as being a feast to the Lord, omits the failure of man and its consequences. It is the Lord's passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even, and on the fifteenth the seven days' feast of unleavened bread begins.

It is to this scripture that Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast. The feast here is not the Lord's Supper, but the life-long feast of unleavened bread which begins when consciously under the shelter of the sprinkled blood, and continues to the end: the old leaven, and the leaven of malice and wickedness, all put away, and, in place thereof, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This clear reference of the apostle to Leviticus 23:1-44 : makes abundantly plain that God had the church in view and not a mere ordinance for Israel. The church was always in the mind of God and has its own peculiar part in the ordinances given to Israel. Separation from evil is our feast of unleavened bread and the memorial of Christ our passover sacrificed for us. In Israel, the memorial of the passover was to be observed in all their generations after the manner of its institution. This which is for Israel alone is separated from that which has its present fulfilment in the church. Accordingly in Exodus 12:1-51 : where the memorial is given (and in spirit to be observed by every saint of whatever dispensation) and Israel's manner of observing it, the former is in the words of God to Moses and the latter in the words of Moses to the people, And it is according to the wisdom of God that he who was the mediator of the old covenant should be God's mouthpiece to Israel; as also when the church and its special privileges are my view, we have the words direct from God Himself.

Israel must keep the anniversary of their deliverance in the same way as they did eat the passover in Egypt, with loins girded, feet shod, staff in hand, and in haste. "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say to you, What mean you by this service, that ye shall say, It is the Lord's passover." It was truly an unwonted way of keeping a feast, standing and eating in haste. No wonder if the children should ask the meaning. But it was God's way of bringing vividly to their remembrance their previous bondage and His most marvellous way of delivering. Type too of a far greater deliverance, it was fitting to have a perpetual memorial; which the Red Sea had not, although it was there that power was openly displayed. The nations heard of the signal judgment upon Pharaoh and his host; but did they hear of blood sprinkled upon the door-post, of the way in which a sin-judging God interposed to save His people from judgment? The blood on the door-post is the foundation of all; the passover is God's feast, its memorial is for ever.

1884 82 Israel has not yet kept the feast of unleavened bread in the spirit of Exodus 12:1-51 : or Leviticus 23:1-44 : They quickly fell into the condition given in Numbers 9:6, of the men who were defiled by the dead body of a man. It is expressive of their condition at that very moment. They had touched sin which brings death and were defiled. Historically it was a new question for Moses, and he enquires of the Lord. God in answer meets the present case and provides for another. The man

that was on a journey as well as the unclean by reason of a dead body, both shall keep the passover unto the Lord. God marks their want of care in keeping the passover while proving His mercy to them. The man who could not eat the passover at the appointed season, because he was defiled or on a journey, was to eat it on the fourteenth day of the second month. He might have to eat it alone; at all events he was not in fellowship with Israel eating it in the first month. But see 2 Chronicles 30:1-27 : where a nation eats the Passover in the second month. As to the particular meaning of eating the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month instead of the first month, I wait for further light, unless it be an intimation of their state as then nationally defiled. But two things are evident that sin brought in disorder, and that God in sovereign grace provides a remedy — a remedy which, while meeting the need of His failing people, declares more fully the riches of grace. The Lord's supper contains more than the passover. As presented in the Gospels it is the continuation of the passover but under a new aspect, and the outward form of memorial changed. The broken bread is the symbol of His body given for us, the wine of His blood which does not merely screen from judgment, but was shed for the remission of sins. The supper has two aspects which we may be permitted to distinguish as the kingdom aspect and the church aspect. In the three Synoptic Gospels the Lord's supper is given in its connection with the kingdom, save that in Luke we have its character of grace beside, but not quite so fully as in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 : where we have the distinctive and special church characteristics of the Lord's supper — in remembrance of the Lord, and until He come. Like the passover it is a memorial, but rather of the Lord than of His work, but unlike the passover which is an ordinance for ever, as long as time endures, the supper in its church aspect ceases when the Lord comes. "Until He come." At the last supper, 1:e. the last in its original character, the Lord instituted the new thing, and as recorded in Matt. solely in view of the gathered remnant. The Lord looked onward to this last passover when, in virtue of His atoning work on the cross, He would set aside the old form; and He said "with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." But this in Luke (where the Lord joins the supper with the remembrance of His person) is not merely the body given and the blood, the seal of the new covenant and the sure foundation of every blessing, but His person, Himself rather than what we have through Him. Nor need we wonder that He who has proved His love to us personally, when about to give a constantly recurring memorial of Himself as dying for us . . . "Do this in remembrance of me" — should say "with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." As the disciples were constantly in His thoughts, so He would be ever in ours. The linking on of the new thing to the old is evident. "As they were eating" the old passover "Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave to the disciples and said, Take, eat: this is my body." This, not the lamb but the bread broken, is to be the symbol of His body. And now that He was come, bread (which is connected with the thought of Himself as the true bread from heaven) is the most suited symbol. Only here the bread is broken and means death, as well as the blood separate from the body. Death was prefigured in the passover, but in the supper there is more. It is communion with Him as the One that died in our stead and for us. Eating, is always the expression of fellowship. Those who partook of thing's sacrificed to idols had fellowship with demons, and we in partaking of the bread and wine have communion with the body and the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). On the passover night the blood was to be sprinkled on the doorpost; but now under the symbol — wine — we drink it, and by faith realise its power for the remission of sins. Thus eating the bread and drinking the wine is the outward expression that we eat His flesh and drink His blood, without which none can have

life. The gathered remnant on that night were the representatives of all who have since believed in Christ. On the day of Pentecost they were formed into the church of God. This was a new thing, a new position for the believing remnant, and the Lord added daily and soon brought in Gentiles. The church was formed before Gentiles were added to it, and when they were brought in, they did not change the character of the saints as a remnant, of being the continuation of the unbroken line of grace from the beginning. So Paul in Galatians 4:1-31 : does not sever the Jerusalem which is, from the Jerusalem which is in bondage, though he shows how widely distinctive they are. The first in bondage, the second free, still Jerusalem, the two being so far identified that the promise to the first is enjoyed by the second. The prophet who has bewailed the calamities of the earthly Jerusalem looked onward to millennial blessedness (Isaiah 54:1-17 :) But the millennial is not yet come. Meantime the apostle, that is the Spirit of God, takes the promise and endows the church with it. Jerusalem is called the holy city, the city of solemnities, the place where God rests. This will be manifestly so in the millennium, but now for a time the earthly character of the holy city is in abeyance, and the heavenly Jerusalem, from above, is now our mother. Saints were always a remnant, and will be until the reign of peace, when the power and the rule shall be with them and not with the wicked (Daniel 7:18). As a remnant the line of saints is continuous whatever the dispensation, or the name by which God was specially known, whether El Shaddai, Jehovah or Father; and there never was a moment when God had no saint upon the earth. The church position, unknown till Pentecost, is beyond the remnant character of saints. Not as a remnant are we joint-heirs with Christ, not as children of the Jerusalem which is from above are we the members of the body of Christ, but because we are made the church of God by the indwelling Spirit, therefore are we joint-heirs with Christ and members of His body. The characteristic and distinguishing work of the church from every other family of heaven is the being baptized into one body by the Spirit. As the Spirit is one, so is the body. This unity is not predicated of any number of saints save of the church, and it ever subsists — though we may have failed to keep it in the bond of peace. Thus, while the saints of the church have not lost one of the privileges possessed by those of the former dispensation, they have besides unspeakably greater. And the Lord's supper, which in one aspect is a continuation of the passover, is also connected with new truth and higher blessing which the passover never could convey. The Lord's supper is not properly a type of His death as was the passover. It is truly a memorial. Types in scripture are the shadows of things to come; and when the true Lamb was come, there was no more room for the type. The eating and drinking of the bread and the wine are commemorative of the body and of the blood. and was so ordained by the Lord. For He was going away and leaves it memorial of His dying love, though in Matthew and in Mark the prominent thought is not "do this in remembrance of me," but that the blood is shed "for the remission of sins." This would be their joy, the time was coming when He would share it with them again — "drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." it is evident from this that Matthew does not give the church aspect of the supper, while equally plain that it is an advance upon the original passover. For the Lord's supper as enjoyed by the church will cease before we enter the Father's kingdom. But we, beside being the house of God and Christ's one body, — we follow in the wake of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. We share with them in the Father's kingdom, not in the kingdom of the Son of Man 1:1 :e. the millennial earth, but as risen and in bodies of glory. Then the Lord as the risen man in His body of glory, the model after which ours shall be fashioned, will partake with all the risen saints of this new wine, "which cheereth God and man." They will rejoice in the presence of the risen Lord, and

He will rejoice over and with them. This is the Father's kingdom, which does not mean eternity but the heavenly portion of the glorified saints, during the time that man upon the earth is enjoying the blessings of Christ's millennial reign: For the present the Lord would no more drink of the fruit of the vine. He waits to drink new wine with them in a new scene. Clearly the Lord here is not speaking of the joy of the church while here below; for the church of God is never called the Father's kingdom. Nor is the earthly remnant so called, who will again have their feast of the passover, and after a fuller sort (Ezekiel 45:21). Not a lamb, but a bullock, to be followed by sacrifices on each of the following seven days. For then even the earthly remnant will know remission of sins; then will be the new covenant in contrast with the old which sealed death upon the transgressor.

Mark gives the supper from the same standpoint as Matthew, in connection with the kingdom, but with the differences characteristic of each Gospel. In Matthew we see the rejected Messiah with the gathered but despised remnant. In Mark the Lord speaks as Servant. He does not say "with you" when looking onward to the drinking wine in the kingdom. It is not His association with the disciples but His own reward as having perfectly done the will of God that sent Him. When the kingdom of God is come, then the Servant will again drink of the fruit of the vine, but then it will be new. As Servant He does not say "kingdom of my Father," but "kingdom of God." This change and the omission of "with you" are in harmony with the character of Mark's gospel which presents the Lord as a Servant. Kingdom of God has a wider significance than "kingdom of my Father." Wherever righteousness, peace, and joy are found, there is the kingdom of God. These marks will be found among the saints of the millennium in the kingdom of the Son of man, and therefore the kingdom of the heavens is also called the kingdom of God. But the moral marks of the kingdom of God are to be found now, and perhaps with deeper significance, for it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The present time marked by faith and patience is with these moral and spiritual characteristics pre-eminently the kingdom of God. And the Lord drinks of the fruit of the vine now, the new vine of the kingdom, in gathering disciples to His Name and Person. The shame and reproach of the world are joy to those who are thus gathered. The blood here as in Matthew is shed for the remission of the sins of many, both Jews and Gentiles, the "nigh" and the "far off." It is the supper, but not the Lord's supper with its church privileges common to all. The church as such is not in view here, but the kingdom of God which is founded upon the blood of the new covenant. This new covenant is with God's Israel and always gives them the prominent place. They had this pre-eminency during the old covenant until the middle wall of partition was broken down. They will have it again when the saints of the past, and those who now share in the Lord's rejection, drink wine with Him in the Father's kingdom. The old covenant which has vanished away will then be replaced by the new covenant. But whether old or new both are with Israel. No covenant was ever made with the Gentile. Nor is Hebrews 8:1-13 : a covenant with the church, but it declares that all the blessings it will bring to Israel by-and-bye are for the saints now. In Luke as in Mark it is the "kingdom of God" and morally now as well as in the future glory. Also in Luke the far-reaching of grace is more prominent than in the previous Gospels. For Christ is in this Gospel not so much presented in His official relationship to the Jew as in Matthew, or in His service to God as in Mark, but in His connection with man whether Jew or Gentile — Christ The MAN in the activities of grace toward all men. Luke 15:1-32 : gives the key note to Luke's Gospel, as Matthew 13:1-58 : to Matthew's. As regards the disciples this grace takes the form of intense personal affection. What more expressive of His love than when He said "with desire I have desired to eat this passover

with you before I suffer?" This last passover was the right moment for setting aside the old observance of the passover, and instituting the new thing, but it surely tells of His love when He speaks of His intense desire for it. In Luke, as in the others, the supper is the pledge of the coming kingdom, and the Lord tells of His joy in it; and that because the true Lamb was offered to God. It was not and could not any longer remain a mere shelter from judgment but a full remission of sins through His blood. But Luke gives more and for the first time we have the Lord's supper in its special character of grace. The two other evangelists record "take eat this is my body." Here in Luke "This is my body given for you." also the cup after supper, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you." The "for you" brings His love home to our hearts, and makes us recognise our interest in the blood. And what an appeal to our hearts "Do this in remembrance of me." This personal remembrance was not in the passover. Now, all that it contained, and all presented in the kingdom aspect of the Supper is merged in that personal and loving remembrance peculiar to the church of God, where we have the enjoyment of a closer intimacy with the Lord.

How suited to this feast it may be added, is the title "the Lord's supper." For it embodies all that He suffered, all that He is in giving Himself for us. All the shame and sorrow of the cross, all the judgment He bore is "for you." Yea all the blessing which the shed blood bestows now, all the glory it will bring soon, all is "for you." The cruel mockings, the bitter scorn, the being forsaken of God, and the triumphant rising, the glorious victory over death, His exaltation as Man at the right hand of God, all are "for you." Why all this "for you?" Because it is not a question so much of our blessing and future glory as of the work of Christ to God. And the church will be God's proof to the world how highly He estimates the person and work of Him who died and rose again. The church in glory is the precious consequence of Christ on the cross. The pledge to us of the glory is the Lord's supper; a token, not for some more favoured company, but "for you." O how slow of heart to believe all that His death and resurrection pledge to us. How small our enjoyment compared with what simple faith would lead us into.

There is yet another feature of the Lord's supper which we find in 1 Corinthians 11:26 "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Not less in connection with the kingdom, but with His coming. And when He comes, it is to take us to the many mansions in the Father's house; a higher place than the Father's kingdom. "Until He come" — this to those who look for Him is the sweetest of all; for then we shall see Him. We shall not see Him, nay, we cannot, without being like Him. But if it were possible to see Him without being like Him, or to be like Him without seeing Him, which would we desire most? Let love answer. But the counsels of grace have indissolubly joined the two. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Paul as the apostle of the church gives the Lord's supper in its full church character. He received a direct revelation from the Lord concerning it, and links together the two greatest events that were or can be: Christ's coming to die, and His coming again. The Lord's supper is the memorial of the past, and the pledge of the future. But there is one thing said of the blood which is common to the Gospels and to the Epistle; the blood is that of the new covenant. Since the new covenant is with Israel we may inquire why it is mentioned here where the church alone is contemplated. The answer is, first, that the blood of the new covenant ensures every blessing to Israel, not on the ground of obedience but by sovereign grace, and therefore Israel and the church are so far on the

same ground. Israel's covenanted blessings rest upon the blood, and the people, now down-trodden, scattered and peeled by the judgment of God, will be brought back to their own land with clean water sprinkled upon them and be made the head of the nations under the rule of their own Messiah whose blood has secured both their blessing and ours. Secondly, it is the blood of the new covenant to us because we with whom no such covenant is made, yet enter into the enjoyment of all they will have, and that long before their time of blessing comes, possessed and known in a much higher way and more blessed too. All their earthly blessings are recast for us in a heavenly mould. The Lord will create new heavens and a new earth, and Israel restored will be a part of the new creation then. Now we as being in Christ are individually a new creation; a part of the new creation before the earth feels its power. It will be said to Israel "Ye are the sons of the living God" (Hosea i). We are now sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). So also Romans 9:24-26 where the words of Hosea for Israel are applied to the church "even us whom He hath called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles." So we have all and more than all the blessing given to them by the new covenant. But it is through the same blood, that of the new covenant, that shed for many, which has provided for us some better thing.

If the church's position be that of joyful expectancy, it is also solemn. Showing the Lord's death till He come is not only a memorial; it is a testimony to the world that they crucified the Lord. The church partaking of the Lord's supper is a public witness of the world's sin, and of its condemnation. This solemn testimony has been going on for more than eighteen centuries, an unbroken line of witnesses maintained by the power of God; who for the purposes of righteous judgment as well as of grace has not permitted the rage of man, or the power of Satan, to destroy it. For it is no less a witness of the long-suffering of God as of the world's sin. So long as the church remains here, the remission of sins through His blood is preached. When the Lord comes, the Supper ceases, the saints are gathered up, and the judgment of the world begins. Meantime we at the Lord's table have by faith both His dying and His coming again present to our hearts, the foundation and the top-stone of grace.

Such is the feast of the Lord's supper, present blessedness and the assurance of future glory with the Lord. We do not forget what we were; we do not forget that it was our sin that brought the Lord Jesus to the cross. And if we had not a purged conscience, the Lord's supper would be the right time when to afflict our souls. It was in connection with the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread that Israel were told to eat the bread of affliction (Deuteronomy 16:3). There is nothing in the Lord's supper that answers to the bread of affliction. Cleansed by the blood, we gather round His table, and in gladness of heart partake of that which reminds us of what the Lord Jesus had to suffer in order to deliver us from judgment and death; and when we look not only at the bare deliverance but at the blessing and the position which redemption gives us, then we can understand the apostle when he said "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin." There is no "bread of affliction" for the new creation.

Saints now are not only heirs of the kingdom, but also the church of God. As church, their position is higher than as inheritors of the kingdom, though still possessing every kingdom privilege and honour. The Supper in the Gospels is in connection both with the kingdom and the church, and in both aspects linked on to the original passover. Even in the Epistle, "Christ is our Passover." In Matthew and Mark the original paschal lamb gives way to the Supper, but in connection with the kingdom. In Luke both the kingdom and the saints aspect are given. The highest joy of the

kingdom aspect will be when we drink wine with Him in the kingdom of the Father. Waiting for an absent Lord is the special feature of the saintly aspect, "Until He come." Paul writing to the church gives this alone. We shall drink with Him then, not in remembrance of an absent Lord, but new wine in the full and perfect joy of seeing Him. R. Beacon.

S. The Son of My Right Hand

The Son of My Right Hand

I have often thought that an interesting exposition remains to be written in which should be set forth and illustrated by the typical imagery of the book of Genesis the wonderful triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ that will be manifested when His people shall be willing (Psalms 110:3) in the day of His power. That triumph was virtually secured in the all-embracing triumphs of the cross. But Israel was not willing in that day of the Lord's weakness, though, stronger than men, it proved as is said of the gospel, to be the power of God unto salvation for Jew and Gentile that believe, and is so still.

Here in Genesis we have a vivid picture of what will be in the millennial day after the church has been translated to heaven. It is a wonderful prefigurement. Surely it is not for nothing that Joseph and Benjamin were full brothers, being both of them Rachel's children as well as her only ones. Thus is the link between the ultimately coalescing constituents of the type made all the stronger. For Benjamin is no longer the "son of my sorrow," as he was pathetically named by his dying mother, sorrow abundantly realised in Joseph's story, but now at last he is linked with Joseph in the latter's typical character as God's chosen man, the man of His right hand. This "son of the right hand" is, as we know, the meaning of the name Benjamin. And it is interesting withal to notice the prophetic insight displayed by his father in thus naming him (see Genesis 35:1-29), a flash of that sustained God-given prescience which marked so wonderfully Jacob's dying charge to his sons. For none of the patriarchs had such a glorious exodus as he who had alas! been so crooked in his life, so crafty and so subtle, so fond of bargaining (see Genesis 38:28), though ever, as one has said, there was a noble side to him, and "his whole soul was steeped in tenderness." Truly we may apply to him, and in a far deeper sense, the words that England's great poet puts into the mouth of his most faulty hero, "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it."

Thus is it instructive to see that the story of Joseph is not only the most moving that ever was penned, save only His whose life and death of perfect grace it prefigures, but that (for that very reason) it is instinct and penetrated with deep spiritual meaning, and weighty with supreme prophetic import.

Again, do we not see, in the long-drawn out ordeal through which Joseph's brethren have to pass, a picture of the future exhaustive sufferings and humiliations of the Jew, so that God will at length declare in His grace that Jerusalem has received double for all her sins (Isaiah 40:2)?

Finally, in Joseph we have a character not only the most striking, but also (spite of the perhaps too great self-consciousness of his early youth) by far the least faulty of all those who had the high privilege of being types of our blessed Lord. R.B.

S. The Trial of Faith

The Trial of Faith.

Genesis 22:1-24.

R. B. (transcribed by R. B., Junr.) The trial or proof of faith is more precious than the trial of gold, even if it is proved by fire (1 Peter 1:7, R.V.) And the result will be seen at the revelation of Jesus Christ Who died and rose again, to His praise and glory and honour. The faithful will sing of victory over the world at His appearing, when the world will know that the Father loved the church as He loved the Son.

Faith is the gift of God and approves itself on trial. The vessel, that receives the gift, needs to be tried; for it is a heavenly gift in an earthen vessel. "Every good gift and perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17, R.V.), 1:e. every gift from the Father of lights is good and perfect. Faith in Christ may be considered in two ways, as a practical principle within, or as the way by which God gives us a new standing before Him, from darkness to light, from death to life, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of the Son of His love, from condemnation to justification. It looks at what Christ has done for us, at what Christ suffered on the cross, having died for us when we were enemies, that by His blood we might be cleansed from sin and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. We are clothed as with a robe which we could not make, but which gives us entrance to the King, and will bear His searching eye (Matthew 22:12), when we sit at the wedding feast. Therefore His work is altogether outside of us; and every one that comes to God through Christ is clothed with the wedding garment. His obedience to death for us yields the robe that covers us; we become God's righteousness in Christ. It admits of no diminution or increase, but is perfect; its purity is not increased by death, nor diminished by contact with the vilest. Our acceptance does not depend for its value on the greatness or the feebleness of our faith in Him (the enjoyment flowing from it does), but is the same for all. Thus the word is plain and is addressed to a would be suicide, "Believe . . . and thou shalt be saved." Our faith (i.e. in the earthen vessel which influences it) may be defective like that of the leper who said, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst," acknowledging the power but doubting the will; or like that of the man who brought his afflicted son to the Lord, and said, "If Thou canst," as if doubting the Lord's power; or it may be strong as that of which the Lord said, that it was greater than He had found in Israel (Matthew 8:10). In each case there was deliverance sought for, which did not depend on the faith of the men asking but on the love and power of the Lord. And these are measured by the cross, — love for the world and power to bear the weight of its sin. Thus faith in Him, even feeble faith, brings His love and power to be for us. Faith in Him, be it strong and vigorous, or weak and trembling, as in the publican that dared not lift his eyes but despondingly smote on his breast, crying for mercy — faith in Him brings salvation. It is God's way of justifying a sinner, and his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Not that his righteousness is measured by his faith, but by Christ; therefore we boast not in our faith, but in Him; and we in spirit say, Jehovah our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). The sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is brought immediately into a new standing

before God, and righteousness is reckoned to him. Faith was reckoned for righteousness to Abraham before he was tried (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-25 :). But Peter speaks not here of faith (in Christ as the object of faith) as reckoned for righteousness, but of the believer's faith after righteousness is reckoned, of faith as the power of divine life in the believer, wherein is manifested the power of the Holy Spirit Who works in us, so that we overcome the world, and all temptation. Such faith becomes more precious than gold proved with fire. The believer has to show the genuineness of his faith by his works; for as James says (James 2:14. etc.), faith without works is dead. Indeed, the power of the Spirit of God is needed at the first to enable the contrite soul to believe in Christ in Whom is redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. And so interwoven are the two principles that His power is absolutely requisite for faith and consequent peace through the work of Christ for us, as it is for holiness of life in us after we have believed in Him. Peter says the trial (proof) of your faith, 1:e. of you believers. The believer is identified with his faith, his victory is commensurate with his faith; and the fiercer the fires that try, the higher the praise that redounds to Christ. Faith untried is like ore containing gold; it must be put into the furnace that the dross may be consumed. There may be any quantity of unsuspected unbelief, and therefore unholiness: all must be purged that faith unalloyed may be found unto His praise and glory and honour at His appearing. The fires which try faith sometimes expose much that we did not suspect. But God, Who gives the faith, guides the trial, and sustains the believer all through. There is the obedience of faith, and the confidence of faith; the dependence, endurance, and trust of faith. In glory we shall sing its victory to His praise. A foretaste of victory is given now; but it is known only to Him Who gives and to him who receives.

How fierce were the fires that tried those mentioned in Hebrews 11:1-40 : who wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, in caves and dens, destitute, afflicted, and tormented; whether past or present saints, all are waiting for His appearing, all will be perfected together in glory. The obedience of faith was seen in Moses, who was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, surrounded with the affluence and splendour of a court, yet who chose affliction with the people of God rather than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; there was obedience at the cost of all. But in Abraham the varied qualities of faith are seen. Hence he is called the father of the faithful (Romans 4:16), because he stands in the foremost rank of trial, for historically Abel might be called father (being the first believer). So Abraham is pre-eminent for that kind of faith which accounted the power of death as no hindrance to the word of God, and which may be called resurrection faith, as it is markedly the characteristic of christian faith. Habakkuk triumphs over circumstances; he will rejoice in the Lord, though the fig-tree shall not blossom (Habakkuk 3:17-18). Job triumphs over fear, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). But Abraham triumphs in resurrection; and so he told his servants, "We will come again," and we have the solution of the word and the intended act in Hebrews 11:19. Death with its terrors is thrust aside; nothing stands between Abraham and God. No saint before the cross had ever defied death like Abraham. Justly is he the father of the faithful. The faith in the prophet Habakkuk goes not beyond the earth. Death to Job would have been deliverance from present sorrow. But the Holy Spirit has recorded Abraham's faith, as if to tell us that such faith as his goes not only beyond temporal things, and is calm at the prospect of death, but that it is sometimes (apparently) in opposition to our most cherished affections, — yea, when it seems contrary to the word which we have believed. It is only a seeming opposition. However contradictory it might appear, Abraham would offer up Isaac and still believe that his seed should be as the sand on the seashore for multitude. Blessing for the

world through death and resurrection is early taught. This may be its first practical lesson, and Abraham the first learner, but the Holy Spirit records in the Hebrews that he learned well.

Genesis 22:1-24, Hebrews 11:1-40.

1894 23 The lesson (Genesis 22:1-24 :) begins with an announcement that prepares us for something extraordinary. God, Who had shown such mercy and forbearance hitherto, now appears to try Abraham. "And God did tempt Abraham, and said, Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering," etc. Tempt may be now limited to solicitation to evil (James 1:13), but the meaning here is try or prove. Try if the earthen vessel will let faith have its perfect work. God tested the man to whom He gives faith. And at the end of Abraham's trial Jehovah said, "Now I know that thou fearest God," etc. (ver. 12). It was not that He did not know from the beginning; but the proof of it was now given and recorded for strengthening believers who partake of like precious faith. Scripture gives a sample of it (shall we say?) — a sample of its obedience, of its confidence, and dependence, yea, its endurance of fire and trust in God, of which no brighter example is found in the word of God.

Thus obedience in faith is seen at the first. The divine command is given; and early in the morning Abraham sets out toward the mountain indicated and has the full scene before his mind. Quite inexplicable was this command, most painful to him unless he was stoically indifferent; but that he was not is proved by his desire to have a son (Genesis 15:2-3), even as his great love is proved by the way in which God points out Isaac, "thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest." God knew the special love that Abraham had for Isaac, who was a miraculous gift from God; nor could obedience be put to a severer test than to offer up as a sacrifice that son whom he loved. Abraham's obedience proves that what he loved most was given to God. There is no wavering during the three days' journey. Had he been indifferent, he would not have shown obedience but hardness of heart. But his obedience was manifest; he answers immediately to God's call and prepares to depart. He rose early in the morning, even clave the wood for the burnt offering, and, without telling Isaac the design of his journey, departed with him and the two young men to the mountain in the land of Moriah. No doubt his affection was tried to the utmost, but there is no wavering. And it was not only natural affection that might rebel against what would appear a strange command, but long before (Genesis 13:1-18 :) God had pledged His word to bless all the world in Abram generally; and because he believed God, circumstances notwithstanding, had he not been accounted righteous (Romans 4:19-22). And now Isaac, the only visible link and first of that chain of blessing, which the world is to receive through him, is to be offered up as a sacrifice! Nature might say all would become impossible. But where would be God's promise? Where would be the righteousness that was reckoned to Abraham for believing it? There would be not only a conflict between the natural feelings of Abraham and the word of God, but a seeming contradiction between the command and the previous promise. Thus there was room for nature to question if his obedience could be right under the circumstances. Did he hear and understand aright the command? Would not the promise that his seed through Isaac should be a countless multitude and dominant in the earth imply that to sacrifice Isaac would be to thwart God's purpose concerning him and the world, and be like abandoning His promise? Did not the natural feelings of a father afford scope for doubt and unbelief, and help the thought that he had misunderstood? Here were three sanctions working with no small effect on Abraham's mind. Natural affection, and in this case a very special affection; secondly, faith which he by no means relinquished and by

which he obtained righteousness, with which moreover nature could clearly unite to withstand obedience to the third sanction, viz., the present command of God.

What a device of Satan to bring past truth into apparent collision with present obedience! But 1 with Abraham natural feelings counted as nothing compared with God's unmistakable though inexplicable command; and all that passed through his mind was at once brought into subjection to the word of God. There was in truth but one way in which he could bring together and harmonise the promise and the command, and that way he took, wonderful as it was and unheard of. It was the way of resurrection. Abraham accounted that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. No such thing had he heard before, that any one should be raised from the dead. He might have heard of Enoch's translation; God could prevent death. But to bring through death was an unknown thing; and now it must be, for the command was irrevocable. If Isaac's birth was miraculous, so would his life be. At all events every doubt and every fear was hushed by his ready obedience in faith. And thus Abraham and Isaac journeyed together till the third day. And when he sees the mountain, his faith does not fail but seems to grow stronger. He bids the young men wait with the ass, while he and the lad go yonder and worship; and his worship was to sacrifice the lad, and to receive him in resurrection, so that it gives a new feature to the original promise. Abraham's seed must still be as the stars innumerable. But death is in the way; only by resurrection can the promise be made good.

How wonderfully the purpose of God for the whole earth is combined with the trial of faith in an individual saint! Indeed we are told by the Holy Spirit that Abraham had the assurance of resurrection, "accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." His faith in the previously given promise is not shaken by the present command. Mark the words "worship" and "come again." It is a seal to the promise, and Abraham worships. Faith removes all difficulties, and the path of the believer shines more and more unto the perfect day. In the quiet command to his servants there is no boasting of his faith: enough for them that he, the father, and the son, will come again; in his bosom the yearning of nature and obedience to God are reconciled by faith. And faith governed Abraham from the time that he was called away from His kindred, not knowing whither he went, only knowing that he was to receive an inheritance. Nor does Isaac know the object of the journey, for he enquires for the lamb. How it must have awakened afresh the affections of the father, if indeed they ever slumbered, when Isaac innocently asked, "My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb . . .?" There was an apparent shrinking from telling Isaac that he is the lamb; perhaps a father's feelings led him to evade a direct answer. His faith was between him and God. It was to him, as to the saint in Pergamos (Revelation 2:17) a white stone, upon which was engraven a new name, the new name of resurrection, which no one knew save He Who gave and he who received. All he says is that God will provide a lamb for Himself. Could that lamb be Isaac? But the thought did not turn him from simple obedience. Indeed his obedience in faith shines all through this trial. And when Isaac is bound and laid upon the altar, he makes no resistance, but bows to the command of God. Had Isaac faith in God's raising him up again? Be that unknown, at all events there was submission. It was Abraham's faith that was tried, and it was found to the praise of Him Who gave it, and sustained it all through. Yet with what joy they must have substituted the ram caught by its horns in the thicket! How they must have rejoiced together in "coming again" to the young men! Abraham's faith shone brighter than the purified gold. And how precious to God in the trial was Abraham's endurance of the fire, his

obedience, and his confidence in the certainty of the promise! Abraham's joy, after his trial must have been like that spoken of long after by James, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations, knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4). Temptations in this scripture are outward trials.

1894 42 But there is more than his obedience in faith; there is also the confidence and the dependence of faith. For what can more express confidence in the truth of God than the words, "we will come again"? This confidence was clearly stronger than the fear of death, or his inability to reconcile the past promise that Isaac should be heir of the world with the present command to offer up his son. Every circumstance was against their coming again, and forbade the thought. Nay, the word of God seemed to place a barrier to their coming again, which he could in no wise surmount save by resurrection. But Abraham cleaves to what God is. It would be a wonderful way of deliverance no doubt, but he surrenders all into the hand of God, the promise, the command, and the reconciliation of the two. He is calm in the presence of such a deadlock. It was impossible for God to fail; he would not judge by appearances. The word of God should be His rule (see John 7:24). The promise was as explicit as the command, and he would cleave to the promise and obey the command; he could count upon God to bring him out of the seeming difficulty. How this dependence is felt and acknowledged too in his answer to Isaac, when the latter enquired for the lamb, — "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb!" Besides the dependence due to God the father's love is subdued by real trust in God Himself. But it bursts out in the words, "My son," and is as quickly brought into submission, as is evident by the words following, "God will provide." Whatever he distress, if he felt any in his soul, all was calmed by this, "God will provide." His dependence on God is unshaken and firm, and makes him like a rock when assailed by mighty but unavailing waves. And this when his natural affection and his faith in the promise that he was to be the father of a numerous seed would have led him to hesitate as to the sacrifice of his son. He had sent away Ishmael, and was going to sacrifice Isaac, none being left. What would become of the promise? This is his strength, "God will provide." During the fiery trial how his faith shines, rising above circumstances and seeming contradictions! And, when the trial is completed, with what joy and confirmation of faith he would sing in his heart, Jehovah-jireh!

Thus in Abraham is displayed the obedience to God, the confidence, dependence, endurance and trust of faith; as also in resurrection the answer to faith. Faith is not to be weakened by any circumstances, however adverse they may seem. And "Jehovah will provide" comes with increasing power as we gaze on him from his rising early to cleave the wood till his parting word to the young men, "We will come again." In very truth full blessing waits for resurrection. So had Abraham (in figure); it was from death that he received Isaac (Hebrews 11:19). But our Isaac is already risen, and in the midst of trial we can say, "Jehovah-jireh." But the rest of victory and the crowning will come at Christ's appearing, and the faith which seems now so weak will then be as pure gold. The Holy Spirit brings believers into a new place. Once we were as others, the children of wrath; now by faith in Christ we are sons of God (Galatians 3:26); now by faith in Christ we bear a new character before God. Christ is the best robe, the wedding garment, clothed in which we stand in God's sight. Every believer has it; he has not to wait for a high development of this or that as if there were an esoteric class among believers to which each must attain before he can put on such a robe. It is the only garment we can wear in the presence of God. It is for all, for the least as

for the greatest; and with it eternal life is joined, nor can they be separated. Without it a man is a child of wrath and as such is lost forever. Even now clothed with this garment he is translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and must be conformed to the Son's image must learn, so to speak, the rules of His kingdom. And the faith in which he stands becomes, wielded by the Holy Spirit, a motive-power by which the inward man is renewed day by day (see also Ephesians 4:23) — alas, amid much weakness, pressure and perplexity, pursued and smitten down, yet the Holy Spirit leads us on to victory: a victory through resurrection, the thing typified — unknown to Abraham, but revealed to us, for we have redemption in Christ and are risen in and with Him. Hence the apostle, in view of death and resurrection, and of the untold blessings to the believer, better than creation contains, could say, "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient unto righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18). "Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

After the resurrection (figurative) of Isaac, God repeats and thus confirms His promise to Abraham (compare Genesis 22:18 and Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:16), and enlarges His promise, not only that his, posterity should be as the stars in heaven and as the sand on the seashore, but also his Seed (i.e. Christ) should be for the blessing of all nations. Thus all, even the earthly blessing through Israel, depends upon resurrection. And this may be called the earthly side of the wonderful event on the mount. Not even the blessing and joy of the millennium could be secured without resurrection. Did this render Abraham's eye clearer when he looked at the city which had the foundations? when he looked onward and saw the day of the Lord? (John 8:56). But it is not merely a trial of Abraham's faith; it is typical as well as historical. Another purpose arises, which was beyond the vision of Abraham, though even that one with all its sorrows and glories was needed for the blessing of his race, but in which there was a fulness where Israel was but a light thing. For a mystery was hidden till the time of its revelation, which we only now know because the great sacrifice is completed, and Gentiles are called in to share with Israel the blessing of the cross. Now after the sacrifice on Calvary we can trace the foreshadowing in Abraham's trial, which would otherwise, as a type, have been unintelligible. With the antitype before us we see how imperfectly any type can foreshadow the depths of Calvary. Like Isaac He was led to the slaughter, but unlike Isaac He knew where the Lamb was. And as Isaac bare the wood, so did the Lord Jesus bear His cross. As Isaac was hound and laid on the wood, so was the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. But there the type fails; no creature is sufficient to be a type. God may use a creature to set forth faintly some of the wonders, the sufferings, and glories we see in Christ; but what creature gathers them up in his own person? A voice from heaven arrests Abraham with the knife in his hand, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." A voice from heaven said, "Smite the Man that is My Fellow" (Zechariah 13:7). Isaac passed through death figuratively; the Lord Jesus in reality. God told Abraham to spare Isaac, but did not spare His own Son, the Well-Beloved and Only-Begotten. There was no ram substituted on Calvary; the blood of Christ alone cleanseth from all sin. R. B.

S. The Unwritten Things which Jesus Did.

The Unwritten Things which Jesus Did.

John 21:25.

"There are also many other things which Jesus did." And since He did them, clearly they were not aimless, but had a divinely ordained purpose. It might be asked why they are not recorded if such questioning were not anticipated in the selfsame verse. The answer is, that a complete account, as one has said, would be practically infinite. "The world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Nor is this oriental hyperbole. The figurativeness of the language is obvious; but, as in all appropriate imagery, the symbolical setting serves to press home the truth symbolised not only more forcibly than plain matter-of-fact language, but as something transcending the literal force of the image itself. In this case the theme is infinite, and is therefore susceptible of infinite treatment.

These "many other things," including doubtless the "many other signs" mentioned in the previous chapter, are indeed unknown to us save as to their general character; but we know that they must have been marked by the same divine grace and stainless holiness, by the same moral glory, that stamped all that the Son of God wrought. They were probably called forth by some need or some sorrow. But we can go no farther — would wish to go no farther; for, as another has put it excellently well, "The silence of God is to be respected in the next place to His utterance." Still, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost notes the fact that there were "many other things" done by our blessed Lord, it is plainly incumbent on us to heed it. The renewed heart indeed dwells with delight on this thought, and the spiritual mind recognises its fitness. For that life of ceaseless self-sacrifice could not but be the occasion of other deeds of mercy than those that are recounted in the Gospels, numerous and unfathomable as the latter are. Those lips, "replenished with grace," must have distilled many an unrecorded benediction; those hands, uplifted in blessing, when the risen Lord ascended, mark the end, and yet not the end, of an unwearied course of love. But if, in the wisdom of God, many a deed of mercy, many a word of comfort, or, may be, of holy indignation is unrevealed. it by no means follows that such must ever remain a mystery. May not eternity give scope for the unfolding of these "many other things" which have been already "seen of angels"? At any rate it is and must be profitable to ponder every statement of scripture, and not least when the Lord Jesus Himself is the direct theme. Direct or indirect object, we know He must always be. And so again, and yet again, each time we read the passage, we love to be reminded that we have a record only of "parts of His ways."

Still, although we have in no wise an exhaustive history of our blessed Lord's life on earth, yet we do possess a full and perfect revelation. If a merely human writer of eminence is capable of making such judicious selection from the sayings and doings of a great man as to present, on the whole, a duly proportioned portrait, leaving out nothing essential, it would be strange if the Spirit of God could do less. Nay, contrariwise, as we are well aware, even the ablest human histories are liable at times to be one-sided, and we hear a Macaulay, musing in sober mood, that as "science is a blind man's guess," so "history is a nurse's tale." Such after all are human chronicles spite of

all excellences and the best intentions. But in that word, whereof God is the real Author, and which He has "magnified above all His name" (and if this be true of the Old Testament, not less surely of the New), we are presented with a perfect picture of the Son of God. On the one hand there is a true perspective, on the other divine accuracy of detail, where detail was the object of the Spirit. Now one Evangelist only relates a suited truth, or parable, or miracle; now the same incident is recounted by two, or three, or even by the four. In short, the object of the Holy Ghost is told us by St. John in the 20th chapter of his Gospel. "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." Enough and more than enough for this, be it said reverently; yet not too much for "our learning" (Romans 15:4), not too much for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), though we are often slow to work that inexhaustible mine. How little have we explored, but what of the still smaller portion we have, so to speak, made our own! We do oftentimes but touch the fringe of the divine teaching, and the most diligent are but as spiritual Newtons, gathering pebbles on the boundless shore. Yet, such is His grace, merely to "touch the hem of His garment" is fraught with richest blessing. To conclude, our Lord's ministry, whether by word or deed, whether recorded or unrecorded, was that which He could not but perform. He could not but work His own works, which miracles indeed were, even as they were the works of the Father that sent Him (John 9:4). And while each sign bore witness of Him, of Whom all the prophets had spoken, yet indisputably they derived their chief lustre from Him, Who wrought them. Let us not forget that He is "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11) now and for evermore. R. Beacon Jr.

S. Thou art Peter

"Thou art Peter"

(Matthew 16:18)

There is no sublimer story in the scriptures than that presented in Matthew 16:1-28, beginning at verse 13; none fuller of rich and blessed meaning. The question concerning Himself, put by our Lord when He had come into the coasts of Casarea Philippi, led to a wonderful unfolding of His Person and His work. And first we may notice that while the Lord addressed each of His two questions to the disciples generally, with special appeal to their knowledge in the second — to their enlightenment already gained ("But whom do ye say that I am?"), yet it is Peter alone who is spokesman the second time, the other disciples having merely repeated what was common report, and derived its importance simply because of the Person whom it concerned.

We can understand the perplexity of the multitude. No doubt the occasional severity of our Lord (for, although,* "when meekness became Him, He was meek," yet "when severity, none could withstand His overwhelming and withering rebuke") led them to think of His forerunner, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, or of the latter himself; at other times Jeremiah was naturally recalled, as they beheld Him who was the Man of Sorrows. Surely the disciples knew better than this, as is implied by the words already quoted: "But whom say ye that I am?" Yet doubtless their thoughts were vague, and Peter himself spoke prophetically, and probably with less realisation of the awe-compelling truth than he afterwards attained. But what a unique privilege it was thus to be singled out and how prominent is Peter ever in the Evangel! It cannot be denied that administratively he was to be the chief of the apostles. Later on, in this very episode, we have the conferring of the keys, symbolic and prophetic of the fact that Simon Peter was to open to both Jew and Gentile.

{*J.N.D.} But now let us consider more particularly the words we have taken for our text. "Thou art Peter." It is most interesting to couple this utterance of our Lord to Simon Peter with words addressed by Him to the same apostle at an earlier date, and recorded in John 1:42, "Thou shalt be called Cephas," 1:e., Peter, a stone. In the latter case we have the Lord prophetically announcing the future greatness and strength of His servant, as with prescient eye He looked upon him (the word is a very energetic one — it is emblepsas, literally, "having fixed a look upon"), and (may we not say?) "apprehended" him (see Php 3:12). In the former we find the Saviour emphatically, as it were, sealing the rock-name upon him as now at last evidently and pre-eminently his. It was Simon Peter's in virtue of his great confession, as it has been justly called. Most true it was that Simon had not discovered the mystery of the Lord's Person; the Father in heaven had revealed it. Yet — and this is in beautiful accord with the ways of God's grace — the confessor was pronounced blessed. And this blessedness the Lord had anticipated when Andrew brought to Him his more famous brother, as we have already seen.

"Thou art Peter." There is often a great deal in names, at any rate in Bible names. These are so often what logicians call connotative, i.e., they not merely denote persons (things too, but this is beside our present point — we are dealing exclusively with personal names), but they imply qualities. Above all is this the case with appellations of God Himself. Think of the various names by which He is revealed in the Old Testament; then pass to the exceedingly great number of names of our Lord in both Old and New Testaments. And in a lesser degree we see the same principle strikingly at work in an Abraham, an Israel, a Joseph, a Solomon, etc. All these names are revelations of character or of office. Nor is this confined to the Old Testament, as we may see by considering the meaning of Barnabas, of Boanerges, of Stephen, and lastly of Peter.

Another interesting thing is that our Lord seems to have imposed such names in three cases only. He called James and John Boanerges, i.e., sons of thunder, and Simon He called Peter, a stone. Usually, however, it would appear that Christ addressed His disciples by names already theirs when He drew them to Himself (see Matthew 17:23). Such might or might not possess a meaning in keeping with their gifts or their character. At any rate, in the case of Peter, James, and John, the names Boanerges and Peter were conferred on account of what our Lord saw in them, and purposed to make of them. These names are, then, connotative in the highest degree, and are charged with great and significant meaning. Yet, as we have said, the three apostles so favoured were habitually addressed by our Lord by their original names.

Next we must notice how the Lord, when pronouncing Simon blessed, called him by his full name, Simon Bar-jona. Was not this to emphasise his lowly estate as a man? Was he not, apart from the divine grace, merely Simon, son of Jonah, or Jonas? And does it not recall the mysterious scene by the lake of Tiberias, after the resurrection, when the Saviour again called Peter "Simon, son of Jonas? By his bitter fall he had made manifest that in himself he was but Simon, son of Jonas, and so the Lord has to remind him of it. Ever as such, grace was about to raise him morally and spiritually higher than ever he was before. May we not say that the reminder came to enhance the contrast? But here, at Caesarea Philippi, such contrast is rather between what man is by nature in his essential weakness (apart from the question of failure and sin perhaps) and the high privilege granted to the apostle of declaring, more adequately than ever before, the divine glory of his Master. Thus we see there is a most pointed antithesis between Simon, Bar-Jona, and Peter. The next thing we have to note is how the divine glory of the Son appears in the same verse 18, where it is rather, "I also say," than, "I say also." in J.N.D.'s version it is given with full emphasis, but not more than the original warrants, "I also, I say unto thee." Clearly here we have the personality of the Son answering to that of the Father in verse 17. While it was the Father who had revealed the wonderful truth to Simon Peter, and not mere "flesh and blood" (this phrase here probably denoting necessary human weakness apart from anything of corruption), we immediately after have the authority and dignity of the Son — "I also." For the pronoun is in strong relief, so to speak, by a simple device of language familiar to even tyros in Greek, but which our English tongue, though possessed of so many excellencies, is unable to accomplish. As we know, it is common to note the emphasis of the pronoun by italics. But Greek requires no extraneous means. And while speaking of this matter, it will be convenient to point out that in the words, "I will build my church," the emphasis is on the building; in other words there is no separate pronoun, the "I" being contained in the verb; and moreover it is a future building. How interesting to couple with it the several statements in Mark and the Acts respectively, "the Lord working with them," and, "all that

Jesus began both to do and teach!" How perfect are the Scriptures! How admirably every part dove-tails, as it were, with every other! We would confess how little we know, and yet thank God for all that He has revealed to those who seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who "go down on their knees," as one has said, to receive instruction, so that the marvels of the divine oracles can be disclosed to them. If we go to the Bible believing our Lord to be what He claimed to be, how wonderfully everything falls into order. If we doubt, or disbelieve, then perplexities grow apace, and "from him that hath not is taken even what he seemed to have."

Lastly, we may note that the blessed Lord condescends to "play" upon the word Peter. At any rate the paronomasia is distinctly there — in the Greek. Whether the Lord at Caesarea Philippi spoke in Aramaic or Greek may be a matter of doubt with students; and, if He spoke in Aramaic the antithesis present in the Greek words (petros and petra) may there be as non-existent as in the English equivalents. But, at any rate, in the inspired word we have a striking and most interesting case of what is known as "playing" on words. Nor is it a solitary instance in Holy Writ. Examples could be quoted from the writings of St. Paul. Some perhaps might not have looked for this in scripture. But there it is, and it need not be said how all is consistent with the deepest solemnity. The "play" on the words simply enhances the vivid force of the truth. "Thou art Peter (Petros) and on this rock (petra) I will build my church." Mark, it is His church, and He is still building. No wonder then that the gates even of Hades shall not prevail against it." They shall not "prevail"; the Lord does not say that His church will not receive heavy and grievous shocks, but that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. This should comfort us; for His church must stand. R.B.

S. Thoughts on 2Co_13:14.

Thoughts on 2 Corinthians 13:14. The words "grace," "peace," and "love," and such as these, as used by the inspired writers, are transfigured words, or, more correctly, the vehicles of transfigured ideas — ideas being here synonymous with divine realities. Conceptions, that in a kind of embryo stage were current among men, are widened, deepened, sanctified, or even entirely transformed. Occasionally, as is pointed out in one striking instance by the late Abp. Trench, a word had become so debased as to be unfitted for the conveyance of the divine meaning — even to be what we should now call "impossible." Such are the classical Greek for "prophet" and "prophecy," "soiled with all ignoble use," and too deeply associated 'with corrupt mysteries to be taken into the service' of the oracles of God, Hence a new word was adopted, signifying — the precise opposite of a dark saying — plain and open declaration, from which indeed our own word "prophet" is derived. But "grace" and "peace" (as also "love," of which presently) are freighted with vast and blessed meaning by the Holy Spirit — "grace" and "peace," of which man knows so little by nature. It is true that "grace" was the dominant word in the Grecian salutation, as "peace" in the Hebrew one; but there is far more than the advantage of mere conjunction in the power with which they appeal to the renewed heart. In short we have grace and peace as measured by God Himself. With the Greeks it was a mere matter of outward courtesy, this greeting of "grace," even as the word was largely used to denote physical beauty and elegance by a people who deified beauty; with the less volatile Hebrew, the depositary moreover of the ancient oracles, "peace" was rather the desideratum, and the form of salutation was accordingly of this nature. But how full and how blessed are God's grace and God's peace as we hear them in the apostolic greeting, and absent from none of the inspired epistles. Whether there were much to praise as with the Philippians, or to blame as at Corinth or in Galatia, "grace" and "peace" are the invariable benison, with the additional prayer for mercy in the individual case as to Timothy and Titus. And the close of each epistle contains a word of still more striking beauty, for we have there, in every one, the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." But while lacking in none of the apostolic letters, the benediction is fullest in 2 Corinthians; for here coupled with "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," we have the "love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost." It will be profitable to dwell briefly on each of these three beatitudes, as the Lord may enable the writer. And first of all we have the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" — the grace of Him, by Whom "grace and truth" came. Without controversy grace and truth as distinctly sum up Christianity, as monstrosity and corruption stamp oriental religions, as beauty and corruption marked the Hellenic world — vain dreams to which, alas, some are returning. How infinitely above both is Christianity, and this spite of the fragments of truth that, embedded in a mass of folly, bore testimony to man's primitive integrity, as well as to the dissemination (very slight it is true) of the Hebrew revelation. It is therefore the special personal grace of our blessed Lord that the apostles desired for the saints. It is a grace that combines the tenderest pity and the most unbounded love with the keen scrutiny of One Whose "eyes were as a flame of fire," — of One Who loves too well to pass over what is inconsistent with Himself; the grace of One, in short, Who is light as well as love, Who is the "Light of men, that left the skies, Light that looked thro' human eyes."

Vast is the gap undoubtedly that practically separates the humblest and most spiritual saint from the Master; but at least we can "follow after." I apprehend then that St. Paul wished this wondrous grace of the Saviour to be ever present with believers, both for consolation and for example. And this brings us to the second beatitude (if I may so call it) — "the love of God," doubtless inseparable from the former one. For the eye that contemplates the surpassing grace of the Lord Jesus, the renewed mind "that covets the best gift," even the gracious ways of the Saviour, will surely be conscious of the overshadowing love of God. And here it may be well to remark that while we cannot be too much occupied with Christ personally, we do well to remember that "we worship Trinity in unity," but we worship Trinity. It is most blessed to think of God the Father. "The Father Himself loveth you," as our Lord reminded the disciples. It is also most blessed to address now the Father, now the Son, as the Holy Spirit leads. Nor may we forget that when worshipping God as God, we include Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Is this sometimes lost sight of?

Finally we have "the communion of the Holy Ghost," equally inseparable from the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God (the Father), as these from one another. What higher, fuller benediction could be conceived, what more blessed endowment! Contemplating the Saviour's grace, conscious of God's love, our spirits become calm as they commune with the blessed Spirit of God, Who takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them unto us (John 16:15). . . . Surely the summum bonum is here, that highest good, for which men vainly crave apart from Christ, finding all that seemed of fairest promise to be but apples of Sodom. They may take up with "idols of the market," of the schools, of the laboratory, of the studio; they may lust after power, riches, or grandeur, to say nothing of less respectable aims. Vanity is stamped upon all. But we "have not so learned Christ" (Ephesians 4:20). And in this threefold benediction, which rings out sweet and blessed, and with the same divine freshness (characteristic of holy scripture) as when the great apostle penned* it, the church collectively, though scattered and broken, and the saints individually, though feeble and faulty, have strong and abiding consolation. R. Beacon, Jr.

S. Thoughts on 2Ti_1:13.

Thoughts on 2 Timothy 1:13.

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

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

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

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

S. Thoughts on 2Ti_1:7

Thoughts on 2 Timothy 1:7.

It is instructive to note how Paul describes, if not defining, the Spirit we have received. It is not the spirit of fearfulness that characterised the heathen religions, which, where they ceased to be frivolous, appealed to human misgivings and apprehensions, making clear at any rate that man has a conscience. It need hardly be said that "reverence and godly fear" are another thing; nor can the attitude of the seraph, who, having six wings, used but two for flying and four for veiling his face and his feet, be forgotten by a child of God. Lowly reverence and self-abasement go hand in hand with the fullest confidence and repose in the Divine favour. But if it is wholesome to be impressed with our own nothingness, it is necessary that we should rise to the dignity of Christian; position for the Spirit we have received is one "of power and of love and of a sound mind." Mark the three distinct characteristics, truly potent for good when blended, but inadequate when one or other is absent. For everything is duly balanced in the ways of God. There is a series of checks and counter-checks. We may illustrate it by a consideration of the conditions essential to the healthy condition of the human frame, viz., a due inter-subordination of the various functions. No intelligent person can deny that there are such analogies in God's methods in things natural and spiritual. They only but greatly err who from analogy would assert identity. So we have the conjunction of love with power, of a sound mind with both. For power and love without the concomitant of a wise judgment would be as a noble ship impelled by favouring wind and tide but bereft of helm. Power and a sound mind without the incentive of love will lack all that has value in God's eyes, and be as worthless as the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." Lastly, love and a sound mind may and do fail of effect if there be a lack of energy and zeal. But with love (the love of God shed abroad in the heart) as the motive, with God-given energy as the more active principle, not without a weighing of all things in the balances of the sanctuary, surely then the "man of God" will be "thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). From the context with which this forcible verse is linked we learn that the apostle was treating of service, and urging his son in the faith to get the better of a diffidence which, if hot carried to excess, is even seemingly, especially in the young, but which might become a positive hindrance where boldness for the truth was imperative. Perhaps that is why power is put first, as the dominant tone in the harmony. It was evidently, of the three, the characteristic in which Timothy was most deficient. Undoubtedly there are but few in whom all three seem equally active; but that is only saying that we are uneven, that, if the great apostle of the Gentiles had all three traits in uncommon measure, still the Master alone was perfect.

It might be easy, if not very profitable, to call to mind not a few in whom one or two of the three great marks of the Christian spirit have been conspicuous, but who were handicapped by the want of prominence of the third. The more excellent way is to see to it by prayer and dependence that in our measure, however small, the three work harmoniously. But seeing that we are bidden to be subject one to another, perhaps there is room for thus mutually supplying what we individually lack. R. Beacon Jr.

S. Thoughts on Joh_16:27-28.

Thoughts on John 16:27-28. The Lord had much to tell His disciples of the Father. But hitherto, as He says in ver. 25, He had spoken to them in proverbs, as they were able to bear it. Then He went on to say that the hour was coming when He would speak to them plainly of the Father. Clearly this hour dawned at Pentecost, and it is interesting to see how what we have here accords with the statement in Acts 1:1. "All that Jesus began both to do and to teach." In the one passage we have the clear intimation that our Lord would instruct His servants at a coming hour; in the other the blessed fact is implied in the striking word "began," which is far from being otiose, as indeed nought in holy scripture is or could be. In short it marks the continuity of what our Lord did on earth with what He did after His resurrection and ascension.

Hereby we learn incidentally how impossible it is to isolate the persons of the Godhead. If "in the days of His flesh" the Saviour cast out demons by the finger of God (Luke 11:2), by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28); if through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God; if again, it was through the Holy Spirit that He gave commandment unto His chosen apostles, it is equally true that what the Spirit revealed at and after Pentecost was virtually revealed by the Son. "I shall show you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25).

But, if that fuller revelation still tarried a while, the Lord does tell the disciples in the clearest language truth concerning Himself which it was of all consequence that they should know, and which it was supremely blessed to hear from His own divine lips. Needless to say, it is also truth most instructive for us to ponder. I allude now to the closing sentence of ver. 27, and to ver. 28. Let us read the passage as it is more accurately given in the R.V. "I came forth from the Father. I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." The careful reader will note some difference between the above and the A.V. In the first place "Father" is found instead of God in the first statement; secondly, there is the distinction of "came forth from," and "came out from." Together they give us the fulness of the truth. As one has said, "no phrase could express more completely unity of essence than the original of these words." Nor was it the first time that the blessed Lord had held such language. In the eighth chapter of this Gospel we read (John 8:42), "I came forth from (ek as here in John 16:28), and am come from God" — words wholly inexplicable and unintelligible except as a statement of the essential Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is "very God of very God." And how blessed, as remarked above, to have all this truth as to His person from Himself. The former expression "I came forth from (tao) the Father" implies the leaving of the Father's side; the latter, "I came out from the Father," points as we have seen to the true Sonship of the Saviour.

It is also interesting to notice that there is a third preposition (apo) found in John 16:30, and also in John 13:3. It is sufficient to point out that as distinguished from para it marks the separation involved in the Incarnation while the latter word emphasises the fellowship between the Father and the Son. And all these wonderful shades of meaning are conveyed in the original with a directness and a simplicity that I suppose no other language but Greek is capable of. It is matter of common

knowledge that this tongue is unique in its powers of subtle precision. Learned men may praise the accuracy of Plato, and cleverness of Aristotle; the believer, learned or unlearned, can feel and admire the profound and striking accuracy of the Scriptures of God.

"I leave the world, and go unto the Father." Thus does the blessed Lord return to Him from whom He came. True He was always the Son of man who is in heaven. But divine intimacy could not be enjoyed when the sinless One was made sin during those three hours of supernatural darkness. Then and then only does He say, "My God, My God." "Father" precedes and follows in the well-known utterances on the Cross, whereby God can in very deed be the Father of all who believe in His Son. "Ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). The consideration of points like these leads us perhaps into what may be called side-tracks of the truth. They may possibly not come within our purview when expounding the broad principle of evangelical, or ecclesiastical doctrine. They may suggest the microscope rather than the telescope, but they are none the less highly illuminative. R.B.

S. Thoughts on Joh_16:8-11.

Thoughts on John 16:8-11. The recorded discourses of our Lord immediately preceding His Passion are in point of length in marked contrast with the sayings of the risen Saviour. The latter are extremely brief, as we know, and largely of what I may perhaps call an official character, whether mandatory, as "Go and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19), or declaratory, as "Whosoever's sins ye remit, they are remitted" (John 20:23). Once or twice, a gentle rebuke was conveyed, as to Thomas, and to the travellers to Emmaus. But we have no details of what the Lord said on these occasions. It is true we are told how He expounded unto the two disciples, in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. But we have not the exposition (how we should prize it!), though we do read that their hearts burned within them while He opened unto them those Scriptures, with the letter of which they were conversant. Doubtless, the Lord must have said much to His chosen ones during the wonderful days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, much that they then needed. But we may be sure that infinite wisdom guided the inspired writers both in what they wrote down and in what they withheld. And indeed it may not be wholly fanciful to see a correspondence between the brevity of the Lord's recorded utterances on these latter occasions, and the mysterious nature of His appearances. Truly, He was still "this same Jesus," as He will be according to the angels' word (Acts 1:11) in the day of His manifestation. But there is a reserve as well as a mystery that did not characterise Him "in the days of His flesh." However, be that as it may, whatever be the explanation of the difference between the sayings, such is the fact. But let us turn to what is more immediately before us, viz. the discourses comprised in John 13:1-38; John 14:1-31; John 15:1-27; John 16:1-33, and more particularly verses 8 to 11 of the latter chapter. The entire record is an inexhaustible, as well as an unfathomable, mine of spiritual wealth, infinitely precious as giving us the ipsissima verba, the very words of the Saviour, and that too just before He suffered. We mark His gracious concern for them at a time so awful for Himself, when the powers of darkness were gathering, how in view of His imminent departure He is occupied in comforting them. They had much to learn, as we have, and we see how feebly they entered into what was before their Master, whether the sufferings or the glories that should follow. Peter indeed shortly before had put the question, "Whither goest Thou"? But he was merely thinking of earthly possibilities, confident of being able to tread the same path as His Master — strangely ignorant of his weakness, though ardent and sincere. We know the Lord's answer, and how literally His warning was justified. Hence it was perfectly true, as Christ said, that none had asked Him whither He was going. They had not asked in the sense He meant. They had no thought of the path of life and the fulness of joy at the Father's right hand. Their hearts were surcharged with sorrow in the prospect of losing their Lord, who explains to them how expedient it was that He should depart, as other wise the Comforter could not come. And then the Lord proceeds to state the comprehensive and sublime truths embodied in John 16:8-11.

"When He is come". It may not be unnecessary to point out that Christ says "He" not "It." It is indeed a very emphatic "He," one of the most forcible of Greek pronouns (ekeigos), so strikingly used to designate the Lord Himself, by the same apostle John in his First Epistle. Thus the

personality of the Holy Spirit is strongly affirmed. Let us not forget that we worship Trinity in Unity. But this by the way. The Holy Ghost then convicts the world of three most important facts, the first being a solemn indictment. And first, as to the word rendered "reprove" in the A.V., but rather difficult to render satisfactorily in English, (so full of meaning is it) — it signifies "reprove," "convict," "convince," all at the same time. It has been rendered, "bring demonstration of," in a version well known to most of the readers of this periodical. It involves, as one has said, the conception of "authoritative examination, unquestionable proof, decisive judgment, and primitive power." Such is the function of the Holy Spirit, who necessarily convicts and brings demonstration. It is true all are not convinced. This, as J.N.D. says, supposes effect in the person convinced. But, whether the world heed or not, such is the work of the Spirit. And the first thing of which He convicts is sin; and that not merely as a matter of fact, but that the world is altogether wanting in a knowledge of what sin really is, of its exceeding heinousness in God's sight. A distinguished statesman, recently deceased, and who was also something of a theologian, was once asked what he considered the great lack of the age. At once he replied, "A sense of sin; that is the great lack." Now, whatever we may think of this leader as a politician (with which of course we have nothing to do), or even of his theology in general, it is clear he hit the nail on the head on this occasion. Alas, this most deplorable want has made rapid strides of late. Whatever were the faults of the old Puritans, at any rate they almost equalled pious Jews in the reality of their sense of sin. Sin is indeed a missing of the mark, as the expressive Greek equivalent implies. But it is more; "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). It is the setting up, by the creature, of its will in opposition to God, and involves naturally separation from God. The cross of Christ is its measure, and "only there do we behold our darkness." "That most tremendous wrong" both revealed what man was capable of doing to perfect goodness, and at the same time displayed how terrible sin was, how great the darkness, because nothing less than that "precious death" could put away sin. As again has been said, sin was expiated in its greatest act." Of course we must carefully distinguish between man's ignorant hatred to which our blessed Lord voluntarily gave Himself up as a martyr, and God's foreseeing purpose thereby to bring about the atonement, and all that is therein involved.

"Of sin because they believe not on Me." Not because they have done this, that, and the other thing, they ought not to have done. All this, however true, falls short of the most serious short-coming. For Christ is the touch-stone, and they had not "loved the Highest when they saw" Him. Nay, they had both seen and hated both Him and His Father, But how the majesty of our Lord stands out! and how inconceivable that any should so speak who was merely man! Being what He was, and is, the language is not only intelligible, but the spiritual mind is conscious that nothing short of it could meet the case. "Talk they of morals, O Thou bleeding Love? The grand morality is love of Thee." So wrote long ago a poet little read now-a-days, too serious probably for a sadly flippant age. But he had evidently grasped the great truth that the want of belief in, and of love to Christ, "lies at the root of all sin and reveals its nature." All is summed up in surrender to the Holy One of God.

But, if the world rejected, what about the Father? Righteousness, said the Lord (and I apprehend the word, used here only by St. John, is employed in its most extensive meaning), righteousness was vindicted by the return of the Son to the Father; not merely to heaven. There could be no further revelation, nothing could be added to it, as one has said. The standard of righteousness was fixed for ever. As a man on earth, even the disciples would behold their Lord no more, there is

absolute finality. And as we have seen that sin is not merely the breaking of specific commandments, but that it reveals a most terrible state of separation from God, so righteousness is discerned to be "no mere outward fulfilment of legal or moral obligation."

Lastly, the Spirit testifies that the prince of this world hath been judged (kekritai). We have the two great protagonists, the Son of God and the devil, each, so to speak, bidding for the soul of man, and we see the one raised to the right hand of God the Father, the other judged. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," said our Lord, at an earlier date to the Seventy, who however were rejoicing too much in the fact of their power over evil spirits, too little in the higher blessing of names written in heaven. But even then Christ anticipated the day when evil would be overcome. Thus then, three cardinal facts are stated in terms of matchless conciseness as well as sublimity. The very order is perfect; first, the fact of sin, secondly, the triumph of the Deliverer, thirdly, the discomfiture of the great enemy of God and man. It is all anticipative of course, but of what soon came to pass. R.B.

S. Thoughts on Luk_7:36-50.

Thoughts on Luke 7:36-50.

One hardly expects to say anything new in meditating on this most touching incident. As so often in this Gospel, and as the aged Simeon predicted (Luke 2:35), the thoughts of many hearts are revealed here, as they come in contact with Him who was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. We mark the contrition and devotion of the woman that was a sinner, the supercilious insolence of Simon, the coarse unbelief of his guests. But the believer marks the grave and gracious attitude of the Saviour His thoughts too, thoughts of love and pity, are revealed as He reveals God and man. And how vividly the whole picture stands out, characterised as it is by matchless simplicity and directness. Every word tells, none is superfluous. It was such trials as these, so numerous in this Gospel, that led the apostate French professor to call it (in words I have recently quoted, but may be pardoned for quoting again) "the most beautiful book in existence." He should have asked himself, how it came about, if this book was written by man's mind and skill, that it so transcends all that was ever written by the greatest masters of style. Other learned critics have been similarly eulogistic over the Epistle to Philemon. How comes it, that, judged thereby as a noble specimen of epistolary composition, this letter is placed by men with no bias in favour of Christianity above all that the Platos and Ciceros Plinys and Senecas ever wrote? The Christian has a ready and satisfactory answer. The Gospel of Luke and the Epistle to Philemon were written by men, not only born of God, as are all true believers, and bringing forth the "fruit of the Spirit;" but they were (how precisely brought about man does not comprehend — the fact is the great thing) guided and controlled by the Holy Ghost. It was so with the O.T. Scriptures; (2 Peter 1:21), surely not less with the N.T. And we may rest assured that there was a gracious guidance as to what should be received into, what excluded from, the sacred canon. Hence the spiritual mind feels no surprise at least not in this sense, though we may well be filled with praise, when we contemplate the grace of the Son of God. For no less was He whom the proud Pharisee had received so churlishly, giving him no water for His feet, no oil for His head, nor the kiss that in those days was the token of cordial welcome. And the Lord, at the due moment, does not fail to bring home to Simon his gross incivility. The thrice repeated contrast that He draws between the Pharisee's neglect and the woman's loving service is strikingly emphasised by the "but she," "but this woman" (twice said) of the Saviour's dignified and searching reply. No making light of what she had been; nay, the Lord speaks of "her sins, her many sins" (for such is the more literal rendering). But she loved much, because she repented deeply, and so she hears the precious words of absolute forgiveness. O highly favoured woman, thou also, to whom was granted to hear such comfortable words from the lips of the Incarnate God the True Light! Yet all who believe without seeing are still more blessed.

Remark next that the Lord does not add, as elsewhere He did the warning, "Go and sin no more." In the case of her who ventured into Simon's house the work in her soul was real and profound. Hence contrariwise she is bidden to "go in peace." We can recollect other cases, where there was little or no spiritual exercise, when the word of warning was needed. How suitable to the occasion

ever were the words of our Lord! Now the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him to heal the brokenhearted; but what of Simon? He was not even of those who love little. Self-satisfied and self-righteous, he doubtless regarded himself as having little or nothing to confess — certainly nothing to the Teacher from despised Galilee, whom for some fancy of his own he had patronisingly desired to eat with him. We can imagine the loathing with which he would shrink from the woman who had been such a disreputable character he who, like his fraternity, affected to regard all women with contempt. No, he did not love even a little; but probably hated a great deal. True it is that every repentant soul should love much, and will love in proportion to the sense of God's holiness and his own sins. No doubt that sense is deeper in some than in others; perhaps deeper in ardent natures that have gone far astray; but which, realising their terrible guilt, love with more fervent and passionate love. But deepest of all in such a one as Saul of Tarsus, so conscientious whilst unconverted, so deeply self-judging and devoted when he heard the Lord's voice, saw His glory and believed in His grace.

Yet, self-satisfied and proud and dark as he was, Simon, we may note, uses the courteous appellation "Master," or rather "Teacher." There must have been something in our Lord's manner that compelled respect, and that from the indifferent as well as from His friends. Compare "The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:28). It is not necessary with Jerome to suppose that there was "something starry" in the blessed Lord's aspect, but still less do I sympathise with those, who, giving a too external meaning to certain passages in the prophets, would infer there was something — the reverse. But that indefinable effluence that men habitually feel in the presence of such as are not spiritually, but even intellectually and morally (I say not intellectually alone) above the mass, must, a fortiori, have been found in the Saviour. And so we learn that while Simon used the term "Teacher," Christ addresses him as "Simon." To address people by their simple name, indeed was the universal custom even between men of diverse social position; even slaves so addressed their masters. People were more simple then in many ways. At any rate Simon's outward courtesy in this respect (though in this only) is noticeable.

I suppose few now would contend for an identification of this scene with that recorded in Matthew 26:1-75, Mark 14:1-72, and John 12:1-50. The fact is, that while there are close points of resemblance, others are quite incompatible with identity; that this incident in Luke 7:1-50 took place early in the Lord's ministry is corroborated by the probability that later on no Pharisee would have cared to incur the censure of his fellows by inviting One against whom they had become so bitter. Also on the latter occasion our Lord was evidently among friends; here He was in the presence of thinly disguised hostility in all, save the woman in whom the Holy Spirit had so wonderfully wrought. And, as has been well said, the same grace that saved her drew a veil over her name. It was enough to record that one who had sinned greatly had been made a signal monument of God's grace. R.B.

S. Thoughts on Mar_9:50

Thoughts on Mark 9:50.

It is well known that the truest harmonies grow out of the strongest contrasts. The precepts of scripture are no exception to this rule. The connection is not obvious between a peaceable spirit and the discriminating zeal for God, which was doubtless typified by the salt of the sanctuary. But none the less is there a divine and necessary connection between the two. In short, there is no one-sidedness in scripture. There is a good deal in us. And we are too apt to cross the border-land of spirituality on the one side or the other, and consequently either to be particularly hard on those whose habits of thought, disposition, or training, lead them in a direction aside from our own; or else to think that to differ is a light matter. We are all aggression, or all yieldingness. We are either fain to call down fire from heaven on those who differ from us, or we call them soft names and hint, not obscurely, that after all we should not be so tenacious of doctrine; that Christianity shows itself in the charity that beareth and hopeth all things more than in the energy of the girded loins and burning lamp. In fact, they are just as essential the one as the other, and the blessed Lord in this concise verse links them in a divine harmony. Of course there are times for yielding, as also for bold defence of the truth. Subjection to God can alone teach us when and how. But though zeal be aggressive, it will be dominated by peaceableness; and if the occasion calls for peace pure and simple, it will not be invertebrate; it will be, so to speak, the gentle pressure of the strong hand. In proportion as this precept of the Lord is, by His grace, made good in our own souls, in that measure shall we be like Him Who, as one has said, "when meekness became Him, was meek; when indignation, who could withstand His overwhelming and withering rebuke?" So much for what seems to be the direct teaching of this verse; but does it not also admonish us that we are often needlessly wordy, and consequently pointless, seeing that so much truth is wrapt up in words so few and so simple? Such brevity is of course divine, but may we not follow the Lord in this also? R. Beacon, Jr.

S. Thoughts on Mat_11:27

Thoughts on Matthew 11:27.

"No man knoweth [epiginoskei thoroughly knoweth] the Son but the Father." These words were spoken by the Son Himself. They are absolute and unqualified, and foreclose utterly, while they anticipate, the irreverent questionings of men. Our Lord's statement is the more striking that in the very same verse He declares that the Father is knowable — in and through the Son. As we read elsewhere (John 14:9), "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Clearly the mystery of His Person is in question; to the captious, the irreverent, the curious, a stone of stumbling in all ages, but to the humble and reverent soul a source of unflinching gladness and thanksgiving. Of course there is a sense in which we do know Christ — most really know Him, albeit not the mystery of His Sonship. Our Lord gently reproved Philip for not knowing Him, for not discerning that all that infinitude of moral glory was the manifestation of the Father. To know Him was to know the Father, so that this verse in John is in the fullest accord with the passage in Matthew. But, as we know, it is the union of the divine and the human in His blessed Person that is unknowable. All manner of ingenious speculation has been exhausted in the attempt to analyse it. In vain! No such impregnable tower ever rose four-square to heaven. The would-be interpreters are ever baffled, and the burning of their own fingers is the least part of the damage. What of the widespread injury to the flock of Christ? Surely, it had been better, instead of such unhallowed dissection, to have bowed before the "mystery of godliness," or even to have taken up, may be, the words of the ancient creed, for "God and Man are one Christ." Such is the Incarnation.

Perhaps this stupendous fact is hardly sufficiently emphasised by any of us, not merely by these whose tendency is to recondite speculation, but by very many who fear lest by so doing their attention should be diverted from the atonement. It is not improbable that the fact that men are willing to descant upon the virtues of the Man Christ Jesus, and admit in a vague way a manifestation of the Divine in His Person, but who slight or ignore redemption, may in some measure explain the slender reference to this cardinal truth that prevails here and there. But our wisdom is to hold all truth, Johannean and Pauline, with equal hands. Doubtless he, who is jealous to hold both, will most effectually hold either. The dying recommendation of one who combined an adoring spirit with singularly acute and comprehensive knowledge will be remembered in this connection. Those who were in danger of becoming transcendental and losing Christ over Ephesian truth were counselled to study St. John. But not even in the fourth Gospel is there a lovelier picture than in the passage under consideration. For, if the Person of the Christ be unknowable, if the Son reveals the Father to the sons who had strayed so far away, He calls upon us to "learn of Him." For what purpose but for this have we a fourfold portraiture? Why such a multiplicity of incident, each leading up to the central truth of the atonement, each laden with its special touch of grace, its peculiar ray of glory? Such pictures may well refresh the heart, and quicken the spiritual pulse as we "consider Him," when gathered to "proclaim His death till He come." The divine and the human in our blessed Lord may be likened to a gold and silver thread, of which the strands are indissolubly united. His Person is to be adored, not analysed. With

Athanasius we say, "so much we know; the seraphim veil the rest with their wings." R. Beacon Jr.

S. Thoughts on Psa_1:1-6; Psa_2:1-12

Thoughts on Psalms 1:1-6; Psalms 2:1-12.

It was an important question put by Philip to the eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And the eunuch's answer was not less solemn, "How can I except some man should guide me?" It was an acknowledgment of incompetency to understand without a teacher, a quasi-confession of the great fact, whatever may be the vain boasting of human learning, that the unassisted mind of man is totally inadequate to apprehend the truth of God. The truth is the declaration of God's will and power, first as Creator and Ruler, then of His mind, yea of Himself; the Son being the expression of it when He became flesh. But this makes known the truth about man — "without strength." God has used human words, and His wisdom has shaped them to convey His meaning. We recognise the vehicle, it is our common speech. The words are of every-day use and employed about earthly things. God has used them for heavenly things, and this use exalts human language to the highest place among earthly gifts. Was not language formed for this purpose specially, that man might know and be a channel for the truth? But none can understand the divine things spoken of save as guided by the great and only teacher — the Holy Spirit. This was the eunuch's difficulty; Philip was the Spirit's chosen instrument for teaching him. A great part of the Bible is a record of facts, but not merely a record. And because it is more than a narrative of facts, the history is momentous and all-important. For each event has an import only revealed in the light of Christ. Every thing in that book is in connection with Him, "and without Him was not any thing made that was made." By His Spirit He preached to the disobedient in the days of Noah. He is the Anointed King of Israel, and the Head of the church; and these comprise His rejection and exaltation, His sufferings and glory. Spiritual things are contained therein to be discerned only by the spiritual. As mere history, the record is most interesting, and the natural mind can in some degree appreciate it — save where infidelity and the base corruption of the world have vitiated its perceptive power. A man whose mind has not been thus degraded will, though unconverted, admit the historical accuracy of the Bible, and in measure may apprehend the righteous government of God in Israel; if educated in the literature of the world, he may speak glowingly of the beauties of Hebrew poetry, of the fervour and sublimity of the prophetic writings; but he has no capacity to go beyond the mere letter. Not even the believer, though the babe has an unction from the holy One to know all things, can reach the hidden but intended meaning and instruction to be conveyed in the least fact or circumstance by his own unaided mind, but only as he is taught of God; and no one is savingly taught of God without being born of God. As born of God he can receive instruction, but there must also be the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Not everywhere does the full meaning of the written word lie wholly on the surface (save the glad tidings to the lost, where he that runs may read). The eye must be opened by grace to see beneath. It may be only a simple relation of an apparently unimportant event; but in every circumstance there is an earthly vessel containing a heavenly truth. Our discernment of it is another matter, but the portraiture of divine truth in human frames is characteristic of God's book, and is very observable in the Old Testament. Let us never forget that it is God's relation of events on the earth which are overruled

by Him, and written not because it was history, but because it is intended to convey to the church the treasures of His wisdom and grace. The whole together is the revelation of God's thoughts about Christ, and we need like the eunuch some one to guide us. In short, to understand the divine word we need a divine Teacher. This is nowhere felt more than in reading the Psalms. Their great theme is the First-Begotten, the rejected King in conflict with the enemy; first suffering, then conquering; suffering because He would be joined to the godly remnant of Israel, who also are victors at the end because they are joined to Him. We have the psalms of David, of Asaph, and of others, written no doubt at various times, but all arranged in divine order, as well as each one inspired by the Holy Spirit, to set forth the experiences of Him who went through them all as a man here below. A human application of them has led saints in this period of grace to take the sword and go armed into battle; not seeing the Lord's meaning when He said, if a man had no sword let him sell his garment and buy one. The disciples misunderstood and foolishly boasted of having two swords. Was not the Lord's meaning plain when He said, "It is enough?" If our warfare were with flesh and blood, would two swords be enough? Nay, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Not the material sword to resist the world, but an intimation that the sword of the world would be unsheathed against them, a warning from the Lord that they would have to meet the world's fiercest enmity. Peter failed to see, and in the garden used the sword of which he boasted against the high priest's servant. The Lord then spoke plainer, "Put up thy sword," and at once healed the servant's ear. Thus He rebuked by word and deed the fleshly impulse of Peter. Alas! how many saints notwithstanding the teaching of the Lord have followed not His teaching but Peter's example. And we are all exposed to the danger, the folly of going down to Egypt for help, of trusting in an arm of flesh.

Righteous judgment upon the wicked, the enemy, and ultimate deliverance and triumph of the godly, is the burden of the Psalms. The godly, however, pass through great suffering before the day of triumph comes. While they wait for their victory, another and different warfare is now waged, it is carried on with different weapons. In rebuking Peter the Lord was disclosing a new principle, which was henceforward, during the day of grace, to guide the spirit and mark the conduct of those who bear His name. In the Psalms the sword is not "put up"; it is invoked and held over the head of all enemies, and this according to the will and purpose of God. While waiting, the Psalms record the exercises of a godly man suffering from the power of the wicked, and patiently enduring till the day of triumph. To these sufferers it was never said, "that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). And again, "they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Their warfare is with flesh and blood. Mingled with their cries of distress are the words of unwavering faith and confidence in God while calling upon Him to take vengeance upon the oppressor, which is not the Spirit of grace teaching us to love our enemies, save the pious expressions of dependence upon God, and the assurance of His mercy, and of ultimate deliverance, which saints of God can use at all times. We feel that the Psalmist is not on christian ground. The invocation of judgment is not christian prayer, and to rejoice in the destruction of human enemies is not christian feeling. The Psalms contemplate an aspect of God towards the ungodly different from that which is being declared in the gospel, now that He is not judging, but calling sinners to repentance and saving all who believe. "For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him." Almost the latest words of the Lord upon the cross give the character of this current time, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Stephen, the

first martyr, if his be not the first christian death, echoes with his dying breath the prayer of his Lord and Master, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Grace and love are the characteristics of saints now, such as we do not find in the Psalms. It is clear then that, while we can legitimately and profitably use largely the words of piety and faith found in them, as a whole the psalms are not expressions of christian standing or of our proper hope. They are for the special use of another family of God, whose proper experiences will be in harmony with the dealings of God when He is judging the earth, as ours are, or should be now, in this day of sovereign grace, during which He is not judging, but calling out a heavenly people.

"Blessed is the man." This MAN all through the Psalms is ever foremost in the mind of the Holy Spirit. He, though joined with the godly remnant in all their sorrows and afflictions, Who supplies them with words of true confession and of prayer suited to their circumstances, yet stands apart from them in the purity of His life, in the absolute holiness of His Person. And the wonderful truth seen in the Psalms is the place He took in His perfect integrity in the midst of a remnant, who, though morally separate from the ungodly of the nation, yet in themselves were obnoxious to divine judgments. We may say — Who is He? — not that we are ignorant of Him, but in wonder that this Perfect Man could and would identify Himself with a sinful, though sorrowing and repentant remnant. He is the perfect, but meek and lowly, Man of Nazareth. When He at His baptism entered publicly into relationship with them, John the Baptist seemed surprised. "Comest Thou to me?" Taught of God the Baptist knew that He was no mere man; but not till He came up out of the water, and the Holy Spirit like a dove was seen descending from heaven and abiding upon Him, did John know that "The same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Then John owned Him to be the Son of God. By His baptism, He before God, and in the sight of Israel, associated Himself with those who went into the Jordan confessing their sins. No wonder that the Baptist was astonished at His taking such a place and choosing such companions. But He came to take this place. "Suffer it to be so now" — an answer which, while pointing to the righteous necessity of His being there, expresses His grace and His humiliation, but withal the consciousness of His own dignity.

"Now," it was the hour when Israel's Messiah appeared among them, the first public step for their re-establishment in the earth according to the counsels of God in righteousness. This their special blessing is now delayed because Israel rejected Him, and a yet greater purpose is being carried out, which being fulfilled, Israel will come again to the front, and Jehovah will make a short work in righteousness. But there is more than grace in Christ their Messiah thus joining Himself with sinners confessing their sins in the waters of the Jordan. "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Divine justice could not otherwise be vindicated. In grace He had to take their place and to bear their judgment. To be a propitiation for the sin of the world, to meet the case of the outcast Gentile, did not necessitate His association with those who were baptised in the Jordan confessing their sins. To Israel it was necessary, for they had broken the law whose claims could not be set aside; the judgment must take its course. And if judgment upon the guilty had been the only question, there would have been no need for the advent of Christ. Judgment like the deluge upon the antediluvians would have swept them all away. But there was a prior question; there were promises which were before the law and could be no more set aside than the law. If Israel alone had to pay the penalty of the broken law, who could inherit the promises? On the other hand, if they were put in possession of the promised blessings, ignoring the law, what becomes of

the judgments and righteous character of God? God provided a MAN Who could reconcile, and has reconciled the claims of promise and of law; Who even as to His human birth and genealogy was the only One Who could legally and righteously occupy the place of representative. He is the rightful heir of David's throne, and the king was the governmental link between God and Israel. He only could morally and divinely bear the penalty and judgment of God's law, but Who also could win back the forfeited promises, and establish them in a better form and on fuller ground than before appeared, or was possible. To do this was the counsel of mercy and peace; but the way of doing it was in fulfilling all righteousness, not merely submitting to the claims of a broken law, but establishing the truth of God. He who represented Israel (the remnant) went into their position, even into the Jordan, subsequently took their infirmities and bore their diseases (Matthew 8:1-34 : compared with Isaiah 53:1-12 :), and ultimately bore their stripes and their sins in His own body on the tree, that through Him all their promised blessings might be assured, while at the same time God was taking vengeance upon them for their iniquity and rebellion. To cast down after lifting up their king (as it were, God breaking the kingly link between Himself and Israel) was judicial dealing on the nation. He the rightful King was cast down, and cut off from His inheritance as Son of David (for a time); under the righteous government of God He had nothing, though the Heir of all things.

He Who suffered all this alone fills up the ideal of the blessed Man of the first Psalm; yet for higher reasons enjoyed none of the promised stability and blessedness — in fact, none in more marked contrast.

1888 51 His was a lonely and a despised path. All through it He was bearing Israel's strokes, not making atonement; that was only on the cross when He made His soul an offering for sin. On the cross were the heaviest strokes surely, but there was atonement also, there was blood-shedding which gives a vicarious, a substitutory value (we may say) to all that He then endured for Israel. The healing power of the stripes is because His blood was shed. He died under the claims of a broken law, and thus declared the inexorable justice of God; in His death He was fulfilling righteousness and establishing truth. But it is His blood that brings redemption (Ephesians 1:7). Christ had died having been made sin, and from a dead Christ the atoning blood flows. The soldiers saw that He was dead, but one of them pierced His side and the precious blood flowed, without which there could be no remission. As on the passover night, not the dead lamb within but the blood without was the salvation of Israel. His blood was shed for the purposes of grace. His death was the completing of that righteousness of which His baptism was the initiation.*

Precious blood! What makes His blood so precious to God? Is it because He was that holy thing born of the Virgin? Because He was that perfect blessed Man, who always, day and night, meditated in the law of God? Who always did the things that pleased His Father? Yea, it is precious because He, the spotless One, was made sin, and bore the full weight of God's wrath against sin even to death, He paid the full penalty and glorified God. The offering was accomplished, He had dismissed His soul. The law can demand nothing after death; and the redeeming blood flowed not from a dying Christ, but from a dead Christ. The vindication of righteousness, the honour of God's law, was proclaimed by the cross, and could not be added to when He died.* The blood was shed after that. It is the blood of Him who thus glorified God, therefore it is precious to Him. It is precious to God because He can now remit sin and righteously forgive. Christ is the wisdom and the power of God, as well as the infinite expression of His love.

[*God's righteousness in justifying us who believe, and in exalting Christ to His own right hand, with its blessed results for us, is not forgotten of course.] To return to our Psalm; it speaks not of His divine glory as Son of God, nor of His official glory as King of Israel — that is in the second psalm — but His own personal character, of moral glory as the perfect Man. "Blessed is the Man." Yea, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; and believers in Christ know that this blessedness is of a higher character than what we could have had in creation purity as Adam before he sinned. It is more blessed to be joined by the Spirit to Christ, than to have been maintained in Adamic innocence and goodness. It is this superior blessedness that led Paul, with his eye fixed upon the immense fact, that believers had died with Christ and were risen with Him, so that in the power of resurrection life we might live to God after a holier sort than an innocent but unredeemed man could know — that led him to thank God that we, having been the slaves of sin, had now obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which we were instructed (Romans 6:1-23 :). But this Man of the first Psalm is perfection and needed no forgiveness. His blessedness is peculiar to Himself. His is not the innocence of the first Adam, who (as created) knew no evil, but the perfection of the last Adam, Who in divine purity lived in the midst of sinners, and delighted in the law with cognizance of all and condemned sin. He meditates in the law day and night, no intermission, uninterrupted communion with God in His law. The law implies the presence of sinners; the law is not made for the righteous. This perfect Man is in the midst of sinners, and alone among them. When the Lord was here, there were a very few who clave to Him. In our Psalm He alone is looked at till we come to the last verse. All others were walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, sitting in the seat of the scornful. It was on their account that law was there. He does not ignore the law because it could not touch Him — had nothing to say to Him as it had to all others; He delights in it. To other men it imposed a check, placing a barrier against their wills. To Him it is the expression of God's will as to what a man should be, and He, both in nature and in life, fully answers to it, and finds joy in it. Yea, it is the expression of His own will, in perfect accord with the will of God. This perfect Man is not in heaven contemplating the divine attributes, nor is it the enjoyment of the works of God in the peaceful garden of Eden, but He is in the midst of sinners, surrounded with evil, yet delighting in the law which pronounces the judgment of God upon sinful men. These are the circumstances in which the perfect Man is found. All outside Himself is imperfect and evil, He alone walking in perfect obedience. We hear the same perfect wondrous Man in the Gospel, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). Consider Him in the midst of evil: how unlike the first man, who with everything in his favour failed at the first testing, and entailed death upon his race, sin, death, and judgment, the heirloom of his family. This blessed Man will have His reward. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." As man He receives this reward. And we may notice here that the remnant (just named in the last verse) have the same character of blessing though He alone in its fulness; and indeed their blessing is given to them for altogether a different reason, as Jeremiah declares (xvii. 7, 8), "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought neither shall cease from yielding fruit." This looks onward to millennial peace and joy. Israel restored will enter into the joy of their King, their prosperity will take its colour from His joy. The land itself shares in blessing described in the same way, no doubt if a

figure for man, it is literal for the land, "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (Ezekiel 47:1-23 :). When men and the land are so blessed, then will the tree of the first Psalm flourish. It is His portion as the perfect Man, theirs as those who trust in Him.

"The ungodly are not so." Nebuchadnezzar on the throne was a tree (see Daniel 4:22), but his leaf faded. For a brief moment prosperity shone upon him; where is he now and his glory? "But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." Alas! it is the ungodly in Israel the Psalm speaks of, and the prophet Hosea (Hosea 13:3) pronounces the same judgment upon Ephraim, "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." The day is coming when He shall flourish as the tree, and the chaff be driven away by fiercer winds than the ungodly have yet known. What day is that? Not that day when the dead shall stand before the great white throne, but when Christ comes to judge the living. Its commencement will be when He appears with His saints, and will continue till the wicked are consumed from off the land, for they "shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." The Psalm goes beyond this judgment and gives a glimpse of the godly remnant who will then be the congregation of the righteous. "All thy children shall be taught of Jehovah" (see Isaiah 54:13-14, also Isaiah 65:20). No sinner shall endure among them. At that time the "Blessed Man" will have the joys and prosperity described under the figure of the tree planted by the rivers of water. The flourishing tree of this Psalm is no symbol of the gospel in its dispensational aspect. For the preacher now, like the prophet of old, may indeed cry, "Who hath believed our report?" Christendom outwardly receives, virtually denies, the gospel. Christendom as read in its most popular writers teaches "another gospel which is not another." Its doom is near, its last stage is being developed, whose features are becoming plainer with awful rapidity. And then "I will spue thee out of my mouth." Neither the worldly spreading of the christian name nor the saving power of Christ's name in the hearts of believers are referred to in this Psalm by the flourishing tree, but the earthly glory of Christ when the earth is purged (Matthew 13:41-43).

Three classes are before us in this Psalm. The perfect Man, the ungodly, and the righteous. In the first there could be but One. His perfection is intrinsic, and is in absolute contrast with the ungodly. Then the righteous, the associates of the perfect and blessed Man. These have a relative righteousness, and He calls them the excellent of the earth, in whom He delights (Psalms 16:3). These will rejoice in the day when the "tree" shall flourish, and will share in His prosperity. These take their character from Him. He is the "tree" whose leaf never fades; they are, through their association with Him, "trees" of righteousness. And when they are established in the land and have become a nation, they too will delight in the law of God. The clean water will have been sprinkled, the new heart will have been given (Ezekiel 36:1-38 :). For then will have come the acceptable year of Jehovah, "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that He might be glorified."

Grace has given us a better portion; yet it is not less grace that will thus exalt Israel in the coming day. As the prophet said and the apostle repeated, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Not so the perfect MAN. He needed no grace, He never failed. And looking at the demands

of law and of government, which being God's government must be according to inflexible justice, none but He could be entitled to the full blessedness of the first Psalm. He delighted in the law, and God delighted in Him. Where is a more striking contrast between the prosperity of the righteous and the destruction of the ungodly than the stable tree and the driven chaff? Eternal doom is not the thought here though it does lead our thoughts on to it. The final triumph of righteousness and the putting down of all ungodliness for the earth is the theme of these two Psalms, and declares the righteousness of God in government. Hence grace as proclaimed in the gospel is not found here. No call to repentance (Psalms 2:10 is rather a warning), no promise of forgiveness to the guilty on his confession, nor of restoration to a failing saint. Righteousness and reward are linked together, so also are ungodliness and judgment. Man's probationary term had not yet expired, he was not yet proved to be lost and dead, and therefore the time was not yet come for the fullest display of grace. Man's utter ruin and God's richest grace are revealed together. Two great facts, the second death and eternal life. The law contemplates neither. It tested man declaring what he should be and making bare what he is; it therefore necessarily takes its form from man's condition. It is holy, just, and good, and demanded that righteousness which Jesus the blessed Man and He alone did present to God.

"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." Here the righteous (not one but many; in the Sept. the word is plural) are distinct from "the Man." Jehovah knows their way, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. The knowing and the perishing placed side by side as here means destruction for the ungodly and preservation for the righteous; yea, a moral approval of the righteous, but does not rise to the height of God's delight in the blessed Man.

1888 67 The second Psalm brings us at once to the time of the end of man's rule when Jehovah has risen up to take vengeance upon the despisers and slayers of His Anointed. The King — God's King — is come to sit upon His own throne, and He finds the whole world in arms against Him. "The heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against His Anointed." The Gentile and the Jew unite and say, "Let us break their bands (the bands of Jehovah and His Anointed) asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

There was a little picture of this confederacy when the priests and Pilate and Herod were united against Christ. For then the kings of the earth had their representative in Pilate, and the rulers of the people both ecclesiastical and secular in the priests and Herod. They then imagined a vain thing against Him, though in crucifying Him they seemed to succeed. But the full expression of the hatred and confederacy is yet to come. The intermediate time between the presence of the blessed man here below as in the first Psalm and His advent to take vengeance is passed over. Christ is now hidden from the world and seated on His Father's throne. The second Psalm opens with the aspect of the world when this present exceptional period of grace is closed. But the chief point is the condition of the Jew; the heathen and the kings of the earth fall under a heavier judgment inasmuch as they are the aiders and abettors, yea the rulers of the Jews in their last and greatest rebellion against Jehovah and His Anointed. For both these names have special reference to Israel. If Jehovah were the only name of God, if Anointed and Son of David were the only names of Jesus, there would be no salvation for Gentiles. The Syro-Phoenician woman had no blessing while calling upon Him as Son of David. When she said Lord, there was a leading word; when she took the place of a dog, she had the blessing she sought. Here in this Psalm truly,

is the Anointed King Whose authority and power extend over all the kings of the earth, but He is established in Zion. Zion is the central point, the place of His throne (see Ps. xlviii).

All take counsel together. How vain! Not less vain when He came to save, not to judge; though only believers can see how necessary is His death to victory and salvation. But when He comes to judge, the enemies will see how vain their thought to set at nought His authority and power. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, Jehovah shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure." Rage as may the kings in their impotency, the rulers are but grasshoppers before Him, and Jehovah says "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The speakers change, and Messiah Himself takes up the word. "I will declare the decree, Jehovah hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The Lord Jesus when down here had this relationship of "Son," and spoke from it. No word more frequent in His mouth than "My Father." And this not only referring to His Eternal Sonship — the Son co-equal with the Father — but to His humanity. He was as Man the Son of God, "That holy thing." Jehovah, long before Messiah's birth, declared Him to be the Son of God; and when He came, He lived and spoke in this conscious relationship. The decree is His universal supremacy. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." The Lord Jesus takes this place of universal authority and of possession, as Son saying, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." And when about to leave this world for a season He said to His Father — a greater work than taking the kingdom of this world and sitting on the throne of David being then in view, the formation of a heavenly people — "I pray not (I ask not now) for the world" (John xvii), in evident allusion to the promise of Jehovah in this Psalm. Not then, nor yet has He asked. The hour approaches when He will ask; for there is a term to His longsuffering and patience, and then comes the judgment. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This power is His now, though not yet put forth in judgment. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). The judgment of the world is committed to Him (Acts 17:31). And when He comes to put forth that power, even the saints — the overcomers — shall under Him shepherd the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26-27). For the present this power is manifested for the purposes of grace and salvation; and this present period (though iniquity was never so rampant, and rebel man never so defiant of God), — yet this present is the time of God's greatest joy. For of all the ages of the world never was such grace seen, never were such blessings conferred as God is now showing; and this is His joy. He gave the Lord Jesus power and authority for this end, viz. His joy. "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." When all the "given" ones are with the Lord, then will come the judgment of the enemies. The Psalm looks onward to this judgment of the quick when the heirs are taken out of the scene.

What a gracious time is the present! For the decree of judgment is enrolled among the immutable counsels of God, and not less sure than the exaltation of the Son as King in Zion. But His exaltation to the throne of universal dominion is delayed, and the judgment of the ungodly is held in check that the authority which the Lord Jesus has may be used in giving eternal life to those whom the Father brings to Him. Is not this patient waiting? The longsuffering of the Lord is

salvation. And "salvation" is the word which gives the character of this present day, as judgment will of the coming day. For then there will be unsparing retribution upon those who have taken counsel against Him and who will be taken, as it were, red-handed in their guilt. None escape; Israel and the Gentile, the people and the heathen, all who are confederated in rebellion will feel the power of God's King when He sits on His throne in Zion. It is grace while He is on the Father's throne. The same scene and the same parties, contemplated in the Psalm, appeared to the Seer, who foretells the same judgment. "Associate yourselves, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces: and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together and it shall come to nought; speak the word and it shall not stand; for God is with us." The people — the bulk of the nation are in league with the heathen, but He is with the little remnant; and because they can say "God is with us" the prophet challenges the confederacy of the wicked with scorn. "Associate yourselves," let Israel and the Gentile join hand in hand, nevertheless "ye shall be broken." At the same time there is a warning word to the godly, "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear nor be afraid" (Isa. viii). The nation is to be in league with the Beast of the West, whose protection they seek against the King of Assyria — the overflowing scourge. But though the Assyrian is to oppose Israel and their allies, all are as one in opposition to God's King. And at His hand they all are to meet their doom.

Awful is the character of this confederacy as given by the same prophet. It is an alliance with a power which is of Satan; its diabolical source unsuspected, hidden from their eyes. "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death and with hell are we at agreement, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves" (Isaiah 28:14 etc.). They knew not that the Dragon had given his power to the Beast; but such is the fact, and God by the prophet declares the people to be associated with death and hell — reveals it to those among them who have ears to hear. It is a warning that all the scorers and the heathen shall be overthrown with an irretrievable destruction. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." The Holy Spirit — the Spirit of Christ in the Psalmist — again takes up the word, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Alas! vain is the call to wisdom.. The coming day will find Israel and the nations, as the prophet predicts. It will be hell and earth in league against the King appointed by God. The North, the South, the Beast and Israel apostate may be all embroiled; but each is opposed to Christ. It is according to God's ways to give warning. Not one lost soul (at least within the limits of Christendom) but has heard at one time or another the warning voice of Him who must punish the wicked, so that all are without excuse. Even Judas the traitor was warned, but had no ear for it, no heart to feel the Master's sorrow. "Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall deliver Me up." Captive of his own covetousness and baseness, Judas heeds not the word, his hard heart is untouched. The sop is given and reveals him to the other disciples, and Satan enters into him. Too late, for ever too late to retrace his fatal path, Satan possesses him. Then, not before, the Lord dismisses him, and bids him do his evil

work quickly. And immediately he went out — went out into the "night," but carrying a night of far blacker darkness in his own soul. Even he was warned. The warning and then announcement of sure judgment is even now already gone forth to the actors in the last days. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings." They are counselled to serve Jehovah with fear, yea to kiss — pay homage to — the Son. The nations that share in millennial blessedness are not to be brought through Christ to the knowledge of the Father as He is revealed to us now. To Christ, the exalted Man, they must bow, Who in His own Person is the revelation of the majesty and power and rule of God, until He delivers up the kingdom to God even the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). There was a glimpse of this glory of the kingdom on the mount of transfiguration. It was too much for the three disciples, who were overpowered and became heavy with sleep. The Lord prayed that we might behold even higher glory. He will soon be revealed; we shall not sleep then but be fitted to gaze upon Him in all His glory and brightness.

It is not yet the day of His magnificent glory; He is still waiting on the Father's throne, and while there, we honour Him even as we honour the Father, but the world disbelieves and dishonours Him. In the day of His revelation, all flesh, kings and slaves, princes, judges, and common people, all together must pay homage to Him. For every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Him; every creature in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, all shall confess Jesus Christ to be Lord. And His Lordship, His universal rule as the exalted Man, is to the glory of God the Father.

Grace bows our hearts now, and with joy we confess His name! Judgment will in that day break the proud spirit of the enemy. When His wrath is kindled but a little — the beginning of His judgment, they perish from the way. "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:17).

1888 81 As in the first Psalm we find the righteous apart from the blessed Man and from the ungodly, so here we find them a distinct company apart from the anointed, and from the raging heathen and the people. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." But if the same three classes appear in the second Psalm as in the first, how notable the different character in which each appears. For the perfect and blessed Man of the first is the exalted Man and crowned King of the second; the ungodly, the sinners and the scorers of the first have made way for the confederated kings who take counsel together against Jehovah and against His Anointed; they are the leaders of the scornful men and their representatives. The "righteous" of the first (ver. 6) are seen in the "blessed" of the second. Introduced in these two Psalms they all are in view throughout the book, save the closing scene where, in the great hallelujah of praise from blessed men and renovated creation, the wicked are nowhere.

Why are they called "blessed?" Why, the same word as applied to the perfect Man? Not because they are perfect as He, but because they trust in Him. His blessedness is the fruit of His own perfection, theirs is also due to Him for He overshadows them with His wing. "Trust" suggests the thought of a time of trial, sorrow and patience, and prepares us somewhat for the sudden transition from the glories of the second Psalm to the trouble with which the third opens. And the wonderful fact is that He who is the object of their trust is Himself deeper in the trouble than they possibly could be. But He must have pre-eminence in suffering as in righteousness and glory.

Theirs is the blessedness of the sorrowing remnant who are admitted to share in little measure the trouble of Him in whom they trust. As the second bridges over the space from the blessed Man here below to the scene of His glory hereafter, so the third takes us back again to the sorrows of His lonely path. For though a few clave to Him, in the depths of His sorrow He was truly alone. They little knew the sorrow that was breaking His heart. Even when told of the inevitable cross (through His grace), they could not receive it. The sources of His sorrow were beyond their ken, although the prophet had declared it; "behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger" (Lamentations 1:12).

While kings are bidden to submit themselves to Him, they that trust in Him are pronounced blessed. Though He went down to the depths, despised, mocked, and cut off from His inheritance, still to trust in Him was the sure and only way to this blessedness. When the Lord was here, His disciples trusted in Him up to a certain point. But when they saw Him in the hands of the priests and the rulers, then they all forsook Him and fled. Death was a strain upon their trust which they were not prepared for; and indeed it is too great a strain for faith short of resurrection-faith, which however was not then given to them. Resurrection must first be a fact: after that faith builds upon it. For the moment, every hope was gone from their hearts and sorrow filled the vacant place. The two going to Emmaus tell their griefs to each other, and to a stranger (supposed) lament and say, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." Others of them return to their fishing. But when death was, as they imagined, stamped upon all their hopes and expectations, their hopes appear again in a brighter and eternal aspect. Jesus appears to them alive from the dead, and the glory of the kingdom, yea, and every other glory, is firmly established in power through His resurrection. It is an immovable basis, the necessary basis; for as it behoved Christ to suffer these things (even death) to enter into His glory, so must He also rise. The foundation of trust in Him cannot again be shaken. Its security is the death and resurrection of Christ, but this is not named in our Psalm. Messiah's exaltation is the theme, and whatever the pathway, though it be through deepest troubles, it is Jehovah's decree and must be accomplished. And as surely will those who trust in Him be blessed.

It is the godly remnant who are here in view. The "righteous" in the first Psalm, and the "blessed" in the second. They are called "blessed," not because of aught in themselves, but because they trust in Him. Under the first name "righteous" we read that Jehovah knows their way. Their path of sorrow as depicted in Psalms that follow was known to God; and this contains a store of comfort to the tried and suffering remnant. Jehovah watched over their way for the sake of the blessed Man Who trod the same path, going before them, and thus leading them through it. The way is appointed, and known to God; the termination is blessing, and that also is decreed. To the understanding heart the closing verses of each of these Psalms embody a sure and certain promise which is abundantly performed when we see at the close of the book the righteous remnant exalted as a nation, and their enemies destroyed.

We know that all blessing is connected with faith both in the coming day for Israel as for the believer in this present time. Christ is faith's object for them as for us. But of us it is said, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8-9). This is our present blessedness. They (the remnant) shall receive their salvation

when they see Him. In the tremendous scenes of the coming day they will say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is Jehovah, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). He comes not only to execute judgment upon the heathen and upon the guilty people, but also to bring salvation to the trusting ones. All the past will be reversed (see Isaiah 61:1-11 : and Joel 2:21-27). They will rejoice not merely in their change of circumstances, however great and marvellous, but even as while waiting they trusted and are blessed, so when they see they will shout "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." They will joy in Him. The blessedness of trusting characterises them before deliverance comes. What will it be when He comes and accomplishes the promises of God for them? This blessedness has special reference to the godly remnant in the last days. But as it is a blessedness which accompanies faith, we and all saints in all times can partake of the blessing which faith brings. And for ourselves, the trust here spoken of is not so much the faith that reveals the Saviour to the sinner — though that faith need not be excluded — as the trust and confidence in the Christ of those who wait for His coming, and who are rejoicing in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1-21). And we know how blessed it is to trust in Christ, surrounded as we are by enemies who, for a little while, are even now in their impotency raging against Christ, if not against His person (there are some who do) yet against His truth. But is not the denial of the truth an implicit denial of His person? To trust in Him is our strength, victory and present joy. We wait for Him, not to be preserved through the judgment, not to triumph over foes on the earth, but to be taken away hidden in the Father's house while He is purging His kingdom and taking away all things that offend. We shall be there till the tempest be overpast.

These two Psalms are introductory to the whole book. They present the person of Him who is the constant theme throughout, either in His own person, or by His spirit in the remnant. In the first Psalm, His inherent perfection as a Man; then in the second, His official glory and power as King in Zion. The rest of the book tells first of His sufferings, and of the righteous to whom He joins Himself; then of His final exaltation and their consequent triumph. The perfection has appeared, and His sufferings are past. The glory has not yet appeared. He is not yet manifested as the tree with the unfading leaf (save to the redeemed who look with the eye of faith). He was and is still to unbelieving Israel as a root out of a dry ground. The Gospels give us historically the circumstances in which He was found. For the Jew He had no form nor comeliness, no beauty that they should desire Him. He was despised and rejected. Therefore He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The Psalms unfold these sorrows, not in the form of an historical record, but as the experiences of His soul. Some are incommunicable, all are as to their depth and intensity, but some as to their nature, as when forsaken on the cross, made sin and bearing its judgment. For who but He could bear it and afterwards rise from the grave in victory? His suffering of death from the hand of God is infinitely apart from the sufferings of the remnant and from ours. In what He endured from man the godly remnant have a share, and the church now has fellowship in His sufferings as the object of the world's hate. Paul tasted of, yea, gloried in them, more perhaps than any other man; yet not even he knew them as did Christ. The suffering remnant as seen in the Psalms have not Paul's faith and hope and joy. Their sufferings have an element peculiar to themselves. Messiah went through all. To believers now, it is a privilege to suffer with Christ. To the remnant it is righteous and governmental discipline. And through the suffering partaking of this governmental character, in grace went Christ, the perfect man, the future King. "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9), yea in it was more afflicted than they. It is beyond the

capacity of mere man to feel as He felt. The remnant of Israel are called to taste of His sorrows and experiences as far as they are capable, and which it is necessary they should under the disciplining hand of God. And they are given to feel in measure with Him that they may feel aright and that He may form their thoughts and words, their prayers and confessions, and supply them with faith and confidence 1:e., He communicates to them all that in their circumstances is acceptable to God. But how infinitely acceptable was His own life and obedience! Although in the same circumstances as they, there shines out, in all His own immaculate purity, His perfection. He was separate from sinners, yet He wept not only for them, but with them, and made confession of sins for them as if they were His own; so intimately did He join Himself to His people. He took upon Himself their burdens and bowed under them. He bore their stripes and they are healed. He was cut off and had nothing. Consider Him, the perfect man yet sorrowing, the righteous man yet bearing judgment, the blessed man yet going to the cross, the true king yet cut off from His inheritance. The prophet said His name should be called "Wonderful." His presence in this world was wonderful; His words, His deeds and beyond all else His death proclaim Him "the Wonderful:" we bow in adoring love and praise.

What more fitting introduction to these experiences of sorrow and humiliation than the perfection of His humanity and Jehovah's decree that He should sit upon His throne in Zion? In that day many crowns will be His, "and on His head were many crowns" (Revelation 19:12). He will be crowned as the perfect man, the leader and chief of the godly remnant, the head of the church. These He wears now. Soon He will sit upon the throne of Israel in Zion, soon He will be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, when the glorious prophecy in Psalms 72:1-20 : shall be literally accomplished. But there is one glory which takes precedence of all these, it is the greatest and brightest of all. These crowns bespeak His relations with man, with the creature. The highest is His because He as man vindicated the name of God in a world of sin and blasphemy. Divine judgment is not set aside, but the full tide of mercy's living waters flows fully and freely. He abased Himself even to a malefactor's death to secure the vindication of a just and holy God which is a higher thing than man's redemption and necessarily takes precedence. And the Holy Spirit notes His deep self-abasement for this end, and on account of which He is highly exalted. "Wherefore" says the apostle "God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:7-11).

Saints, holy angels bow now; in His humiliation even demons feared the power of the name of Jesus. Believers bow and worship; unbelievers still reject. Soon they will be compelled to confess Him Lord of all. That name is the glory of heaven, and though now rejected by the world, shall soon be its boast also. "O Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth" (Ps. viii).

Many crowns! and with the glory and honour, with the shining forth of His majesty then will be the tokens of His grace. "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" (Revelation 5:6). His humiliation, sufferings, death will shine as brilliants set in crowns of gold. R. Beacon.

S. Thoughts on Second Chronicles.

Thoughts on Second Chronicles.

R. B.

2 Chronicles 1 – 7. The wars of the Lord are now ended, Solomon is on the throne of the Lord. Further glories appear, and a fresh page is turned in the book of God's counsels. The prince of peace is on the throne, and we have the building, and the numbering, the order, and the arrangement of the servants of the temple. Not now as when David ascended the throne, then the numbering was of mighty men of valour, ready armed for war "a great host like the host of God." Now all enemies are subdued; even the internal disturbers, as Adonijah, Joab and their adherents are not even worthy of mention — the last but equally impotent effort of Satan against God's chosen man. In the joy and glory with which the second book of Chronicles opens all else is either annihilated or enshrined in its brightness. As when the feeble rays of a lamp are over-powered and lost in the light of the midday sun, but the precious gem shines in a splendour beyond its own; so the glory of Jehovah rests upon all. It filled the house; and Solomon on his knees before the altar shines more than when sitting on the throne. The Gentile has the privilege of having a little share in the building of that house; he has not the readiness and free-giving of an Israelite, but he has a place there, and we may say a blessed place. And a more blessed place is yet to come. For that house is to be a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17). And the presence of king Hiram's labourers may have been the occasion of the psalmist's prophetic utterance. "And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift" (Psalms 45:12). And the Tyrian Gentile will shout then with more intelligence." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that made heaven and earth, Who hath given to David a wisdom endued with prudence and understanding that might build a house for the Lord and a house for His kingdom" (2 Chronicles 2:12). The Gentile's place was subordinate, but participating in Israel's blessedness. This fact and the psalmist's prophecy must have been known to the scribes and pharisees who boasted of their knowledge of their law, that in the days of the temple's pristine glory Gentiles were there. Why then raise such a tumult in Paul's day, saying that he had brought a Gentile — an Ephesian into the temple? There was more hatred of Paul than against the Gentile; not so much jealousy of the Gentile as dislike of the truth. No difference! and that salvation was as greatly needed by the Jew, as by the Gentile! The abiding presence of Jehovah in His house was dependent upon the obedience and faithfulness of the king, and Solomon knowing his responsibility prays for wisdom to govern Israel aright. Doubtless David as a saint knew that he was responsible; but Solomon is presented here as responsible for the right exercise of his kingly functions, and he accordingly asks for wisdom. He asked because he needed. God uses him and sets him in a position, that we may, as it were, look through him as through a glass on to the glories of the Messiah; yet He meets him as a man in his necessities, which became all the greater because he was so highly exalted. The unwisdom of a mean man might pass unnoticed, but folly found in a king would be like dead flies in the apothecary's ointment. But Messiah, the Lord Jesus, is wisdom, both the wisdom and the power of God (see 1 Corinthians 1:1-31). and He will ask in that day, yet not for wisdom but for the accomplishment of

God's decree. "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. 2: 18). Grace postpones that day, for it is the day of judgment. God forbears long with the wicked, and His long-suffering is salvation. When the Lord was about to suffer, He made a very different request to his Father from that which He will make in the day of vengeance. He was occupied with His disciples and said, I ask for them, I ask not for the world," (John 17:9). The present time is characterised by divine patience, and He Who is the coming king reveals Himself now as the Saviour. In that day He will ask and receive, and dash them — His enemies — in pieces like a potter's vessel, The Lord exceedingly magnified Solomon in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him. Alas! no sooner has he reached the topmost glory, than he begins to use his high position, and riches, as a means for the gratifying of the flesh, and the pride of life. He multiplied chariots, sent to Egypt for horses, and multiplied wives and silver and gold (see Deuteronomy 17:16-17). The Lord God had laid down a rule for the guidance of the king. and Solomon disobeys in all points. This could not fail to bring judgment. It was delayed for a little, for the accomplishment of the counsels of God concerning His Son must have the first place. The house of David began to feel the first strokes of judgment in the last days of Solomon. In the following reign the kingdom was rent in twain. But God's purpose to give a picture of the future blessedness was not yet complete, and judgment must stand aside awhile. The temple must first be built, the glory must fill it. The priest must be sanctified, and the singers — not the least important in that joyful time — must be arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps. Then when the glorious future is presented, the whole panorama is rolled up, and the history of the kingdom is briefly given so as to mark each downward step unto the end.

We think of another white-robed company, whose robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb, whose voices will join in a sweeter song than that of the singers of Israel. It will be the shout of all, "For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever." But there is a speciality about the white-robed company in Revelation 7:13, etc., etc. The Lamb spreads His tabernacle over them, rather than dwells among these Gentiles. Jehovah, as it were, came down to receive the tribute of praise from Israel's singers, and filled the temple with the cloud of His presence. The picture would not be complete without it. The foreshadowing of the glories of the millennial reign of Christ is closed, for what more can be added, when His glory fills the house? It is the crown of Israel's blessing.

There are seemingly two occasions when the glory filled the house so that the priests could not minister. The first (2 Chronicles 5:11-14) is before Solomon's prayer, when the trumpeters, singers, and all join with one voice saying, or singing "For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever," that then the house was filled with a cloud, the cloud appears as an answer to their shout of praise. Jehovah steps down from the heaven of heavens, His dwelling place, to His earthly throne, to receive the praise of His people and reveals His presence by a cloud. On the second occasion (2 Chronicles 7:3) after Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. Two facts are recorded, the same as on the former occasion. The priests could not enter the temple by reason of the glory, and the people worship and repeat the same words, "For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever." But when there were two occasions, the Holy Ghost is repeating the joyous record, returning to it after having given Solomon's prayer which gives more cause for grief than for joy, occupied with Israel's sin, and captivity in the end; this scene is the

climax of their blessedness, the essence of their glory. Henceforth the glory declines, the fine gold becomes dim. Not many years after that glorious display, the dark shades of night spread a funeral pall over the guilty city and captive people, which will not be removed, till the nation's moral resurrection, when "many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake" (see Dan. xii). At this point — Solomon's prayer — there is a transition from the setting forth of the kingly glories and power of the Only-Begotten, in spite of man's failure and errors, to the committal of what was used by God as a vehicle to declare these glories, to the care and responsibilities of man; to a man who was made a king, and endowed with wisdom and honour beyond any other king, before or after, but who was not able to sustain the weight of it. The throne and the temple were entrusted to king Solomon's keeping, and the glory of each dependent upon one man. Solomon knows his position, and prays. He blesses the Lord God, blesses the congregation, then takes the attitude of supplication, and spreads forth his hands towards heaven. As David before the ark, so Solomon before the altar; but what a difference between David's psalm and Solomon's prayer! Though the ark be only in a tent, and the altar be in the gorgeous temple, yet David's view of the coming glory is not hidden by the intervening failure of Israel which limits the outlook of Solomon.

God said to David, "there shall not a man fail thee to sit upon my throne." There was always a man whose birthright it was to sit upon David's throne. Unworthiness was found in each, but the line of descent continues till Christ came. He is the Man on Whom the Holy Spirit looks. In Him there was, and is, the divine right as well as the human title; for He is the Son of God as well as Son of David, and whatever may intervene between the promise and its fulfilment, He will assuredly sit there. Solomon, unlike David, looks not on to the bright future unless the last words of his prayer (2 Chron. 5: 40, etc.) express his faith in God remembering His mercies to David. The word that presses upon his mind is "Yet so that thy children [David's] take heed to their ways, to walk in my statutes, as thou [David] hast walked before Me." This gives a supplicatory character to his prayer. David's psalm is rather thanksgiving and praise, for he contemplates Israel in the land, in the enjoyment of God's uninterrupted favour, Solomon sees them rebellious, suffering, and scattered. David calls upon the heavens to be glad, and on the nations to say "The Lord reigneth." Solomon prays for mercy when Israel shall be dispersed among the nations. David calls on the

God of salvation, rejoicing in that name. "Save us" he says, not in view of Israel's backsliding but that the heathen should be finally subdued, for the ark in the temple — the evidence of final victory — was not yet. He is full of the promise. Solomon thinks of his present responsibility, of Israel's sin, and deprecates the righteous anger of God, and, pleading, as it were, the pity and compassion of God in view of the broken covenant, explains, "What man is there that sinneth not?" In a word, David calls upon a happy people to praise the Lord, Solomon prays for mercy and forgiveness for a sinful people; the dominant note in David's song of praise, and with which he closes is "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever;" the constantly recurring petition in Solomon's prayer is, Hear Thou from the heavens, and when Thou hearest, forgive. The time when Messiah will sit upon His throne was then and is still future, but it was present to David's faith. Solomon's prayer is not prophetic of the coming happy time but of the near future when Israel would forsake the Lord, and the Lord forsake His house and dwell in the heaven of heavens. Even there would He hear the supplication and confessions of the repentant. The Holy Spirit through His inspired instrument gives this repeated cry, "Then hear Thou from the heavens, Thy dwelling place," thus teaching the contrite and humble to look up through the surrounding gloom to God's eternal dwelling place. A

gracious intimation that in the last and closing days of the people's long captivity, when in a far country, and no access to the temple, when every outward mark of their still being the chosen people of God is gone, let them only look up to the heaven of heavens, and He Who sits on the throne will hear, and will forgive.

2 Chronicles 6:1-42.

1892 53 In Solomon's prayer there seemed to be two different grounds on which he stands to prefer his requests. The first he takes is the promise conditionally given to his father David. In the second, it is the mercy of God that can forgive after sin is committed. For sin having appeared whether in any man, or in the nation at large even though Solomon himself personally be not guilty, the whole kingdom would be lost unless God in His mercy went beyond the terms of His covenant with David. Hence in the case of transgression there can be no cry but for forgiveness.

These essentially different standpoints appear, the first from 2 Chronicles 6:14-20, and the second in ver. 21, and following. In the latter Solomon is no longer on covenant ground. Forgiveness would not be needed if he and the people had righteously fulfilled the conditions laid on them, for God's promise was made contingent upon their obedience. In the former part there appears no doubt or fear of his own, or the people's, taking heed to the law; and in this his request is "let thy word be verified." It is calling on God not to forgive, but to fulfil His promise. There seems this confidence in himself, for though he speaks of any man sinning, or even of all the people, he never says, If we sin. The Lord does not fail to remind him that he was as liable to sin as any man (see 2 Chronicles 7:17), and that it is upon his failure, dragging all the people with him, the solemn judgment of God is pronounced.

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

Forgiveness is linked with God in his dwelling-place, the heaven of heavens, and not with the house. For grace is sovereign and has its source in God dwelling in the heavens. The temple and its magnificence were well suited for the law and the covenant, but forgiveness is with God in His dwelling-place. Thither Solomon looks. Nothing could be hidden from the all-searching eye of God and as if the thought expressed in 2 Chronicles 6:36 — "there is no man which sinneth not" — were pressing upon his heart, he prays for forgiveness. For if God judged on the principle of law, and righteousness apart from grace, He would, yea must, forsake His house and leave Israel under the awful judgment of a broken covenant. Often does he say "hear and forgive." And God did repeatedly hear and forgive (governmentally) till He was compelled to judge, and say "why should ye be stricken any more?" Solomon's prayer to this point is general; but he knows there is no man that sinneth not, and he is in presence of the holiness and righteousness of God, Who can

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

"If any man sin against his neighbour." Such a thing might happen as an exception to the general obedience of the people. Had the people never become idolaters and externally at least maintained the righteousness of the law, there was still the possibility of an individual sinning against his neighbour. And Solomon's prayer in such a case is not, Hear and forgive, but "Hear thou from heaven [where he knew that forgiveness could only be found] and do, and judge Thy servants by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head, and by justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness." This is law. If the sinner had been immediately requited in judgment, neither land nor people would have been polluted. But when the whole nation are sinners, when those whose office it was to vindicate the law were equally guilty, who then could righteously take vengeance for a broken law? Such the whole had become in the time of the prophets, and for this reason the prophets were sent, and dark pictures are given of the chosen people's sin and guilt. It was even worse when the Lord was here; for in His presence they dared to appear as vindicators of the law when their own conscience could and did bear witness against them. Their incompetency to act was made manifest (see John 8:1-59) Only the mercy that endureth for ever could act for such a people. And he who at the first said "Verify Thy word" can only now say "Hear and forgive."

What a mingling of law and grace is here, if the way of the wicked is recompensed upon his own head? where is forgiveness? The law never brought out the depths of sin in man. Nor, while the law obtained as a rule of life, could forgiveness be known as the gospel proclaims it. While the saint of old as under law knew that if the Lord marked iniquity none could stand, and has not the knowledge, nor could have of a perfect redemption — can only say, "But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:1-8 :), he had not the knowledge of God's perfect love which casteth out all fear. By the unspeakable grace of God this knowledge is ours. The experience of these saints never rose to christian experience. Looking to law as a rule of life, along with grace for forgiveness, was a condition that did not meet the mind and love of God (see Hebrews 8:8). Now the believer in Christ has died to law, is separated from the whole order of things, which was suited for God's earthly people, and quite right then, but wrong now. The believer now has a heavenly calling, being in a sphere which is beyond the reach of the law which pressed upon the saints of old so that they were in bondage all their life. Is then the believer lawless? Nay, but as risen with Christ, he is to live to God, and Christ is his law in the new resurrection sphere. The grace that came by Christ teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age; the law said, Thou shalt not covet, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, etc. But the grace goes farther, giving the impelling power to fulfil the righteousness of the law (which the law itself never could, and was never intended to do). The grace adds, to look for the appearing of the glory, and this is a chief part of christianity, and is always accompanied (where it is not mere sentiment but a divine reality) with power so to live as the grace given teaches. Shall a forgiven man go to the law for the measure of his holiness and obedience? That same law which when in force by the authority of God could only stir up the flesh and excite its opposition?

There was a time when obedience to the law, or disobedience, was the dividing line between the saints of God, and all others. But it did not separate saints from the world. For there was then no

cross. Now saints, believers, are crucified to the world, and the world to them. This is a complete and absolute severance not merely from its sins and condemnation, but from it as a system which may have good things (good naturally) as well as bad. We as believers in Christ belong to an entirely different sphere, as separate from the old system in which Solomon lived, as the Lord Jesus risen." They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:1-26 :). The requests of Solomon go not beyond temporal evils and temporal judgments. For Israel is God's earthly people; but they are Jehovah's people and Solomon constantly says Thy people. And though the wickedness of the people seems to spread out before his eye, so does also the goodness of God, and for the worst sins he can beseech forgiveness. He had before said, "If any man sin," as if such a thing would be an exception in Israel; but now in 2 Chronicles 6:29, the exception to the general prevalence of iniquity would be if any man prayed or confessed his sin.

Still in this desperate condition of the people, he says, "and render unto every man according unto all his ways" (2 Chronicles 6:30). But forgiveness is blended with the law, which had no place in the law as given by Moses, though the forgiving character of God was revealed to him in the mount (Exodus 34:6-7). It is now brought prominently out, and God's perfect absolute knowledge of the heart is, as it were, pleaded as a reason for forgiveness. Under the gospel it is not law alone, nor law and grace mixed, as under the intercession of Moses, but grace reigning through righteousness by Christ our Lord. The stranger is prayed for, and comes in to share in Israel's blessings and privileges, even to pray in this house. The Lord said it was written "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17). The comparatively few strangers that worshipped in that temple cannot be the full answer to Solomon's request, He was led by the prophetic Spirit of God beyond the time then present to the time when all Israel shall know the Lord; and he goes on to say "that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name as doth Thy people Israel." In that day Israel will be the greatest nation and bear rule over the Gentiles, but will also be a model of obedience and worship. But before the brightness of that millennial day bursts on the world, a greater sin and a heavier judgment than all before it shall be found with that people. Their sins and their judgments had been in the land; the outpouring of the wrath of Jehovah drove them out of their own land into one afar off. Captivity to the Gentiles was to succeed pestilence and famine and war. These which they suffered in the land were sufficient to teach them to be obedient to the law of God if they had had ears to hear and hearts to understand. But they were heedless to every call, their hearts were impervious to God's patient dealing, restoration after chastisement only gave them further opportunity for sin until the cup ran over. And God said, Why should ye be stricken (chastised) any more? and gave them up to the Gentile. Even the sorrows of the Babylonish captivity so deeply felt by Jeremiah were comparatively light before those under the power of the Romans, and the two tribes that represent Israel feel Gentile oppression much more now than when carried to Babylon. And greater woe awaits them before that day comes. But the prophetic prayer of Solomon comprehends a return and a gathering of all back again to their land. He reaches forward to the millennial day. "Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place. Thou, and the ark of Thy strength; let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness" (2 Chronicles 6:41). It is in the form of a prayer, but it is not the less a prophetic description of their millennial gladness. And as it were recognising that all this blessing is not because of Israel's repentance, but for His sake Who is appointed to reign over them, Solomon closes with the feeling that all rests with Him. "O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine Anointed; remember the mercies of David Thy servant."

Sin and its judgment, a possible repentance, and forgiveness from God, occupy his mind and are the subject of his prayer. But the mercy of God is as prominent in Solomon's prayer, as was the inflexible righteousness of God in the law given by Moses; and it was on this mingled system of grace and righteousness that God dealt with Israel until the Lord came, the fruit of mediatorial intercession really. God (to speak after the manner of men) accepts Solomon's modification of the old covenant. "And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer" (2 Chronicles 7:12), and takes up special cases of judgment; if the people repent, He will hear and forgive. But He did more; He did not wait for their repentance, but sent prophets to rebuke, warn, of the inevitable judgment that must follow sin; to invite, yea plead with, them to repent, and if they did repent, to say what grace would do for them.

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

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

2 Chronicles 7:1-22; 2 Chronicles 8:1-18; 2 Chronicles 9:1-31.

1892 68 The Lord manifests His acceptance of the worship of Israel, and of Solomon's prayer, for fire descends from heaven and consumes the sacrifices, and His glory fills the house, and He also graciously grants the King's requests. He will hear and forgive if the people humble themselves and pray to Him. He will look on that house and be attent to the prayer that is made in it. And the Lord is as minute and particular in His answer as was Solomon in his prayer. "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, if my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever and mine eyes and mine ears shall be there perpetually" (2 Chronicles 7:13-16). Solomon prays for Israel as the Lord's people; he said in his prayer, Thy people. And the Lord owns them as His, and says, My people.

It was in the night the Lord appeared and answered his prayer. As the chief if not the sole responsibility rested on him, a private word is given, not in the hearing of the people but special to him. "And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments, then will I

establish the throne of thy kingdom according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel." This is a word for Solomon himself as to his own ways and obedience to which he made no reference in his prayer — unless it be contained in the words, "there is no man which sinneth not." Yet are they remarkable words from one who was under law (for at that time the two tables that Moses wrote were in the ark, but not the budding rod, nor the manna), and therefore on the ground of establishing his own righteousness. The words are almost a confession that his righteousness at the best would only be as filthy rags. Be his thoughts what they might, the Lord reminds him of what he seemed forgetful. "And as for thee" must have awakened in him thoughts and feelings which perhaps had till that moment lain dormant; if faithful and obedient, the unbroken continuance of his throne is promised. But if he failed, though the forgiveness which the Lord had pledged Himself to would certainly be shown to him and to the people, yet persistent sin would ultimately bring upon them unfailing judgment. "But if ye turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them, and this house which I have sanctified for my name will I cast out of my sight and will make it a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house which is high shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it, so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done this unto the land and unto this house? and it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them and served them, therefore hath He brought all this evil upon them" (2 Chronicles 7:19 etc.).

Solomon was disobedient, and "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 11:6): all these evils fell upon them. Solomon's throne was overturned, the house was destroyed, and the people made captives; even the righteous remnant had to share in the national calamity. And it is Solomon himself who in the first years of his reign shadowed forth the peaceful glories of Messiah's rule and kingdom; in his later years he becomes the leader, the first link among the kings of Israel of the abominations which in the end brought on king and people the long-threatened judgment of God. Thus, the first idol, after the temple was built and the Lord's name called on, was found in the family of the king, of him who had so earnestly prayed that the Lord God would turn not away the face of His anointed. And the idol was not a secret thing worshipped by his servants, but by his wives in public, and he built altars for them. He who had led the people in the worship of Jehovah, is now and thus the leader in idolatry. The typical character of Solomon's reign ceased when, or soon after, the temple was filled with glory, and the honoured type gives place to failing man. In Solomon's greatness and his subsequent fall we have an answer to the all-important question: — Can man sustain himself in the position of the highest favour and dignity possible, the immediate gift of God (short of new and eternal life) by his own strength? Let Solomon's fall answer, and in the N. T. see Hebrews 6:1-20 : But was it upon Solomon's fidelity that the promise of God depended? Nay, the kingdom of God is not contingent upon Solomon's faithfulness, but rests on One greater than Solomon, Who at the right and appointed time will surely establish it.

Solomon said, "Verify Thy word." Truly the word is verified in their judgment. But there is one promise that their sin and judgment do not touch. While every blessing which depended upon their obedience is lost, this one becomes more necessary (so to say) through their unfaithfulness. The Lord had said, there shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel; that God's king should sit upon

His throne in Zion. It is His eternal purpose and declared in His word (Ps. ii), though kings and rulers take counsel against Him. This decree could not be annulled even if all Israel were for ever destroyed. There is nothing in God's righteous judgment on the land, the people or the house, not even on the royal family of David of whom the promised king was to come, that could in any way set aside God's immutable decree concerning His Son. This promise shines with increased lustre when all apparently is lost; for when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city, when Jeremiah was in prison for his testimony when their cup of iniquity was full, and the Gentile was to rule over them, then the word of the Lord came to the imprisoned prophet, "David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel" (Jeremiah 33:17), and now joined to the priest and Levite (see whole chapter) there shall not want a man before the Lord to offer burnt-offerings — a sacrifice continually. Thus the throne and the temple shall be both on a foundation of God's laying. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation" etc. (Isaiah 28:16).

There appears to be a delay to the setting up of this glorious kingdom, and, though Israel is under the appointed judgment during the delay, their judgment is not the sole reason of the delay (apparent), but that through Israel's fall salvation might come to the Gentile (Romans 11:11), or, as Peter says, the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. The Man, Who is to reign, has appeared. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh to lay a righteous foundation for the bringing in of a greater glory than Solomon knew, yea, and much more. For as the prophet said, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). It is now salvation to the Gentile. When He comes to restore the preserved of Israel, this present day of long-suffering will have closed for ever. He Who is coming — our Lord Jesus — is now sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Exalted to the highest, He is waiting there on God's throne till His enemies are made His footstool. Meanwhile, He has all power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. As the ark floated over the waters of the deluge (for God's word — The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head — was contained in it) while the earth that then was perished, so does this decree of God, this promise to Israel, this blessing for the whole earth, the eternal decree, rise above the moral and judicial flood that now overwhelms Israel.

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

riches and honour. For these things did not leave him when the typical aspect of his reign ceased; but he was surely responsible to God for them in the use he made of these great gifts and endowments. He asked for wisdom and knowledge that he might judge and rule God's people aright, and God approves of his request. And the Lord added riches and wealth and honour such as no other king had. He was wiser than all men; he spake three thousand proverbs, one thousand and five songs, he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, he spake also of beasts and of fowls, and of creeping things and of fishes (see 1 Kings 4:29-34). Amazing knowledge! Earth, air and water disclose the secrets of the vegetable and of the animal creation of God. But was this wealth of knowledge needed for the government of Israel according to the law? Was it a necessary part of that wisdom for which he prayed (2 Chronicles 1:10)? Did he not waste that power, that wisdom with which he was so eminently endowed? And was there no misuse of the abundant riches, which the Lord added to him? Were they given that he might bring horses out of Egypt, possess chariots, and multiply wives, things expressly forbidden? Can we wonder that when he looked upon all his labour, his verdict is, Vanity and vexation of spirit. (Ecc. i). He failed in nothing upon which he set his heart, and his word upon all is — no profit under the sun. We hear the words of our Lord Who said long after, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? We do not dare pronounce on his soul; but he gained much of the world's riches, and found — no profit. The conclusion he comes to is, "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour etc." (Ecclesiastes 2:24); and that all this was nothing but vanity and vexation, he saw or had learned, was from the hand of God. The rich man in Luke 12:1-59 : said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry;" but God said Thou fool. Treasure for self and not toward God must end in vanity and vexation of spirit; and this was Solomon's experience. And in it his responsibility lay.

Alas! man being in honour abideth not. Impossible that a mere man could maintain such a place as being the channel of God's word to man or of man's supplication to God. Only One could do that mighty work of connecting heaven with earth, and only One could bring the eye of God to be open on that house, and His ear attent to the prayer that is made in it; only He everlasting. It is not now the old link of creation, as of God with a sinless creature, as with Adam before he sinned, or even with Israel under a modified law, but on the ground of redemption, a new and eternal link; through faith now, through the manifested glory in the coining time. The consequences of disobedience are not limited to himself, yet all hangs upon him; his turning away involved that of the people. That, vast outlook of glory and power and dominion was presented to Solomon as the reward of his obedience. But as resting on his faithfulness it was but a house built on the sand. The floods of idolatry overthrew it, and great was the fall thereof. When the appointed time comes, all will hang on Him Who cannot fail. For He is the man of God's right hand, and to Him praise is ascribed by every creature. "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13).

2 Chronicles 8:1-18; 2 Chronicles 9:1-31.

1892 83 We are now on lower ground (ch. viii). Not here a foreshadowing of the peaceful reign of Messiah; but a man is presented who is in possession of glory and honour which was given that he might, as far as a mere man, display the glories of the coming kingdom; a man who used his

excellent wisdom in searching out the things of nature and found no profit in them. In his wisdom he utilizes the cities that Hiram refused (1 Kings 9:12-13); he built store cities, secured his communications with outlying districts by fortifying the upper and the nether Beth-boron, fenced cities with walls and gates and bars. This is the display of prudence and strength in the presence of possible enemies. It is the evidence of that wisdom with which he was endowed, which, if he had not misused it, would not have been applied in accumulating horses and fortifying cities. This is not the aspect of Messiah's peaceful reign, when peace and safety is the portion of each Israelite; for the strength and impregnability of a kingdom may subsist under the oppressive power of a tyrant, and the showy splendour of the king may be only a veil to hide the oppression and tears of the subject. As yet this was not the case with Israel. The Canaanites who were not consumed are made servants and pay tribute; the Israelites are captains and chiefs.

We are reminded of our Lord's words to Peter: they may allude to this period of Solomon's reign and throw a ray of light upon the future condition of the children of Israel. "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute, of their own children or of strangers? Of strangers, said Peter. Then, said the Lord, are the children free." Solomon had not yet so sunk in the slough of idolatry and forgetfulness of God as to deal with Israelites, the chosen people, as he did with Canaanites. His fall into idolatry, though rapid, was not as if proceeding at once from building the house of the Lord to the erection of an idol's temple. Even the heathen said

"nemo fit repente turpissimus." The cause of his fall is given in few but pregnant words. "But Solomon loved many strange women." This was the steep incline. The fame of Solomon's wisdom had brought the queen of Sheba to hear and prove it. She is astonished and overcome. But what will be the outshining of Him, of Whom the brightest days of Solomon were but a faint resemblance? She is only one of many, for "all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart." But what are these kings of the earth compared with countless numbers that heaven and earth and sea will send forth to sing the praise of Him that liveth for ever and ever?

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

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

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

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

2 Chronicles 10:1-19; 2 Chronicles 11:1-23; 2 Chronicles 12:1-16.

1892 101 Now all apparently depends on man's faithfulness, and necessarily the brightness is increasingly overshadowed until completely extinguished. The distant, as yet, black cloud had its beginning in Rehoboam's reign, morally its dark shadow began when Solomon multiplied his wives; it was the penumbra of the coming eclipse. In such a crowd of heathen women is it a wonder that Rehoboam proves to be a foolish son and constrained Solomon to say, "A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her that bare him." His first act was one of extreme folly more like the cruel despotism of an oriental tyrant than of wisdom that should have characterised the son of Solomon. But this folly, the immediate cause and occasion of the revolt of the ten tribes, is the consequence and fruit of Solomon's sin, and the beginning of the public manifestation of divine wrath. Solomon in his later years made Israel's yoke heavy, he chastised them with whips, but Rehoboam's foolish resolve brought their discontent to a head and the slumbering tribal jealousy now blazes forth with increased virulence and a leader appears who gives form and cohesion to the rebellious spirit of the ten tribes. A prophet had told Jeroboam that he should rule over them. This man is the appointed executor of God's judgment, and a breach is made in Israel which will only be healed when the true and wise King shall come and sit on the throne. When Rehoboam gathered an army to punish the revolted tribes he is forbidden by the Lord. "Ye shall not go up to fight against your brethren: return every man to his own house: for this thing is done of me" (2 Chronicles 11:4). They obeyed. This seems like bowing to God's judgment; and for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon. The priests and the Levites leave their possessions and come to Jerusalem; for Jeroboam's policy would not permit them to execute the priest's office unto the Lord. And so they strengthened the kingdom of Judah. For three years this foolish son acted wisely. Yet that the glory of Solomon's earlier years was gone, what greater

proof than Rehoboam building and fortifying cities in Judah? Against whom? Against Israel, as against others. While he dealt wisely, he prospered. But the same snare which caused Solomon's fall brings Rehoboam into more open guilt. And the people follow him, true then as the prophet said later, "My people love to have it so." When he had strengthened himself he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him. Why is it said here, "all Israel with him" when the ten tribes had forsaken the law and the temple led by Jeroboam's priests? May it not be that Judah is called Israel as remaining true to David's house, and so far on covenant ground when the ten 1 tribes had forsaken it and morally were no longer Israel, which name is here limited to the two tribes which claved to the house of David and to the temple? The priests and the Levites, who had before left their possessions for the sake of the temple, now follow the king in his departure from the Lord; and thus it is "all Israel with him."

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

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

Hence Ephraim had preponderating influence; so much so that in the prophecies the ten tribes are often called Ephraim. See their jealousy in not being foremost in Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judges viii). His meek answer mollified their wrath. The same spirit was seen when Jephthah had overcome the Ammonites. In this case they were called, and refused. Nevertheless they resented his victory. Who was Jephthah, the child of a concubine? Should Ephraim follow him? But the man they despise is victorious; and this they resent. It was resenting the mercy of God Who had wrought a great deliverance for them. Their jealousy rose to the extent of civil war, in which they were defeated. This defeat apparently kept them quiet even when Saul the Benjamite was made king. And there was no pretext for manifesting it (save in the case of Sheba, 2 Samuel 20:1-26 :) during the lives of David and Solomon. It was the folly of Rehoboam that gave occasion for its reappearance, never to depart till the true and wise King comes, Who will unite in His own Person the power of the Ruler, and the privileges and glory pertaining to the birthright.

Judah may have taunted Ephraim that the Ruler came not from Ephraim, and then what was the advantage of having the birthright? Ephraim envied Judah the privilege and honour of giving the Ruler which naturally belonged to him who held the birthright. In the coming day Ephraim will acknowledge that the birthright is His Who fulfils in His own Person the original promise when He appears to reign over all Israel. "The envy also of Ephraim shall depart and the adversaries [?Ephraim] of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah and Judah shall not vex Ephraim" (Isa xi). As we read that Solomon loved many strange (foreign) women, and then of the establishment of idolatry; so here is the turning point in Rehoboam's prosperity: "he desired many wives" and then when he was strengthened in his kingdom, he forsook the law of the Lord. The next recorded event is the invasion by Shishak king of Egypt, the Holy Spirit expressly adding, "because they had transgressed against the Lord" (2 Chronicles 12:1-16).

2 Chronicles 12:1-16; 2 Chronicles 13:1-22; 2 Chronicles 14:1-15; 2 Chronicles 15:1-19; 2 Chronicles 16:1-14.

1892 114 Now for a season Israel's glory is gone. Satan had succeeded in causing it to depart, but could not annul God's purpose concerning Christ. Therefore is Judah preserved, and prophets are sent if they have ears to hear. Ephraim rebelled against David's house, Judah rejected Christ, the greater Son of David; they hated Him without a cause. Caesar, even Barabbas, was preferred to Him. In revolting against Rehoboam Israel cut themselves off from the governmental channel of blessing, and as if to close up every means of communication from God one of the first acts of Jeroboam was to set up calves for Israel's worship. We know how the mercy and patience of God rose above even this insult. He sent them prophets, notably Elijah and Elisha. Did not some of the kings of Judah do as bad, or worse; setting up the idols of the Gentiles, and shutting up the temple of the Lord? Yet guilty as they were, even exceeding Israel in their abominations, they are kept and watched over by God, and Judah never rebelled against the house of David — not till Christ came; and then all their sin culminated in this, We have no king but Caesar.

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

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

doubtless true literally, for the gold and the silver are His. But God was beginning to pour out His wrath, and He brings them under that same power from which He with a mighty and outstretched arm had at the beginning delivered them. Their sin and rebellion against God had been the fruitful cause of internal division (ten tribes gone) and external disaster (Shishak the Egyptian). But the God of all grace says that, if they cry to Him and own His righteousness, He will give them deliverance. "I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak" (2 Chronicles 12:6-8). Mercy lingered over the already doomed city; and while it waited, sin increased. Rehoboam's life is summed up in the words, "he did evil." But is it not said that he walked wisely during the first three years of his reign? Yea, but the prophet says, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24). The days of his wisdom are not mentioned, and the judgment of God upon him is "he did evil." Was it not a very special act of disobedience to make constant war against Jeroboam when the Lord had expressly forbidden him to fight? The Levites showed their fidelity by leaving their possessions and going to Jerusalem, but it was equally a proof that the whole system established under David, and instituted by the Lord, was broken and gone. For they had their appointed possessions in all the coasts of Israel. It was one of the external marks of God's order in Israel; to forsake them would be disobedience to God's command. But when that order was broken by the nation's sin, it was according to God's mind to leave their possessions which had become now defiled, and to assemble at the place where the Lord's name was still recorded. So now, when we find defilement and sin sanctioned in that which pretends to the Lord's name, absolute and complete separation from evil, whatever its appearance, is the true path for every Christ-honouring believer.

Abijah comes, and follows in his father's steps as to war with Israel. His battle with Jeroboam, and God's deliverance of Judah and judgment upon Israel, is all that is recorded under his rule, unless it be summed up in 2 Chronicles 13:21. Abijah reasons with the revolted tribes. Was this mere human policy, an attempt to win back Israel to himself, or real concern as to their condition before God? Be his motive what it may, it was no less a call to Israel to return to the Lord God of their fathers. Israel heeded not, but even sought to destroy this testimony and set an ambush against Judah. Judah cries, and God delivers. Is not this deliverance equally a call to Judah? A reminder of God's faithfulness "if they cry to me I will hear;" if we may so speak, it is God redeeming His pledge, His mercy and truth rising infinitely above their transgression, however low and fallen they might be; if they called, God would hear. So Solomon prayed. In the beginning of Asa's reign the deepening gloom is stayed for a brief moment. A gleam of light shoots across the dark scene, and reveals how great the darkness. The idols that were in Judah and Benjamin he puts away. How evident the spread of idolatry, how greatly increased, to require a law to put it down! In his zeal he decrees that "whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death." Did you ever know idolatry, or any sin, put away by commandment? It may hide its head: idolaters may seem to throw their idols to the moles and the bats, but it exists and is rather strengthened by repressive laws. Its seat is in the heart and the idol is only the outward symbol, the visible index of the heart's enmity against God. And so in Judah when a good king would uproot it out of the land, it always burst forth with increased power when an evil king succeeded. (2 Chronicles 15:17). The heart of Asa was perfect all his days, perfect outwardly in zeal against idolatry. But a more

searching test awaits him, and this exposes the state of his heart; for while things that look well, and have a fair appearance, may win a good name among those that cannot look beneath the surface, He Who searches the heart, and knows what man is, brings out to view sufficient at least that saints and godly men may have a true judgment of things in their reality. Perhaps not now every hidden evil, but in the great coming day every secret thing will be revealed. When the believers' hidden, perhaps unsuspected, evil is made known before the judgment seat of Christ, all will be to the glory of His grace. But when the books are opened, and the sin and hidden evils of those who live and die in the rejection of the Saviour, it will be for their everlasting condemnation. The attempt of Baasha against the kingdom of Judah, brings out the want of faith in Asa's heart, that he had no confidence in God. His unceasing activity in zeal against idolatry had no reality in his soul. The sun arose in the form of Baasha's invasion, and this outward piety withers away, because there was no depth of earth. He goes to the king of Syria for help, there is not even the appearance of going to God. Asa has brought silver and gold into the house of God; now he gives these treasures to Benhadad, and adds thereto treasures from his own house. All this is glory of the kingdom departing from the house of David; it may be a Jeroboam, a Shishak, or a Benhadad, but God is accomplishing His own will, though every succeeding stroke of His judgment had its immediate occasion in the king's increasing sin. And now we see Asa outwardly zealous against idols, inwardly no faith in God, (and without faith it is impossible to please Him); and when reproved by the prophet Hanani, he puts him in prison, and at the same time oppresses some of the people. How evidently the king and the people are departing from God, for those that remain faithful to Him, are oppressed and imprisoned. These were some of that remnant which God always, even in the darkest times, reserved for Himself. God, Who waits patiently until the measure of iniquity is filled, applies another test to the unfaithful king, a bodily personal trial. The result is the same, and his want of faith appears in another aspect. Not God's merciful interposition, but man's aid; first the Syrian, Gentile help against Israel, now he goes to the physicians. Two years before he died he was diseased in his feet and it became exceeding great. Yet he sought not the Lord but went to the physicians (2 Chronicles 16:12): pregnant words. His unbelief is not in simply applying to the physicians, in using providential means, but looking only to man, and in forgetting God. But the physicians could not help him. "And Asa slept with his fathers." How solemn and graphic the words of scripture! He is diseased, goes to a physician, and dies! Yea, now, as well as then, if God be forgotten, vain is the help of man. So far we mark the descending steps of Judah. First, idolatry creeping into the king's house, then becoming general among the people insomuch that Asa in the early years of his reign makes a law against it. What a change in a comparatively short time from the bright early days of Solomon! Yea, what a change from Asa first to last, from the time when he did not spare even his own mother (2 Chronicles 15:16) to the time when he put Hanani in prison and oppressed some of the people. So forgetful of God, of His mercy and of His promise, and His claims upon them, that he seeks aid from the Syrian, and we have this wonderful, even monstrous thing, Judah seeking and purchasing with Jehovah's treasures Gentile help against Israel. This tells their evil condition before God. Well, if they would worship the Gentiles' God, why not seek the Gentiles' aid? How different all is from the time when the Gentile brought tribute and presents, and kings came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Hitherto how manifest the longsuffering and patient waiting of God. His partial judgment on the kings and nation, as well as His great mercies are His gracious calls to them to turn from their

idols. And these calls ceased not till the hardness and perversity of their heart was shown to be evidently indomitable. "Why should ye be stricken any more?" So the whole nation after Jonah's death, took a deeper, we may say headlong, plunge into the darkest abyss of iniquity that an Israelite at that time could. I say at that time, for now apostate Christendom is sinking deeper than apostate Israel did or could. And the rebellion of Israel against Jehovah their king is succeeded by Christendom practically denying the Lord that bought them while pretending to honour Him.

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

2 Chronicles 17:1-19; 2 Chronicles 18:1-34; 2 Chronicles 19:1-11; 2 Chronicles 20:1-37.

1892 131 Although the last days of Asa were evil, and the cloud hanging over Judah was darkening, yet there is a gleam of brightness during his son's reign. Under Jehoshaphat's rule the fear of the Lord fell on the surrounding nations, for the Lord established his kingdom. Judah brings presents, and he has riches and honour in abundance. He sends instructors with the book of the law of the Lord, and they go throughout all the cities of Judah, and teach the people. Moreover some of the Philistines and Arabians bring presents and flocks. Jehoshaphat waxed exceedingly great and had mighty men of war and of valour in Jerusalem. It might have seemed to the few godly ones a return of the golden days of Solomon.

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

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

Ahab walked in the steps of Jeroboam; now to join affinity, with such is, if possible, more offensive to Jehovah, than to forget God and seek help from the Syrian. Besides, Asa was evidently afraid of

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

He may have reasoned that although Israel had forsaken the Lord and His temple, they were as much the children of Abraham as themselves, and where then the evil of affinity with them? Possibly kindness and friendship might win some of them back to the temple in Jerusalem, whereas to avoid and shun them would only strengthen their hatred. Something like this kind of plea is used now by those who, having professedly forsaken the world, look with a lingering eye upon the things they had seemed to condemn. Jehoshaphat condemned idolatry yet made affinity with it. But how did the prophet rebuke him on returning to his house, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord" (2 Chronicles 19:2)? This was a phase of sin not contemplated in Solomon's prayer; for that supposes the people, though sinful and therefore suffering, yet acknowledging outwardly the authority and rule of Jehovah, to Whom if they cried, He would grant deliverance. But how could that be when allied to the haters of the Lord? In how short a time after the responsibility of maintaining the worship of Jehovah was laid upon man, how quickly all seems forgotten! beginning with Solomon's idolatry and Rehoboam's consequent folly; and now Asa seeking help from the Gentile, and Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab, with an apostate. But he did not worship the calves. No, but he sought the friendship of one who did, and so became a partaker of his sin. The Corinthians are warned not to mingle the Lord's table with the table of demons. Was not Jehoshaphat, as it were, mingling the temple worship with that of the calves of Jeroboam 1:e. with demons? as far as possible in that day, doing what the Corinthians were warned against.

It was no extenuation, but rather an aggravation of the sin of the ten tribes that they were Abraham's seed, and they were far worse than the heathen around them. But what is Judah's condition before the Lord at this moment? They were cleaving professedly to the house of David and to the temple of the Lord, but practically allied with a rebel and an idolater. This was to be deeper sunk in iniquity than even Israel; and yet there are depths lower. Does this bear no very distant analogy to something nearer our own time? Do Christians now in this day join themselves to idols? Certainly not to Jeroboam's calves; but every thing which takes precedence of the Person of Christ is an idol. Even the church of God, beloved as it is, if its blessedness, if the "one body and one Spirit," become a shibboleth and displace in ever so small a measure and occupy in our heart that supreme place which belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ, then the church becomes an idol. If an evangelist thinks and aims more at popularity, 1:e. preaching himself and not the Lord, his preaching, blessed work as that is and God's means for the saving of souls, that too becomes an idol. In fact every soul, believing or not, that has not Christ as the supreme Object of his affections, is to that extent an idolater. So that idolatry is not limited to the bowing to an image of gold, or of wood; the idol may be only, but really, in the imagination. There is constant but pressing need of our remembering the apostle's words "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Jehoshaphat's connexion with Ahab was not to his honour, and how disastrous to his son, who married Ahab's daughter! the consequence doubtless of the friendship between the two kings. Jehoshaphat is entangled in Ahab's quarrels; still in his heart there is a feeling of what is due to the Lord, and he will not join Ahab against Ramoth-Gilead without consulting a prophet of the Lord. Micaiah said enough to have dissuaded him from joining Ahab in that enterprise. Evidently he had determined his own course, and wanted the Lord to sanction it. Micaiah's solemn word did not deter him; besides, he had pledged his kingly words, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war" (the people are linked with the king for good or evil), and he would not withdraw from it. A false notion of their word of honour has led others since then into the path of evil, sometimes irreparably; but the merciful Lord interposes for His own, notwithstanding their perverseness. Unmingled justice would have allowed Jehoshaphat to feel the full effect of his folly, but mercy triumphed; in his danger he cried to the Lord, and he is delivered and returns to his house in peace. But the Lord's reproof comes after His mercy. The prophet armed with the sword — the word — of the Lord meets him, and with the words as of indignant surprise, says "Shouldst thou help the ungodly? etc., etc." And here is a solemn word, important teaching, that Israel though truly of the seed of Abraham, were yet haters of the Lord. And this read in the light of the New Testament tells us that, whatever our privilege — the greater, the more responsible — if Christ be not supreme in our affections, we are so far haters of God. This may seem harsh to some, but we must bow to the truth of God. If Christ is exalted above every name in heaven, and He is worthy, so He must have the highest place in our heart. And to reign there is neither to give nor to seek friendship with the world, nor with those who bring not the doctrine of Christ 1:e. the Christ of God. This is the only true measure of separation from the world and the world's religions. A different scene now opens, and Jehoshaphat becomes another man. Moab, Ammon, and others come against him: he is afraid but seeks not Benhadad's aid nor yet to strengthen himself by an unholy alliance, but in the midst of the congregation he stood and prayed (his true place) and pleads the promise of God, and touches the right chord when he says, "Thy possession which Thou hast given us to inherit." The answer is immediate. The Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the sons of Asaph, and they are told not to fear; that the Lord would fight for them, that it was His battle, not theirs. "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle, set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you" (2 Chronicles 20:17). It was a wondrous battle, truly the Lord's. The Lord set ambushments; who or what these were, we are not told. Judah was to stand still and see how wondrously the Lord would fight for them. Judah goes forth with songs and then stands still while the Ammonites destroy the inhabitants of (those who came from) Mount Seir, and after that, "every one helped to destroy another." So that, when Judah came to the field, not of battle, but of slaughter, they found only dead bodies.

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

it all Himself, for the king cannot be used as an instrument of deliverance.

How many saints now through past unwatchfulness and failure are in a somewhat like position! Safely preserved from the foe according to the sovereign grace and purpose of God, but there is no contending manfully with enemies. This privilege and honour is for the faithful, for the strong and valiant. For the righteous government and discipline of God must be maintained in the church now as in Judah then; and this as well as His grace found in every time of need. The weak and even the failing are kept safely, while the faithful engage in the battle. But when all fail in steadfastness, what then? The Lord Himself fights His people's battles, and they stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, but they have no honour in overcoming. What mercy! what shame to us! and what part can we have in the many promises to the overcomer? (Revelation 2:3 :) 2 Chronicles 20 – 22: 9.

1892 146 Even Jehoshaphat is no exception to the universal deceitfulness and ingratitude of the human heart. The people were sinking deeper in sin notwithstanding the wonderful interpositions of God's mercy, His patient longsuffering; they had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers (2 Chronicles 20:33). The prophet had told the king, "There are some good things found in thee." When did the Lord ever forget what was acceptable to Him? Yet here is but another instance of the inconstancy and instability of man. For after the gracious rebuke of his unholy alliance with Ahab, after his wondrous deliverance from the united armies of Moab, of Ammon, and others, a great multitude, after God had given him rest, after all this did he join himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel who did very wickedly. This alliance was for commercial purposes, to make ships to go to Tarshish. The prophet reproved him for joining with the father, and he repeats it with the son. Again the Lord rebukes him, and the ships are broken. There is to be no alliance with Israel, with the haters of the Lord, neither for war nor for commerce. Ahaziah solicits a renewal of the attempt, but Jehoshaphat would not (1 Kings 22:49). No doubt he felt the reproof given by Eliezer, and that the destruction of his ships was Jehovah's judgment. A brief notice of Jehoram follows; we see the cruel policy of a tyrant: he slew all his brethren and some of the princes. Is he a son of the house of David? Yes; but he is married to Ahab's daughter, and was better pleased with Ahab's court than with his father's. See what Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab led to. For the first time we read of Judah's king following and bringing in Ahab's wickedness into the court of Judah; and not only worse idolatries, but his wife when old (Athaliah) develops into a murderess and slays even her own grandchildren, save Joash who is preserved from her fury. In a remarkable way a prophetic writing comes to the king from Elijah, which was kept back by the over-ruling hand of God till the right moment, after the prophet's death, when the threatening contained in it might (humanly speaking) have greater effect upon him. But it does not appear to have wrought any change on him. A murderer of his brethren, an idolater, of the worst type, he died just as Elijah's writing predicted. In judgment his was a miserable, dishonoured and unregretted end, no reign hitherto so disastrous, if we except Rehoboam's, when the ten tribes revolted: the Philistines and the Arabians, who brought presents to his father, rise up against him. And again we may ask; Is he a scion of the house of David? Yea, and therefore he and his are not irreparably destroyed. "Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that He had made with David, and as He promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever" (2 Chronicles 21:7). Judgment yet delays, but it soon comes, and is pronounced by divine authority upon the guilty people and land. As each evil king appears, Judah's guilt deepens; and

idolatry, the root-sin of all, bears abundant fruit. Judah had already become Aholibah.

Enough is given to show the accelerating descent of Judah into the depths of idolatry and the judgments of God becoming more severe. Think of the chosen nation dwindled down to two tribes; of the royal family of David, the chosen of the chosen, whose representative now is a fratricide, an idolater dying a most awful and terrible death, the immediate infliction and judgment of the righteous God; and of the enemy triumphant! What a condition morally and governmentally for the people! Were the surrounding heathen nations worse than this? How great the compassion and longsuffering of God! how His mercy flowed on like a river that deepens and widens as it rolls onward, as it were, side by side with the flood of iniquity, and keeping pace with it, until that deed was done which brought upon them the heavy judgment under which they are still lying. That deed which truly was the doing of the combined power of the darkness of hell and of earth, of Satan and the haters of the Lord, but which was fore-ordained of God as indeed the means and reason of the only foundation of Israel's past mercies, of God's present longsuffering, of their ultimate restoration, and of eternal salvation known now and forever, both for the Jew and the Gentile. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out (Romans 11:33)! The greater their provocation, the greater does the mercy of God appear. But underneath their provocation is the power and cunning of Satan. For he is to them the unknown and hidden enemy of their Messiah, ever seeking to break that kingly chain whose first link is David, and the last Jesus the great Son of David. The idolatries, rebellions, and alliances with the Gentile, or with apostate Israel, are so many attempts of Satan against Christ. His enmity is more against the COMING KING than against the people of the kingdom. He is permitted so far as to bring judgment upon the chosen people, but this only shows how glorious is the victory of grace over the most desperate wickedness of man, and of God's power over the utmost malignity of the devil.

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

Either by the enemy's sword, or by internal treachery, Satan had apparently almost succeeded in destroying the house of David; against that house he was continually plotting. If he could but destroy that family (by this time he knew that the Bruiser of his head would come thence), then all Israel would be his prey, the two tribes as well as the ten, besides the world at large where he reigned. Jehoram, Cain-like, had slain all his brethren, and the Philistines and Arabians come to complete the destruction of the chosen family, so that there was never a son left him [Jehoram] save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons (2 Chronicles 21:17) called also Ahaziah, who reigned but one year. How marked the judgment of God upon these two kings! The former (Jehoram) dying of

a dreadful disease, buried ingloriously, the latter slain by the sword, a poor runaway fugitive. But it was the vengeance of God (2 Chronicles 22:7).

2 Chronicles 22:10-12.

1892 164 Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, granddaughter of Omri a wicked king of Israel and of a heathen king — Ethbaal king of the Zidonians — the wife of Jehoram, the idolatrous mother and wicked counsellor of her son Ahaziah, when she saw that her son was dead, arose and destroyed all the seed-royal and seized the throne, all but one infant whom his aunt Jehoshabeath hid from the demoniacal policy of his grandmother. What a picture! Where is David's son? What now of the promise that David should never want a man to sit upon his throne? Has Satan in very deed almost caused that race of kings to be cut off? Has he rendered null the word of God? How the great arch-foe would have boasted, if he had thus proved himself able to bring an everlasting curse, where God was controlling all things for better blessing! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Though the line from David to Messiah is at this time attenuated to a mere feeble thread, and the promised glory (the future blessing of Israel, of the whole earth, and the immutability of God's counsels, then seemed to hang upon the precarious life and safe hiding of an infant), yet the promise of God is as sure and His counsels as firm while the infant Joash is in hiding, all unconscious of the momentous results hinging upon his life, and that his unnaturally wicked grandmother, a mere tool in the hands of a greater enemy, would seek his life; the purpose of God was as sure, and His decree as immutable, as when Solomon in all his might and glory sat on the throne. Apparently all seems contingent on the life of a babe; in reality all rests upon the firm foundation of God's word.

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

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

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

All the days of Jehoiada the priest, Joash did right in the sight of the Lord; yea, seems to take the lead and gives commandment to repair the mischief that Athaliah had done (2 Chronicles 24:6-11). But external influence, however holy, can never change the heart, which like a constrained bow springs back to its normal bent the moment that pressure ceases. How often this solemn fact is seen in christian families! How often a son leaving the godly restraints of his father's house plunges with greater zest into the sinful pleasures of the world! This was the case with Joash who sank into the depths of crime and ingratitude. While Jehoiada, his uncle, lived, Joash did what was right; but Jehoiada dies, after which "came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance [flattered him]: then the king hearkened unto them." Their evil influence led Joash to his ruin, as princes had before led Rehoboam. Yielding to their flattery and no doubt solicitation also, "they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers and served groves and idols" (2 Chronicles 24:17-18, etc.) How short the step from seeming outward piety to unblushing evil! Was there no conscience in Joash? No feeling of gratitude toward Jehoiada or his family? He remembered not the kindness of the father but slew the son.

2 Chronicles 24:1-27; 2 Chronicles 25:1-28.

1892 178 The reign of Joash is summarised in 2 Chronicles 24:18, and his life is condensed into three facts. (1) He left the house of the Lord, (2) he served idols, (3) wrath came. The nation follows the king. But God is still patient with Joash and with his people. He sends prophets to them, for though the judgment is so near, and as certain as their iniquity, He remembers His covenant with them. His mercy and long-suffering is most manifest toward Joash; for a special messenger is sent to him, one who naturally has some considerable claim on him, and who would be heard and attentively listened to beyond all others. The All-wise God knows how to use natural feelings for His purposes of mercy, and when these feelings are outraged, so much the greater evidence of the power of Satan over man. Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, and a cousin of the king, is the bearer of God's message and reproof. The life of the king, humanly speaking, is due to Jehoshabeath, and the king will (if from no other feeling than gratitude) listen to her son, though he heed not Him Who sent the words. And how then was God's message received? Just as the most hardened sinners receive it. "And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord." Joash forgot Jehoiada's kindness; and when Zechariah was dying he said "The Lord look upon it and require it." A righteous cry, that which the Lord did look upon and require; but if we look for a gracious cry, which agrees with Christianity, hear it in the last words of Stephen, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Little did Jehoshabeath think that she was hiding and preserving the murderer of her own children. Divine retribution is sometimes slow but always sure. About a year after the death of Zechariah, he is himself slain on his bed; his slayers did not commiserate him in his great diseases. But while retribution is an essential element in the government of God, and plainly

appears in 2 Chronicles 24:25, there is something more important still than any such requital. The line of kings, of the sons of David, though for the time being so iniquitous (their position increasing their guilt), must be preserved until He, the great Son, comes Who shall reign in righteousness.

Amaziah succeeds his father, in mercy to the people, but in faithfulness to His covenant with Israel. The stream of iniquity from Solomon to Zedekiah is frequently turned aside, but not uninterruptedly as in the case of the revolted apostate tribes, where, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, all did evil. And we see in this how the Lord Jehovah rises above the provocation of the sins of Judah. The great end which God has purposed within Himself is ever before Him, and to this He makes everything here below to tend, not the irresponsible creation only, but responsible and accountable man. Joash was righteously requited for the killing of Zechariah; the Lord required it of him, so that man is individually responsible and righteously judged, while every, the minutest, event is in His hand to control and direct as He shall please. How can man dare to pronounce upon such wisdom as this? Rather let us bow our heads and adore. That an evil-doing son should succeed a righteous father is a proof that an evil nature is not made good by righteous example or precept, though that evil nature may become apparently worse through unrighteousness being constantly presented and enforced by example and precept. But that a son even in such circumstances should do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, when a righteous son succeeds a wicked father, is a proof of the interposition of God in the power of His grace. So in this case Amaziah, who did right, succeeds Joash his father who at last. did wickedly. It was a little brightness for Judah, but only a short time; for "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart." And before he died, the little brightness passed away, and domestic treachery deals with him as with his father.

Notwithstanding the exceeding wickedness found among the sons of David, imperatively calling for divine vengeance, the true Heir, the promised Son, must sit on David's throne, and the kingdom must be established in righteousness. For much more than that kingdom hangs upon the coming of the Son. The world waits for His coming to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and for the display of the glory of God; for not only Israel and Judah are to be one kingdom then, but the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14). And more than these, there is His glory as the head of the church, as the great First-born from the dead. We speak not of His coming with grace, bringing salvation; but of His coming in glory completing our salvation. There was a due time for the former, there is also for the latter. If, as the prophet says, it was but a little thing to gather Israel compared to the being God's salvation to the ends of the earth, so we may with the utmost reverence say, that His glory filling the whole earth is but a little thing compared with the glory of redeeming the church, giving Himself for it and cleansing it from every spot and stain and blemish, and then presenting it to Himself, and making it the vehicle of His glory to the delivered world. As the evil of man, and the persistent malignity of Satan become increasingly prominent, we also see how both are used of God to show forth the richness of His grace toward man and the Almightyness of His power and control of all the attempts of Satan; and that in spite of all these, yea, and sometimes by using them, God is bringing to pass His own immutable purpose. In this history in the Chronicles, we learn the patient long-suffering of God, His constant rising in goodness and mercy over all the evil in Judah till — in crucifying the Lord — it reached and touched the throne of God. Then there was no remedy, no more patience (save for the few disciples whom the Lord would gather out of

Jerusalem, and hide them during the storm of wrath and vengeance, as He did, in old time, save Lot from the overthrow of Sodom), no reason why the threatened judgment should any longer be delayed. In pursuing this history we see — perhaps plainer than elsewhere — not only how vain, but also how untiring, Satan was in all his attempts to destroy the family of David, or to make it so vile that God in His righteous anger might destroy it. See his attempts in Solomon's declension, Jeroboam's rebellion, and Rehoboam's folly. The chequered history of Judah since Rehoboam; the forsakings of the temple, the consequent invasions of the land by enemies, then outward repentance; the stupid iniquity of conquering a people and then worshipping the gods of the vanquished nation; — is not Satan's hand discernible in all this? But there is worse to come.

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

Amaziah begins well. He did well in not slaying the children of his father's murderers, in appointing captains over thousands, over hundreds throughout all Judah and Benjamin; but when he hired soldiers out of Israel, it was not well. Jehoshaphat was rebuked for giving aid to Ahab, to Israel; Amaziah seeks aid from Israel, and hires apostates. In the former, there was the appearance of Judah's superiority; now under Amaziah there is more marked indifference to the name of God, and to the associations of His people. As a nation they were in a weaker condition, for Jehoshaphat giving help to Ahab is certainly greater than Amaziah receiving soldiers from Israel. Later, the king of Israel in his conscious superiority compared himself to a cedar in Lebanon, while he contemptuously likened Amaziah to a thistle, that a boar out of the wood could trample on. Amaziah felt the truth of this afterwards (2 Chronicles 25:22).

Jehoshaphat made friendship with the enemies of God; as the professing church has joined affinity with the world in many things. We know who has said "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." And when the professing church helped Constantine to the throne of the world, it was not the church overcoming the world, but yielding herself (i.e. the professing mass) as a stepping-stone to the world's power and grandeur. The world and the church shook hands over the cross, and thus cemented their friendship (unfaithfulness with hypocrisy) which has continued ever since. This was surely high treason against our Lord and Master. The world smiles upon the professing mass — Christendom — and they love to have it so. Christendom sleeps in the arms of the world and rests there, subsisting by the world's power. So Amaziah, professing right, and indeed doing right at first, seeks to strengthen himself by means of the haters of God; and the nominal church has followed in the wake of Amaziah and Judah. In all this history we see the rapid sinking of Judah into the mire of idolatry; but we see also that Christendom has plunged as deeply into worldliness. When the body calling itself christian gave up its place of separation from the world and took that of affinity with it, prostituting its power and influence to the service of the world, and receiving in return the world's smiles and riches (as was really the case when the famous edict of Milan in A.D. 313 or 319 was published, which places Christianity and paganism on the same level, i.e. an "act of toleration," the world in its wisdom began to tolerate the name of Christ), the so-called Christian church was like the ten tribes that followed Jeroboam. They no sooner left the temple than they worshipped golden calves. Christendom has forsaken the place of pilgrims

and sojourners, assigned to them by the rejected Lord, and made obeisance to the world.

Upon being rebuked by the prophet, Amaziah thinks of the hundred talents; must he lose them in sending away the Israelitish soldiers? The prophet removes his anxiety. "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." God rewards his obedience, imperfect as it is, and gives him victory over Edom; and he takes many captives. His treatment of them was barbarous; the Holy Spirit does not sanction it, but relates the fact (2 Chronicles 25:12). But if his obedience to the divine command was due partly to the assurance that he should not lose his hundred talents, his obedience was not with a perfect heart. And he has to feel the consequences of his error. The dismissed soldiers soon showed their true character; they were mere mercenaries. Whether for or against Judah it mattered not, it was plunder they wanted; therefore no wonder that they were angry, for they expected abundant booty. They had their revenge on the cities of Judah. But there is a higher stand-point whence to look at the hiring of these Israelites. The Lord was not with them, and the incorporating of them with the army of Judah was obliterating the mark of distinction which had been made by God (as worshippers in the temple at Jerusalem, and as worshippers of the two calves), save as He mercifully remembered them, and sent prophets unto them, notably Elijah and Elisha. Would it not be a triumph for Satan, if he could not join all the tribes in a general apostasy, to amalgamate their armies? For then whatever victory the Lord would give to Judah must be shared by apostate Israel. This the Lord would not permit, and His word is, Send them home. If we give occasion to the enemy to mix himself up with the affairs of the church in ever so small a matter, under whatever pretext, we are sure to suffer. In the righteous government of God, the evil consequences of previous folly may appear, even though that folly, or sin be repented of and forgiveness received. David repented and was forgiven; the Lord put away his sin, but the consequences were felt all through his life. He felt the sword in his bitter wail for Absalom (2 Samuel 18:33), in the insurrection of Sheba the Ephraimite, and in his last days the futile attempt of Adonijah to usurp the crown which God had given to Solomon. All these were but the accomplishment of the Lord's word by Nathan. "The sword shall never depart from thine house (2 Samuel 12:10).

Now comes (ver. 14) the most amazing folly. He returns victorious over the Edomites, and with extreme brutishness worships the gods of the people he had vanquished. One could perhaps better understand how a heathen would bow down to the gods of his conquerors. But that Amaziah who began his reign well though not with a perfect heart, should worship the idols of those that he had conquered, is an act of folly and stupidity; which can only be accounted for by the fact that Satan was behind it all, hurrying king and people to their ruin, and that God in judgment permitted blindness to fall upon them, which in a succeeding reign was judicially decreed (Isaiah 6:1-13 :).

2 Chronicles 25:1-28.

1893 194 A prophet is sent and reproves Amaziah for his amazing folly. "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?" The infatuated king had no answer to this stinging reproof, which in effect was saying that he was worshipping the gods he had vanquished. But if the king cannot answer he can threaten — the resource of the world to stop the mouths of God's witnesses. "Art thou made of the king's counsel? Forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten?" Have you authority to speak, have you been duly

appointed as one of the king's counsellors? And thus it is that the merciful message from God to show him his sin and folly is met with threatenings; "forbear," said the king, and the prophet ceased, and the message of the merciful reproof was thrust away. He could refuse the mercy and shut the mouth of the prophet; but he must hear God's judgment without any mingling of mercy. "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee because thou hast done this and hast not hearkened to my counsel" (2 Chronicles 25:16). And when God determines to destroy, can man escape?

Amaziah is but a sample of man. There is a message of mercy from God now, and the spirit of the world is still saying "Forbear," or giving hearing only to some humanly appointed authority, an authority which is constituted and upheld by law. And all such do forbear rather than offend the world. The awful judgment of God on those who do not obey the truth is not announced as God gives, but is toned down so as not to be self-applied. Nay, a mere human authority will preach smooth things; and man will sleep on in his sins, or, if perchance a word alarms the burdened conscience, he turns himself on his yet unthorny bed, folds his hands saying "a little more sleep," takes his accustomed draught of the devil's anodyne, and after a while wakes — where?

"Thou hast done this" 1:e., his seeking after the gods of Edom, and afterwards not hearkening to the prophet's counsel, which perhaps was frequently given before that time. Indeed the stern impatient word "forbear" seems to imply that this was not the first time that the prophet had reproved the king. But this was the occasion for uttering God's determination. "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee." To sin is to be worthy of condemnation, but to refuse mercy and reproof brings out God's determination to destroy (Proverbs 1:24-31). His own pride and folly becomes the immediate occasion of his ruin. He was lifted up because of his victory over Edom and challenges the king of Israel. How contemptuously Joash treats him! Amaziah impelled by his own vanity would not hear; it was the first step in the path which led to his downfall, and his defeat was the first public stroke of God's judgment which was now inevitable, for this came of God (2 Chronicles 25:20). Man's pride and folly when persisted in become the precursor of God's judgment. Yet for this act of foolish pride he took advice — whose advice? Like Rehoboam he sought the mind of flatterers.

If a lying spirit was permitted to persuade Ahab, whose determination was it to destroy Amaziah? The king of Israel made good his parable. It was the thistle against the cedar, and the result was a complete rout. The thistle was trampled on, and was trodden down by a wild beast. "Judah was put to the worse before Israel and they fled every man to his tent" (2 Chronicles 25:22). Amaziah is a captive, the walls of Jerusalem are broken down for the space of 400 cubits, the treasures of gold and silver both of the temple and palace were taken, and hostages also. This was an effectual stop to Judah's boasting against Israel. Whatever glory Amaziah won by his victory over Edom is irretrievably overshadowed. Fifteen years afterwards, like his father, he is slain by conspirators. But mark the closing words of the inspired writer, "Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem" etc. (2 Chronicles 25:14-27.) He turned away from the Lord on his return from the victory over Edom. Then the conspiracy was formed. He returned in triumph and thought his throne was secure; but unknown and unapprehended, as when Jonah rejoiced under the shadow of the gourd which a worm at the root was destroying, a conspiracy was formed against him in the hour of his boasting. It was the judgment of God. "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee," said the prophet,

and whether vain-gloriously boasting against Israel, or humiliated under his defeat by the man that he wantonly challenged, or fleeing to Lachish from conspirators, this determination of God still followed him: God was overruling the wickedness of the conspirators to accomplish His determination. He might flee to Lachish from them, but he could not flee from the judgment of God. No conspiracy would have succeeded had he not turned away from the Lord. Though he showed little or no faith when he hired soldiers from Israel, and a very selfish and interested obedience to the Lord's word when he sent them away, it was when he publicly set up Edom's idols that the Lord permitted these evils to come on him. "Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah first and last" (2 Chronicles 25:26). "First and last" — Is there not a division here between the former and the later part of his reign? and is the dividing line when he turned from the Lord? Though the former part was not with a perfect heart, it was when Jehovah was publicly dishonoured that the prophet announced God's determination to destroy him.

How low, in a comparatively short time since the magnificence of Solomon's reign, has Judah fallen! How debased in their own eyes they must have appeared when their own city wall, even of Jerusalem, was broken down by an enemy! Calamities from within and without fall on the people, as the family of David, dragging the nation after them, sink deeper and deeper in the mire of idolatry and corruption. How marked has been the downward course since the death of Jehoshaphat and how swiftly and surely the judgments of God followed! Jehoram dies of a terrible disease, Ahaziah by the sword, Joash and Amaziah by domestic treachery. What a history that of Judah is becoming! The last days of pagan Rome are scarce blacker. In Rome we see the cruelty, the ambition, and the lawlessness of men without the knowledge of God; but in Judah with equal wickedness there is the knowledge of God, as far as could be known under the Mosaic economy. But if God winked at the time of ignorance among the Gentiles (Acts 17:30), not so with Judah; there judgment followed more or less swiftly in the track of sin, God using earthly instruments but not the less His judgment. Not so now; this present is pre-eminently the day of grace. God is longsuffering and man is heaping up sin. But the day is coming when Christ will take the immediate rule of this world; for when His judgments will be seen in the earth, then also the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9).

2 Chronicles 26:1-23.

1893 211 Uzziah succeeds and does that which is right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father did; that is, not with a perfect heart in the first part, and manifest failure in the last. The same evil was in Uzziah, as in Amaziah; only it was manifested in a different way. It was after Amaziah was lifted up in heart that he marched straight into defeat and captivity; and when Uzziah was strong, he transgressed in going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar. How often does prosperity, far more than adversity, try the saints of God! The pretentious and the hypocritical are snared and taken. The true if carnal are laid low. The spiritual and true are kept by our faithful God Who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, etc. (1 Corinthians 10:13.) If then we ask why the saints of God are for the most part poor, we may answer with another query (looking merely at the weakness of man, not at the power of God), Who has strength to overcome the power of riches?

"He transgressed." So had previous kings; and man might estimate the sin of worshipping idols to be worse than that of assuming the function of a priest. But especial note is made of it, and this

alone should arrest man's estimation; God's mention of it, and the judgment that follows show God's estimate of his transgression. In usurping the office of the priest, he was rebelling against Jehovah. The world's history gives many instances where the chief of the civil power assumed the functions and duties of the high priest. And for idolatry or a worldly religion no arrangement could be better. Indeed the two functions (the kingly and the priestly) naturally gravitate towards each other, affording mutual support; the temporal clothing itself with spiritual dignity, the spiritual expressing the power of the temporal. And for the material prosperity of a nation, a church upheld by the state consolidates the nation's power, while dissent tends to weaken unless other things counteract. So the ancient kings of Rome from Numa, and afterwards the emperor, even Constantine and several of the christian (so called) emperors that succeeded him took the title of "pontifex maximus"; until, after being declined by Gratian, it was entirely dropped by Theodosius. But when the emperor dropped the title, the priest eagerly yet gradually grasped it; and he who assumed the title of "pontifex maximus for the whole of Christendom" was not slow to avail himself of every opportunity of claiming and expressing the civil power. The Christian's path is above the secular and the spiritual power of this world. The saint's path of the former time was connected with the things from which the Christian is now separated. It was then God's will in the old dispensation that the regal and sacerdotal offices should be distinct and separate. Even David, the honoured type of the coming king (and, as such, appointing the temple service and the twenty-four courses of the priests), assumed not in his kingly office the duties of the high priest. Solomon does take the lead at the dedication of the temple, but he is scarcely the high priest on that occasion. "Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord" (2 Chronicles 7:4). But it was right for the king and all the people without naming the priests or the Levites; for he was then foreshadowing the kingly and priestly glories combined in Christ. It is of Christ the prophet speaks, "He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon the throne, and He shall be a Priest upon His throne" (Zechariah 6:13). It was but a transient glimpse, but it was the union of the kingly and priestly glories of the millennial day in the Person of Christ. And what was the splendour and magnificence of that typical day to the coming day of Christ! We wait and long for His appearing. But we may humbly enquire wherein was the exceeding greatness of Uzziah's transgression. "He transgressed," the inspired historian says; so did Solomon; and ten tribes revolted as the Lord's judgment on the people. Rehoboam's idolatry brought Shishak the king of Egypt on Judah, and the despoiling of its treasures. Abijah (Abijam) walked in all the sins of his father (1 Kings 15:3). Asa sought help of the king of Syria, and when diseased sought not the Lord but the physicians. Even the good king Jehoshaphat joined affinity with those that hated the Lord. And from Jehoram's accession to the death of Amaziah, what fills the page of Judah's history but murder and usurpation and idolatry increasing all through the land? If these sins should cause the Lord to drive the people to a far-off land, Solomon prayed that, if they repented, God would hear their cry and forgive. But a more subtle evil is here than those for which Solomon prays for forgiveness, and a more terrible judgment than any that Solomon thinks might happen. A judgment which prevents the cry for mercy and God's interposition "lest they should convert and be healed."

Such a sin as Uzziah's and such a judgment were unthought of by Solomon. If idolatry evidences man's baseness, ingratitude, and corruption, Uzziah's entering into the temple to burn incense on the golden altar evidences proud presumption and defiance of the Lord's authority. For he was not ignorant that to burn incense was the office of the priests alone — a duty and privilege for the sons

of Aaron and no other. In Uzziah was the appearance or pretence of worship, but real disobedience and profanation of the holy things; it was sacrilege on the king's part and faithfulness on the priest's part that drove the king out of the temple: yea God Himself showed His displeasure by smiting him with leprosy. The judgment is in accordance with his transgression. He dared to take the office of the priest, to do what the law forbade him. Now as a leper, he cannot come into the temple, he loses the privilege of a common Israelite, he is cut off from the congregation, and must henceforth live in a separate house. Nor can he exercise his kingly functions, but, in modern language, a regency is appointed. Jotham was "over the house and judged the people."

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

1893 226 The governmental connecting link between God and Israel was broken when the ten tribes rebelled against David's house. Grace then established a temporary link, having a governmental character with the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It could not be otherwise than temporary; for two tribes in the place of twelve would be an impeachment of the wisdom and power of God, a sort of compromise of God's original purpose. It is not temporary alone historically, i.e. Judah broke it, but it was so intentionally, and necessarily as resting on human instability. It was a condition of human evil, a grave circumstance which divine wisdom made to fit in and be subservient to His counsels of redemption, and also for immediate display of His forbearance and mercy, His wisdom, power, and patience shining in all as nowhere else (the cross excepted). But two tribes only never could inherit the promise originally made to twelve. God's promise was made to the fathers, and though the fulfilment necessitates the raising of the dead, is this incredible (Acts 26:6-7)? All the twelve tribes are spoken of as hoping to come to the inheritance. To ask how it could be established in the future for all Israel if Christ had not been rejected, and after His death raised again the third day (though in human and Satanic wisdom to crucify the King must for ever have prevented the setting up of the kingdom in Him, the only divine and stable foundation), is presumptuous if not sinful on the creature's part. The unerring word declares that this temporary link is broken, and that the government of the world in and by Israel is for the time in abeyance, but to be manifested when God will have established them as the first nation in the world. All turns on Christ dead and risen. Their rebellion against Rehoboam formed a crisis in Israel's history. Ten tribes wilfully forsook the covenant — perhaps not intending to forsake it; but this was Satan's object, and he, as far as permitted, led them to it. Did he know that the rebellion was permitted and overruled by God, and was to be used as part of the plan of divine counsel, in the carrying out of which the wisdom and the grace of God was to be infinitely exalted, and he himself defeated and all his aims eventually brought to nought? Though carried away and almost overwhelmed by Satanic craft, having followed his leading at first and powerless afterwards to overcome, the ten tribes are distinctly responsible to God for breaking away; and the promises pledged to them under the covenant were absolutely forfeited, and every act of forbearance and loving-kindness on God's part towards them was pure and sovereign mercy, quite above, yea

infinitely above the character of covenant blessing. They had forsaken the covenant; but God did not forsake them till justice and truth compelled Him. There seems a crisis in Judah's history in Uzziah's presumptuous attempt on the functions of the priest. The former was rebellion against Rehoboam, and the occasion for it was found in his unwisdom. The latter was direct rebellion against God. How much greater than Rehoboam's folly is Uzziah's presumption and disobedience to God's word, that the anointed priest alone should burn incense! Diminished power and dominion, and subjects changed to enemies were the fruits of that arrogance; but Uzziah could still enter into the temple, not yet shut up in a separate house till he died (2 Chronicles 26:21). It is the leprosy of Uzziah which hinders his being the channel of God's power and government in the earth, as it was his profane disobedience that occasioned the leprosy. The king's exclusion from the house of God formed the second and irreparable crisis irreparable till Christ the Son of David restores all things. The exclusion of the king shadows the cutting off of the whole nation. Their idolatry for a long time was pointing to and preparing the way for this judicial act of God. No sooner had God's picture of the coming glory passed away than idolatry appeared. Even Solomon, who in his estate dimly mirrored the glories and universality of the millennial reign of Christ, fell into idolatry before he died and shamelessly built places for his wives' idols. And soon it spread among hearts that naturally are enmity against God, and though its public growth was somewhat checked by each good king that occupied the throne, it was never wholly eradicated; nay, with an evil king it burst forth with increased vigour. No affliction, no judgment, could free the land from it before the Babylonish captivity. It began possibly with Solomon's weak desire to please his idolatrous wives, who like Rachel brought their images with their household stuff. A weak desire on Solomon's part, but sinful and foolish where obedience and faithfulness to the Lord were involved. He as a wise man perhaps looked with contempt upon his wives' folly, but he did not forbid it. And, beginning with winking at it, he ended with being a willing supporter. A dreadful end it was to a small beginning. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth"!

1893 244 How inveterate the love of idols in Amaziah when he worships his captive gods, for he had brought them to Jerusalem! To what did Ahaz sink, and Manasseh yet lower (if that be possible); for to the idolatries and cruelties of Ahaz, he added witchcraft? To the practice of the worst abominations among the heathen, like Balaam he had dealings with a familiar spirit. But notwithstanding this constant and increasing evil until the decree of unsparing judgment, as spoken by Isaiah, and the sign, as well as the occasion seen in the king's leprosy, Judah was accounted, and God dwelt with king and people, as on the ground of covenant responsibility. But though sovereign grace abounded, and infinite mercy seemed to linger, Judah had now forfeited that place, and they were Lo-ammi. God would have reinstated them and built up their kingdom in more than Solomon splendour and riches if they could have repented, but they would not. Their eyes were blinded lest they should see etc. however mysterious it may appear to us, it is no less time, that God had judicially done to them as He had in judgment done in ages past to Pharaoh; He hardened their heart. But compare the different position and responsibility of the king and people now with what it was under Solomon, for then covenant blessing and privilege depended on the faithfulness and righteousness of the king. If he walked before God (see 2 Chronicles 7:17-22), the responsibility of the national prosperity rested on the king — thou — but his turning away would surely draw the people after him, and the consequent judgment would be on him and the people — if ye turn away. The turning away was consummated in Uzziah, the measure of iniquity was filled by him (it overflowed under the following evil kings) and the decree of judgment

was issued. Their ears made deaf, their eyes blind, heart fat until the appointed time.

If, as the prophet says, the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron (Jeremiah 17:1), so also is their judgment. Uzziah was a type of that nation which, leprous as he, must endure the deprivation of being cut off from the Lord's house, and be confined in a separate one until the judgment be overpast. The Jews now have no temple and are separate, as a rule, from all Gentiles. But while the mercy of God lingered over the doomed city and nation, it gave a season of joy and gladness to the righteous. There was still the temple for them, and they would find His presence in His house. It would be empty and desolate for the wicked who might crowd to it, and boast of it, as did the Jews when our Lord was here, but there would always be a line of demarcation between them, the house would be full of God's mercy for the righteous, it would be desolate for the wicked (Isaiah 1:10-15). The judgment of God upon this guilty nation takes the form of a delusion. There had been wars, pestilences, and famines, but now something that blunts their feelings. They might have wept and cried to the Lord under the former, as often they did in the times of the Judges; but now they shall simply be deluded. What more terrible judgment, save the eternal one, than "I also will choose their delusions," and this because when God called, there was none to answer. A more fearful delusion followed by a heavier judgment will come on Christendom, and for the same reason, because they will not hear. In the past time God called by judgment and by mercy. Now He calls by mercy alone; the message sent is God's love and free salvation. Still men will not hear, "for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11 etc.) On Israel the expression is rather negative (though equally fatal); their heart is made fat lest they convert and be healed. On Christendom it is more positive: not only inability to perceive the truth; but the positive acceptance of a lie, "that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned:" their eternal doom is foretold.

God forebore long with Ephraim, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" He bore with greater long suffering the greater provocations of Judah. For His house was in Jerusalem, and His name was recorded there. When (see Hosea 11:12) the covenant was broken which afterwards subsisted with Judah after Ephraim (Israel), and judgment was inevitable, there was still, as it were, the lingering of divine commiseration; for we know Who wept with human tears over Jerusalem. The interval between the judgment on the king, and the destruction of the city by the Babylonians, is filled up with the solemn calls to repentance by God through the prophets, — calls to the nation; but words of comfort to the righteous, and the certainty of final deliverance for them. But from the time of Uzziah's leprosy governmental responsibility is set aside, or modified, it becomes more of an individual character. They were to be no longer as a nation the people of God. Lo-ammi was writ large when they were carried to Babylon. But it is then when the individual in contrast with the nation is addressed that the sovereign grace of God shines forth, and mercy to the transgressor which the law could not hold out, and which indeed ought not, or it would cease to be a righteous law. But grace is higher than law, and bids it stand aside till the great propitiation is set forth, which shall proclaim and establish its inflexible righteousness. But God, shall we say? waits not for that supreme moment to declare His mercy but proclaims aloud "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." And so the repentant Israelite returning to the Lord would have all the blessings named in Isaiah 55:1-13 : But these blessings are not merely given as the happy portion of the then repentant Israelite (had

repentance been possible) but have a prophetic character. He declares what Israel will be when they turn to the Lord, and the veil is taken away; then all these blessings, will be made good to them both literally and symbolically. But the proclaiming grace and pardon to the contrite individual in no way condoned the national sin. Judgment on the nation must fall on the righteous as on the wicked. The difference between the righteous and the wicked will definitively and eternally appear in the next life. In this they are mingled together, and the suffering, brought upon themselves by the wicked, the righteous are involved in. Nationally the wicked and righteous are one, and both endure the national judgment. Saints of God now feel the temporal judgments falling on the world, but this is made a blessing and becomes a means of knowing God, and the wonders of redemption in a deeper way. For it enlarges the sphere of faith and trust, and the Christian may take the language of Job, and with a Christian's confidence and submission (which Job had not) say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). The Lord knoweth them that are His and is able to preserve in the midst of the fiercest judgment those that trust in Him. How did He preserve His own that were cast into the fiery furnace, the intense flame of which destroyed their executioners while on the three Hebrews there was not even the smell of fire! In the splendour and amid the riches of their Babylonian palaces not so happy or so honoured as when walking in the midst of the fire; for they were in company with One Who was like the Son of God! And so with that remnant which God has ever kept for Himself, out of that people, whether the righteous in the past, or the believing portion now joined to the church, the righteous judgment that overtook the guilty nations did not, could not, remove the special care that God takes of the godly. To human eyes they suffer in the same circumstances, and no difference is seen. So it might have been said of Daniel and his three friends. They were captives like the wicked princes, bound with similar chains, carried to the same city, all of them known as captives of Judah. But how they rose to honour in an alien city! True God was carrying out His own purpose, foreordained and immutable; at the same time it was God's reward for their faithfulness. We turn to the earlier words of Isaiah — "say ye to the righteous that it is [shall he] well with him." If "well" here below in the midst of the fruits and consequences of sin, what must "well" mean in eternity?

1893 260 The law excluded the leper not only from the tabernacle but from the camp, yea from his own family; "he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall be his habitation." Driven out with rent garments and bare head, but with his upper lip covered (the sign of mourning and woe) and from his own lips the confession of his shame, and the reason of his exclusion, he had to cry, Unclean, unclean (Leviticus 13:44-46, Numbers 5:2). In the government of Israel, the king was chosen to stand for God before the people, and before God for the people to enforce righteousness both by precept and example, and the temple as the tabernacle of old was the meeting place (Exodus 29:43 and 2 Chronicles 7:12). Now that the king is driven out of the temple, and compelled to dwell in a separate house, thus interrupting the legal communication between God and the people, what a feeling of woe must have passed through the few righteous that were in Judah! What unknown terror in their minds when compelled to say of the king — he is a leper! The place of chief of the godly was the king's, as well as chief of the people. And when he had to take the place of a leper and say, Unclean, what wonder that Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13 :) as the most prominent of the godly remnant should give sad expression to the tears and feelings of the righteous! "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;" and this he would the more deeply feel, for as he adds "mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts." There is no word in scripture to express a worse condition than "unclean"; for this is applied to the leper

who is thrust out of the camp, but this is the word that the prophet applies to himself. Why should he be so vile in his own eyes? Because he had seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. The posts of the door moved, and the house was filled with smoke at His presence, what else could Isaiah — holy as he might be — say of himself, but that he was unclean? Not that the righteous were cut off from God; nay, there was a resource, a little city, always provided for them; as now God says by the apostle that with every temptation (trial) there is a way of escape. And the prophet had already given God's word, "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him" (Isaiah 3:10). It is while threatening the wicked that the Lord pauses (shall we say?) in the midst of His denunciations to give this assurance to the righteous. How cheering this must have been to those who, conscious that in the righteous government of God, every covenant, blessing, and privilege was forfeited! Nothing remained for them but sovereign mercy, and this is just what God delights in, for He is the Father of mercies. And in the vision when Isaiah sees Jehovah of hosts, when the almost despairing cry bursts from him "Woe is me," it is then that mercy, yea, more than mercy is shown him, and the angel with the live coal takes away his uncleanness. This purging of the prophet is not quite the same as the cleansing of a sinner when he receives the forgiveness of his sins, and is cleansed from guilt, for it is the precious blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin. Fire, which is symbolical of the judgment of God, would consume a sinner not purged. In the vision it is qualifying a saint to carry Jehovah's message when every visible means was gone — a message to a people who were never in such a position before. And now that this priestly and kingly link had utterly broken, a new link is formed with the righteous: not that there had not been prophets before, but a new one under the circumstances. The nation was cut off and Lo-ammi written on Judah, as indelible as Belshazzar's doom upon the walls of his palace. Only Christ can say Ammi again. The corporate position of the whole nation also the prophet bewails, when he confesses that he is a man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips. His association with them (for he was an Israelite) aggravated the uncleanness: a truth that has its importance now, and that needs the live coal now as then. Not only is seen the individual condition of the righteous, but their national position. The righteous and the wicked as both forming the nation must, at least outwardly, suffer the national judgment. But through all, the righteous are kept and brought, and the prophet becomes the visible link of communication between God and His witnesses, until Christ came, and with Him not a mere temporary link of prophecy with the righteous remnant but the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. But righteousness which is by faith is that which therefore comprehends Gentiles as well as Jews. How wondrously and mercifully God is presented as meeting His own disconsolate ones! The word too records the mercy and the power that kept them together in spite of the influences of surrounding idolatry and indifference. Malachi speaks of those that feared the Lord, and that they spake together; and though they dwindled to a small number, the Lord found some in the temple that then stood, and called others to follow Him, until the hour came when they would no more be correctively smitten, but chastisement gives place to judgments and exhortations, yea, entreaties, to the expectation of threatenings.

1893 274 The purging qualities of fire are often used symbolically to foretell Israel's cleansing in the latter day. God's judgments are a fire that will consume the wicked and purge the righteous. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call upon my Name, and I will hear them, I will say it is my people and they shall say Jehovah is my God" (Zechariah 13:9). "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier

of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto Jehovah an offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:3). The prophet's vision of the angel cleansing his lips with a live coal, and the righteous remnant refined like silver and gold over the furnace, are correlative. Isaiah represents the righteous remnant, and they are symbolically purged with a flaming coal from the altar; in the future God will refine and purge the remnant of Israel.

Looking at the historical fact, the prophet is lifted out of his "undone," "unclean," condition, and sent with Jehovah's message to the guilty men of Judah — "Go tell this people" Even Moses at the burning bush shrank from being sent to Pharaoh. Here Isaiah, who had just bewailed his uncleanness, no sooner hears Jehovah saying "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" than he answers in the power of the Spirit, "Here am I: send me." Cleansed from his iniquity, purged from his sin, he is empowered to bear Jehovah's words. What efficacy in that live coal! But the time is coming when not merely a cleansed individual, though a prophet and representative withal, shall be the Lord's messenger, but a chosen remnant who are also called His brethren (Matthew 25:31 etc.), not to Judah who hearing shall not hear, and seeing shall not perceive, nor understand, but also on whom God's heavy judgment must fall. These future messengers carry a different message to a different people; they preach the King and invite to the kingdom. Then it will be good news of the kingdom and blessing for those that receive it. But the message by the prophet is a decree of judgment, the shutting, for a time, of the door of mercy. Time people, as a nation, are set aside. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Judah, like Ephraim, is given up.

Seasons of merciful interposition may yet be given after the judgment is decreed. And though the judgment is pronounced, this does not prevent God's promise of His Son even to "that king Ahaz," not for the sake of the guilty people, but for the sake of the righteous. They thought that if king Uzziah was a leper, then all was ruined; but the promise reveals the King that is coming, of Whose kingdom there should be no end. The glory and magnificence of this promise may have been but dimly seen and felt, but there was strength and cheer for them. God knew how to comfort, and reveal His own purpose; and He has ever known how to provide and care for His own individual sheep while carrying on His great purpose of redemption, or taking vengeance on his enemies. With Him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning; for when Sodom was destroyed, not having ten righteous men within its gates, God did provide for the safety of one, and Zoar, a little city, was spared for his sake. And the Lord Jesus says that the days of great tribulation shall he shortened for the elect's sake. God controls and guides the storm for their sake. Worse and fiercer the storm of sin during the first of Manasseh's reign, and mingled with the predicted judgment under the sons of Josiah; yet what a merciful and blessed season the righteous had in the times of Hezekiah, and of Josiah! God provided an ark for Noah, spared Zoar for Lot's sake, and now calls upon His people, His elect, to enter into their chambers until the indignation be overpast (Isaiah 26:20). The bright seasons in the reign of Hezekiah and of Josiah were to sustain the faith and cheer the hearts of the righteous, not to set aside or annul the judgment. Even Josiah's tender heart and piety could do no more than bring him peace in his own day. But the judgment would surely come in his son's day. If the people could and would have heard and seen and understood, who is to say that it could not then have been, as it will be when the words of the psalmist are made good to Israel in the coming day? "And He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies" (Psalms 106:45). But the prophet enters into

the mind of God and does not pray that the judgment may be averted, nor for forgiveness as Solomon did, that God would hear from the heaven of heavens, and, when He heard, forgive. The people were to be deprived of contrite hearts and broken spirits (to which God pledged Himself to look), lest they should be converted. The prophet recognises the righteous judgment, and merely asks "How long" this unparalleled judgment is to last. And the irrevocable answer is "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and Jehovah have removed men far away and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land" (Isaiah 6:11). But the judgment is not yet past; the land is desolate, for Israel's blindness is not yet removed. When the veil is taken away, they will turn to the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:1-18 :), their enemies shall be destroyed, and the waste cities shall be inhabited (Isaiah 54:1-10). But all through this time of wrath the line is preserved among them, even as the seed remains in an oak or a teil tree that is stripped of its leaves, cut down, and only a stump remaining; through the scent of water it will yet bear boughs like a plant (cf. Job 14:7). How small the remnant at the time of the Babylonish captivity! If the oak tree was shorn of its leaves then, nothing but the stump is left now.

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

1893 293 But the national sin calls for national judgment, which would have been eternal, but that God provided a Man made strong for Himself, Who should be their Messiah, and also our Saviour, even the Lord Jesus. He healed them by His stripes, He was bruised for their iniquities. But it was a light thing to be a substitute for Israel merely, His soul was made an offering for sin. Reconciliation was made by His blood for the sin of the whole world; for the shedding of His blood could not be limited to its atoning value for Israel. As the king was cut off by his leprosy from the temple, so was the nation governmentally cut off from God. Uzziah's exclusion is symbolical of Judah's. But the nation shall be restored, and the sin, the moral leprosy, shall be washed away. And the house of David which led the way into sin and idolatry is first named as cleansed by the

waters of the fountain that shall be opened in that day, a day joyfully anticipated by the prophet. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). But who can tell its brightness? When the then nation is sprinkled with clean water, when all are taught of God, when the name, the real name, of the chief city, the once idolatrous Jerusalem, will be JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, then the story of the glory of Solomon and of his golden city (2 Chronicles 9:20) will lose its place of wonder and boast, in presence of the greater millennial glory which the Lord will surely bring to Israel; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are His. The Lord will turn Israel's sorrow to joy, their captivity into conquest. He Who in their stead once suffered, and was afflicted for their sakes has blotted out the handwriting that was against them, all the broken ordinances that called aloud for judgment; and He will reinstate in all the blessedness of the original promise. That Israel's guilt was borne by Him, as well as atonement made for every believer, in His death and bloodshedding on the cross, is a truth that shines through the words unwittingly spoken by Caiaphas when he said to the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in council, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:49-50). How contrary to God, how devilish, was the thought of Caiaphas? How blessed and divine the truth of God contained in it! Yet the high priest was quite unconscious of any feeling but his own hatred and jealousy of Christ; but he is compelled by the Holy Spirit to use words which unfold God's love to Israel, and His purpose of redemption in Christ; and then God gives His commentary on them, and that such was not the meaning of Caiaphas. But this shows how God controls all things for the furtherance of His truth, and of His glory. And Caiaphas was not the only one, nor indeed the first to utter words, the fulness of which he could not comprehend. Balaam, while desiring the last end of the righteous, could scarcely grasp the extent of his despairing cry, "I shall see Him but not nigh." It was wrung from him: he felt himself powerless in the hand of his Almighty Conqueror.

Again, we may reverently and adoringly say, how wise, divinely and graciously wise, that the words of the high priest were not of himself as was his thought, but were controlled by the Holy Spirit, that they might hear His meaning; "And not for that nation only but that He should gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad." In these words of meaning is the nation (Israel) as such, and also the children of God, each one in his individual position, rather gathered out from it, and all made one in Him. It is for Israel restored; and believers made one in Christ by His cross.

Henceforward from Isaiah's prophecy there is no semblance of repentance in Judah; for although Jotham, the son of Uzziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, it is expressly said, "And the people did yet corruptly" (2 Chronicles 27:2). Even the bright moments in the reign of Hezekiah and of Josiah were only an outward reformation, a veil drawn over the evil of idolatry, so that it was compelled to hide its hydra head. And the Lord said by the mouth of His prophet, "For as much as this people draw near Me with their mouth and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me; and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13). It was by the command of Hezekiah that the people pretended to draw near, but He Who searches the heart knew that it was far removed. This was God's word in the prophet's day; and the word is confirmed by our Lord Jesus Who applies the same word to the Jews in His day (Matthew 15:7-9). Hypocrisy was characteristic of them, and was dominant in the time of the

prophet. "Every one is a hypocrite" (Isaiah 9:17). "I will send him against a hypocritical nation" (chap. 6). The people would please Hezekiah, but they followed their own evil; and the natural effect of a good example on an evil nature is to make persecutors, or, if the good example be that of a man in authority, it very probably will make hypocrites. This the nation became and were so when our Lord was here below. Not but what some also became persecutors (Hebrews 11:36-38), but hypocrisy perhaps the more prevalent. And what more hateful than hypocrisy? While to the publicans and harlots the Lord said Come, to the hypocrites He said Woe. And yet the Lord had His own chosen ones among the nation of hypocrites and idolaters, and while the prophets came armed with God's judgments against the wicked, they were also the messengers of peace to the afflicted few. The prophets were laden with assurances of God's mercy, and His remembrance of them. The godly might have had desponding moments when Ahaz reigned, yet what a distinct and definite promise is given, and given too to "that king Ahaz!" Not for his sake is it given, but to tell the nation what God will do for them, and to cheer and brighten the lives of the oppressed remnant. There is the destruction of their enemies (Pekah and Rezin), and afterwards the advent of the Son, of Whose government there should be no end. "For unto us a child is born etc." (Isaiah 9:6-7). How evident that two classes in Judah are before the mind of the prophet, the righteous and the wicked! To the former is given the glorious promise; to the latter although their calamities are great, and will be greater, yet the words of the prophet, the knell of their utter ruin, are "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!" Even the great prophecy, the promise of a Son, could not turn away the Lord's anger, nor was it intended so, but to give a sure word of prophecy where the righteous might rest their hope, laying a foundation on which the righteous could build all through the time of judgment.

We may here notice a change in the manner of communication from the Lord to the people. In the wilderness it came through Moses, and all his power and authority enforced it. But now, through sin, the leader or king of the nation can no longer be the channel of the Lord's messages. A special man must be raised up for the purpose; who, through the wickedness of him that occupies the place of the first channel, may be put in prison as was Jeremiah. But he was strengthened of the Lord (Jeremiah 1:17-19) to overcome the anticipated opposition. And not only so; for the Lord in old time commanded Moses to speak to the people, as if, in putting honour on Moses, He would use his authority. Now the Lord speaks more directly to the people. Certainly the prophet speaks to the people, but it is the Lord's authority; the servant may be ill-treated and despised, and the authority and power of the king be against the authority of the Lord. In mercy now the words come direct from the Lord to the poor and despised. "To that man will I look etc." That is, the Lord spoke through Moses and the ruler spoke with the Lord; now when the Lord speaks, it is outside and often against the king, but ever to the humble and contrite. God's communications will again come through the Ruler, when the Son of David comes and takes the kingdom. All will be in due order in that day. He that rules was "the Servant," and serves even while He rules. In all things He has the pre-eminence.

2 Chronicles 27:1-9; 2 Chronicles 28:1-27.

1893 308 Very brief is the notice of Jotham, no event does the Spirit of God dwell on. In a general way he did right in the sight of the Lord, but, it appears, manifested no energy, for while he did right, the people still did corruptly. Nevertheless, outward prosperity marks a righteous king, his enemies pay tribute, and "Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord

his God" (2 Chronicles 27:6). But if the people acting corruptly is evidence of the want of energy in the king, how much greater the corruption in his son Ahaz, who soon exceeded and led the people in their corruption? If Jotham could not put down the idolatry of his own family, and restrain the tendencies of the heir of his throne, much less the same tendencies in the nation. Two things mark his reign, the king personally righteous but without zeal, while the people doing corruptly were fitting themselves to follow Ahaz in all his abominations.

Rather longer is the account of Ahaz, or of what happened during his reign, than of Jotham, a righteous king. But it was the iniquity of Ahaz that made him prominent; and there were two events in connection with Israel which were brought out at that time, viz., Judah's decadence, "For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD." Ahaz is called king of Israel, his position before God, for the ten tribes were apostate. Judah was the Israel of God, but Judah was made naked, never so low as now, even lower than apostate Israel. It is this that we see; and secondly, that Israel, who had taken an apostate place before God, had yet some righteous men, who felt their position, men of weight and influence who would not allow their trespass to be added to by retaining the captives from Judah. "Our trespass" was no doubt their great trespass in rebelling against the house of David. The rebuke of Oded and the remonstrance of the four princes cause the captives to be sent home. Israel seemed to be more amenable than Judah to correction. At least, with some, the remembrances of what they had been under David, and how they had sinned and forfeited every covenanted mercy in their rebellion against Rehoboam, extorted the confession "for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." The return of the captives and the cause of it could have been no secret to Judah and Ahaz; but it had no effect on the besotted hearts of the men of Judah, who were already feeling the judgment of God. Unconscious of it they might be, but no less visible was the judgment; for while the LORD was calling them to the remembrance of His goodness, by causing the Israelites to restore the captives of Judah fed and clothed, and the remembrance too of His just wrath in permitting the Edomites and the Philistines to smite and invade Judah, yet "At that time did king Ahaz send to the kings of Assyria to help him," and purchased it with the gold of the temple, and of his palace. And though the Assyrian king did not help, but distressed him more, yet did Ahaz sin more, for he sacrificed to the gods that smote him; and the sacred writer, even the Holy Spirit, as in the utmost human contempt says "This is that king Ahaz." Yet to him the prophet speaks of the glory of the Son to be born, and Hezekiah gives a dim shadow of the coming glory. Dim, for though wonderful in itself, as coming after the abominations of Ahaz, what can it be but partial and dim when taken as a picture of the future millennial glory of the Son? "For now we see through a dim window obscurely." The power and goodness of the Lord is manifest in the fact that Hezekiah was a good king, his father was the worst that yet sat on the throne. Where was the youth Hezekiah trained, was it in his father's palace or in the city? Ahaz had surrounded him with idolatry, he had idols in every separate city, in every grove, on every high hill, he had shut the doors of the LORD's house. Wherever Hezekiah looked, an idol met his eye. And yet in the first year of his reign, the first month(!) he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. It is not only remarkable, and astonishingly so, in Hezekiah personally as being an evidence of the power of God over surrounding influences, but also in that Hezekiah was used governmentally (for God still waited for Israel though the judgment was pronounced). He was giving a sample (shall we say?) of what the fulfilment of the promise would be, the promise of the Son just made to Ahaz. There is no excuse for the rationalistic pretension

that the virgin's Son, Immanuel, was to be a child either of the king or of the prophet. Compare Isaiah 9:6-7.

2 Chronicles 29:1-36; 2 Chronicles 30:1-27.

1893 322 This chapter may be called the account of the re-consecration of the temple and of the priests and Levites; the trumpets and the instruments of David were there (2 Chronicles 29:27). Nor did Hezekiah fail to remember all Israel (2 Chronicles 29:24), and accordingly, in the following chapter, he sends to all Israel and Judah, and wrote to Ephraim and Manasseh, to the remainder of the ten tribes that were not carried into captivity by the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17:6 ver.). Some scorned the invitation; but many came (2 Chronicles 30:10-11). When the anti-typical day comes, the scorners will have perished; for then all the tribes in various ways will come to the house of the Lord and to Jerusalem (see Psalms 107:1-43 : which is a grateful remembrance and thanksgiving for the loving-kindness of the Lord: a song of praise from Israel restored). So in these chapters we have the re-opening of the doors of the temple, its re-consecration, and the recall of all Israel. What can these be but pledges from God of what is yet future, for the temple then standing was soon to be burnt by the Chaldeans, and the tribe of Judah to be scattered, as Israel was? why then such a great change, if it were not symbolical of a greater yet to come? The temple service was certainly restored because Hezekiah was good. But a deeper truth, I think, is to be apprehended — that Hezekiah was made a good king, because the Lord was going to give a little sample of His grace and power to be fully manifested in His time. Is this not intimated in the sudden preparation of the people's hearts, which humanly would require many years? "And Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people that God had prepared the people, for the thing was done suddenly" (2 Chronicles 29:36). Looking at the circumstances, their most universal idolatry and the national and truly quick response to Hezekiah's call, apparent in all the chapter (2 Chronicles 30:1-27 :), are we not compelled to acknowledge the constraining hand of God, and while acknowledging, stand aside and humbly enquire what new act of grace and love is now to bring out more of God of which this rebellions and idolatrous people are to be the platform? Soon is the grace displayed. A sample, shall we say? of that eternal love that never changes and of that power before which all enemies are as chaff, is presented and each while prophetically it points to the future, historically it is the voice of a call. He Who can do this, can do much more. Repent for why will ye die? for God hath spoken and evil is determined against this nation, but if you turn from your evil, He will repent of the evil He thought to do (Jeremiah 18:8). But the earnest call of the prophet and the gracious interpositions of God in delivering power were alike unheeded. "Make the heart of this people fat." How true of the last days of the kingdom! How patiently God waited to be gracious!

All that were invited could not keep the passover of the appointed time, the 14th day of the first month; for the priests were not sufficiently sanctified, nor the people gathered. The king and princes had taken counsel to keep the passover in the second month. This was a provision made by the Lord for unavoidable failure. (See Numbers 9:1-23 :) But even in the second month a multitude of the people, chiefly of the ten tribes, had not cleansed themselves; yet did they eat otherwise than it was written.

Hezekiah prayed for them; not that he was indifferent to their condition, but his only resource under the circumstances was to pray for them saying, "the good Lord pardon every one." There might have been much ignorance in the people which were left of the tribes of Ephraim,

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

2 Chronicles 31:1-21; 2 Chronicles 32:1-33; 2 Chronicles 33:1-25.

1893 339 What of old was the consequence to Judah of the unnatural alliance of Jehoshaphat and Ahab? The marriage of Jehoshaphat's son with Ahab's daughter. Jehoram slays all his brethren and some of the princes. The dark times of Ahaziah, and Athaliah succeed. Jehoram killed his brothers, Athaliah slew her grandchildren (2 Chronicles 22:10-12). Such the effect of his affinity with Ahab. God suffered long: only one thing more to fill up the measure of their iniquity; and then judgment was pronounced. They had forsaken the Lord, followed idols, sought the aid of man, and made alliance with apostates. It was in Uzziah's reign that an attempt was made to upset the order of the temple. Departure from the Lord would bring judgment. Not giving heed to God's calls to return, would confirm it, but to interfere with God's order in His own house and seek to introduce man's order called forth the immediate sentence. The nation, symbolised by Uzziah's leprosy, is cut off from the house which they had defiled. But the judgment on the king did not change the people. The sentence was "make the heart of this people fat," and the fulfilment was, "and the people did yet corruptly" (2 Chronicles 27:2).

Another effect of the then affinity with Ahab is that Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. This expression seems to denote the greatest guilt of the kings of Judah, and is used after affinity with Ahab. Ahaz burnt his children in the fire. Manasseh dealt with a familiar spirit and with wizards. Could the chosen nation sink lower? The sons of Josiah make the cup of iniquity to overflow, and the beginning of judgment overtakes them. But before that, the patience and goodness of God provides two bright presentations of the future, when in His time, not in Uzziah's, the priest and the king shall be one; not to avert the doom of Judah, but for the encouragement of the righteous yet found there. They are given under Hezekiah and Josiah. This was unmingled mercy. But they passed away and wickedness prevailed from the king to the lowest. Hezekiah had it in his heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce anger might turn away, but the sentence was decreed and the piety neither of Hezekiah, nor of Josiah, could turn aside the judgment about to fall on Judah and Jerusalem. The utmost was a delay (2 Chronicles 29:10; 2 Chronicles 34:23-28).

How the many interpositions of God in mercy during the whole of their history, which were so many calls to repentance, remind us of our Lord's words, as He wept over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:1-35 : etc.) Asa in his later days oppressed some, who seem by being named together to belong to the same company as the seer (2 Chronicles 16:10); but persecution raged after Uzziah. Perhaps the bitterest times were during the reigns of Ahaz and of Manasseh. But the Holy Spirit refers to them and their sufferings

(Hebrews 11:33-38), and declares the world not worthy of them. Idolatrous Jerusalem has its army of martyrs as well as pagan Rome, and so-called christian Rome not less but more. But mark that He Who wept said, I would have gathered! God speaks in Him with human tears. Who will dare to attempt to draw the line between His deity and humanity? Where is reverence for the person of Christ our Lord? It is far from shining in this present evil age, when the only Worthy One was rejected for a robber, and which will close with the vilest of men exalted and exalting himself as God.

2 Chronicles 34:1-33; 2 Chronicles 35:1-27.

1893 356 In Hezekiah's life there are two events which foreshadow the restoration of Jehovah's worship and the destruction of the enemy; that is, the passover and the overthrow of the Assyrian have each a prophetic bearing. But again what closer illustration of the history of Israel than in the life of Manasseh, wickedness and rebellion against God, then captivity in a Gentile's dungeon, and lastly restoration, not merely deliverance from a foreign land, but restored to his kingdom! As to all Israel, their national iniquity is ended, and they are eating the fruit of their doings. Their restoration is yet to come. And come it will as surely as Manasseh was restored to his kingdom.

Manasseh has fearful prominence among the wicked kings of Judah, even the fierceness of Jehovah's wrath is attributed to the sins and provocations of Manasseh (2 Kings 23:26, 2 Kings 24:3, Jeremiah 15:4). He is singled out for his sins, and as the object of God's mercy, as no other, before or since. The passover kept by Josiah seems more extensively observed by the people than that of Hezekiah, at whose invitation some mocked (2 Chronicles 30:10). There was no passover before or after like that of Josiah, and none like him that turned to the Lord with all his heart "according to all the law of Moses" (2 Kings 23:25). Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from His fierce anger. But Hezekiah's soul has a deeper thought of the mercy of God; for to him the first thing was to receive the pardon of all sin, and then the service of God. Both begin by cleansing the house of the Lord. This was imperative, for in vain would Hezekiah draw nigh to God while the temple was defiled. The difference is that Josiah did it as preparing himself for the eating of the passover; Hezekiah, as that which was imperatively due to God. It is the "passover" which fills the heart of Hezekiah, and in the first year, in the first month, having put the temple in order and the priests and Levites in their places, he sent to all Israel to come to the passover. This is more than "according to all the law of Moses" which characterised Josiah. The holding this feast so filled Hezekiah's heart, that if he could not keep it on the day which was regularly appointed, he would on that which was graciously permitted, and all Israel were in that condition to which this permission is granted by God. And when the passover is finished, then all present went out to the cities of Judah and brake the images, and then returned to their own cities. But it was in the eighteenth year that Josiah kept the passover. He would have them all first prepared, as he said to the priests: "So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves and prepare, etc." It was due preparation "according to the law of Moses" moved Josiah, not the mercy of God beyond law, which seemingly occupied and filled Hezekiah, insomuch that when he was told that some had taken the passover without having cleansed themselves, 1:e., without legal preparation, which was a sin in the eye of the law, he looks higher than the law, to the sovereign mercy of God, and prays, "the good Lord pardon every one." Josiah cleaves to the law, and acts righteously in cleaving, but it did not bring him joy and gladness as to Hezekiah and the people with him (2 Chronicles 30:26). The book of the law is found (not that he searched for it); and he reads. What is the effect of the law upon his

soul? He rends his clothes: it brings distress. The Lord answers to his weeping and promises mercy beyond the provisions of the law (2 Chronicles 34:24-28). The reading the law may have quickened him in his work of purging the land, but it did not make him joyful; on the contrary he rends his clothes. When Moses went up the second time on mount Sinai to meet the Lord, He proclaimed His name as the merciful, gracious, and longsuffering Lord, and yet as visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children — wondrous mingling of law and grace which only He Who gave the law could do. Josiah clave to the law, as a good Jew. Hezekiah, in spirit, rested on the mercy which was in store for thousands. Hezekiah prepares himself to purge the land by eating the passover. Josiah prepares himself to eat the passover by breaking the images. In eating the passover, there is confession of sin and helplessness; there is the profession of faith in Him, Who said, "When I see the blood I will pass over," and still more emphatically, though symbolically, given by the Lord Himself, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, etc." Man prefers and follows in the path marked by Josiah. It is not God's way. His way is to eat the passover first, and thus to get eternal life. How else could we break down images? It would be Satan casting out Satan.

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

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

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

a paradox, that the farther they advance in this path, the farther is God from them. And if they could approach God by this path, and receive His pardon and justification, it would not be God justifying the ungodly, but the purged. But purged from what? From sin? But the nature is sinful: if any could purge himself from the sin that dwells in him, he must purge himself from his nature, without having any other — for he is supposed on his way to God to receive the new nature — where then would he be? The gospel speaks differently. The unpurged, the lost, are called, are invited in the gospel; for even Christ, our passover, was slain for us. We are keeping the feast that followed it, the feast of unleavened bread.

How Satan must deride the attempt of any man to make himself clean, and fit for the presence of God. The Lord said of Job that he had no equal in the earth, not excepting his three friends, that he was perfect and upright; and when his calamity suddenly burst on him and overwhelmed him in body as in circumstance, he not knowing God's love and inscrutable wisdom uttered intemperate words; yet even then he knew enough of himself to say, "If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." He did not know the utter vileness of his nature: this can be learnt only in the presence of God Whose divine light makes the heart bare. When brought to that light, he says, "Behold, I am vile." A man sometimes speaks of finding his way to God! He never will. He may be brought to God, but he will never find the way to Him. Why the Lord Himself only brings us to God by the shedding of His own precious blood, and will man pretend to come in the name and strength of his own works, after the truth is declared in the cross of Christ? That cross which proves the vileness of man as well as proclaims the infinite love of God?

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

2 Chronicles 36:1-23.

1893 370 With the death of Josiah the forbearance of God ceased and judgment soon came upon the city. It had been hitherto restrained; for the calamities that befell the kingdom of Judah partook of the character of chastisement. The reformation effected by Josiah was the last interposition of mercy from God, while Judah remained as a nation. The next national interposition of God will not be a mere temporary reform but eternal, under their king Messiah, our Lord Jesus. But now the sky was black with impending judgment. And the first droppings of the storm of the judgment proved the removal of the last stay of David's house. Alas! this was followed by the maddest infatuation of their kings, the sons of Josiah. The dominion of the Gentile soon began, and will only terminate when the Lord appears. But Josiah, in this matter, enquired not of the Lord: it was his own ardour that led him to withstand Pharaoh-necho. And as if he had a presentiment of his death, he disguised himself (2 Chronicles 35:22), of which there was no need with faith in God. He had

not even the faith of Jehoshaphat, who, though abetting and helping Ahab, would not go to battle without enquiring of the prophet of the Lord, and went with his kingly robes on. Jehoshaphat was preserved; Josiah was slain. The God of battles, Who guided the arrow that gave Ahab his death-wound, controlled the archers that slew Josiah. Mercy took him away from the evil to come (Isaiah 57:1); but there was judgment in the manner of it, which fell on the guilty city unmixed. The people of the land placed his son Jehoahaz on the throne. The Egyptian monarch, however, would not permit him to be king, but carried him into Egypt where he died a captive: the same land and power, from which, in ages past, the Lord with mighty arm and wondrous signs had delivered His people Israel.

All Israel as a nation now was cut off, and the way made for accomplishing in due time His purpose, that mercy should come to the Gentiles (Romans 11:1-36 :). And we may observe here that, as one Gentile is used for the execution of Jehovah's anger on Israel, so another (Cyrus) is used as the instrument of His mercy in giving permission, and help to all that wished to return. "Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up" (2 Chronicles 36:23). True, that restoration was partial; for only a remnant returned, a little one compared with the nation. A full restoration of all Israel, after the judgment is ended, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south (Psalms 107:3), is reserved for the great Son of David; Who will not only restore them to greater glory than they had under Solomon, but also take vengeance on those Gentiles that, while executing Jehovah's wrath on His own guilty people, sought to gratify their hatred and boasted against the Lord God of Israel. It was truly the axe lifting up itself against Him Who used it. But if the king of Egypt is God's rod for Josiah, not he is for the guilty city. The king of Babylon executes Jehovah's wrath upon Jerusalem, and Egypt must submit to him now whom God had appointed to rule over the world. Nebuchadnezzar set up whom he would, and whom he would he cast down. We see this power exercised in regard to the sons of Josiah. Egypt's subjugation is seen in that Eliakim, the nominee of Pharaoh-necho, becomes the servant of the king of Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6). How completely is Judah under the power of Nebuchadnezzar when he binds this king in fetters, and puts a child of eight years on the throne, and after three months places his uncle Mattaniah (Zedekiah) there! Even the changing of his name was evidence of the supreme authority of Nebuchadnezzar, who did the same to Daniel and his three friends. But Zedekiah rebelled against his lord, and the rebellion was through the anger of the Lord (1 Kings 24: 20); it was a part of the judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, and it brought special judgment upon himself. For the terrible vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar on his helpless captive was due perhaps not so much to the rebellion of a vassal king as to the guilt, the enormity, of breaking the oath that he took in the name of Jehovah to be obedient to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 17:11-21). This iniquity filled up his cup. He made a covenant with the king of Babylon, and took an oath in the name of Jehovah to obey Nebuchadnezzar, insomuch that Jehovah said "my oath," and "my covenant." Afterwards he rebelled against the king that Jehovah had set over him, and sent to Egypt for horses and men. He despised the covenant and oath so solemnly taken and thus presented the name of the Holy One of Israel to the heathen king as nothing. This brought things to a climax: there was "no remedy." The Babylonish captivity terminated the existence of Judah as a nation, as the king of Assyria did that of Israel. In all their past history the long-suffering of God rises above their sin. Nevertheless they turned a deaf ear and would none of His reproofs. Jehovah "sent to them by His messengers rising up betimes and sending, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place"; but they mocked

His messengers, despised His words, and misused the prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah rose against His people till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans (2 Chronicles 36:15, etc.) until Cyrus arose — type of their Messiah, Who will accomplish a greater and a final restoration. But though the captives might weep by the rivers of Babylon, the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13 :) was not fulfilled; the removal of men far away, and the great forsaking in the midst of the land yet remained to be exhausted. The children of the returned captives had yet another opportunity (humanly speaking) of turning aside the wrath of God; according as He said, "I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jeremiah 18:7-10). How wonderful and full of grace and truth are these words! Yet they rejected and crucified the Lord of glory. The time of "Jacob's trouble" is at hand; and so is their Deliverer. Then there will be no need for one to say to his neighbour, "Know the Lord," for all shall know from the least to the greatest. Once the city was forsaken; but the irrevocable name of it soon will be "Jehovah is there," R. B.

S. Thoughts on the Chronicles.

Thoughts on the Chronicles.

R. Beacon. The Chronicles are by some thought to be a supplement to the preceding historical books, that is, to supply the omissions and defects supposed to be found in them. This is a denial of God as their Author. For if holy men of old were divinely inspired to write them, failure or error is impossible. To assert that the Chronicles are a more supplement to correct what went before is to misapprehend the aim and purpose of the Holy Spirit Who has never written one book as a supplement to another, in the above sense and meaning. Each separate book of the Bible is perfect in itself, though each a necessary part, to form one divine whole, and needs neither filling up nor correction. Even in the historical books the events related are never a bare record, but all are in special relation to the object the Holy Spirit has in view. And all, being under His control, are just so many steps leading to the accomplishing of His will and purpose. So it may be that many circumstances, having no direct and immediate bearing upon the object of the Spirit in the particular book, are omitted, not because they are unimportant in themselves, but that the purpose of God does not call for their mention. And these same circumstances may be most essential in another book written for another object. The true question is, What is the purpose of God in this or that book? And only when we have apprehended it, can we see why events are mentioned in the one book and not in the other, although both may be concerning the same persons and nation. Take for instance David and Bathsheba and the moral processes by which David is restored, so fully given in the Kings, and not alluded to in the Chronicles. Only one fact connected with it circumstantially is found in Chronicles, viz., that David tarried at Jerusalem when he ought to have been at the head of his army. The consequences are narrated in Kings. The purpose of God in Chronicles did not require that mention.

Yet the Chronicles are the counterpart, the complement, of the Books of Samuel and of the Kings; for complement does not imply defect in that of which it is the complement. Supplement, ordinarily, implies omissions in the thing supplemented. A perfect book or epistle may have a complement, never a supplement in the above sense and meaning. The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians are counterparts to each other, and both are perfect. We have the glories and fulness of the Head in the one; but Head implies body, and the full privileges and blessedness of the body are given in the other: not the one Epistle supplying omissions in the other, but each perfect in itself. And the body is the fulness (complement) of Him Who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:23). These Epistles are complementary to each other. So Paul speaks of filling up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ. That is, the sufferings of the body — the church — are the complement of the sufferings of Christ. Does this mean that His sufferings were not perfect? So also the Books of Samuel and of the Kings on the one side, and the Chronicles on the other, are complementary. The former is a record of mercy and forbearance. The iniquity of the people reached its climax when they rejected God as their king, yet He forbore. It was God's mind to give them a king, and this necessarily appears in their history, as proof of God's goodness which their sin could not turn away. But it in no way lessens Israel's guilt in desiring a king like the surrounding nations, that it

was the purpose of God to give them a king in His own good time. Israel would have a king before God's man (typical) was prepared for them. The result was ruin. But the point in Samuel and the Kings seems to be the complete breakdown of man as seen in Israel; responsibility and ruin are correlatives. Now in Chronicles, where of course the ruin is as plainly read as in the former books, the point is God's predetermined bringing in of His Only-begotten, through a human line, but His only begotten Son. That is to say, His purpose is the more prominent in Chronicles. The genealogy is proof of this, and gives the key to the book. The sin and rebellion of the Kings involving the ruin of the people is met by God's purpose that His King shall reign. The grand solvent for every apparent difficulty as to what is recorded or not is that Christ is the one Object before the Spirit of God, whether in the Bible as a whole or in each separate book. Nothing is there but what exalts Him. And He must be before our hearts if we would understand; and then we can laugh to scorn (or rather mourn over) all the futile objections of ignorant infidelity. If David and Solomon are historically more prominent in Samuel and 1 Kings, it is only because they are types of the Lord Jesus, in His rejection, than of His kingly power and glory. Suffering was David's pathway to the throne; it was the necessary path of Christ to His kingdom. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke 24:24)? In Chronicles there is no rejected David; his history begins with the transfer of the kingdom to him and the establishment of his throne, though when the kingdom is committed to the responsibility of man, Israel becomes irretrievably ruined. And for the time the ruin is not merely apparent, but real. This, however, only for a season, so that in the end grace will be seen to provide the only stable foundation and sure basis for the accomplishing of the counsels of God. Saul's enmity, David's failures, and all to the consummated sins of the sons of Josiah, could not annul God's counsels, or set aside His purpose. What a triumph for Satan if God had on account of Israel's wickedness revoked His promise to Abraham, for in his seed all the nations, not Israel alone, are to be blessed! What would have become of the blessing? Apparently all was contingent upon man's obedience and faithfulness. Really, all rested upon an unassailable foundation, God's promise, given to Abraham 430 years before the law. But if Israel made the fatal step of accepting law as the ground of inheriting blessing, man's failure can never annul the purposes of grace.

Though the people sinned till there was no remedy (save that remedy which was only as yet in God's counsel), and they were carried away captives into a foreign land, during all that dark time of disobedience and idolatry grace was constantly watching over them, and guiding the destinies of this wonderful people. And grace is, now that they are scattered and for the most part unseen by human eye, controlling the world's history for their sakes. Now Lo-ammi is written upon them with a pen of iron; the time is coming when in that place where it was said, "Ye are not My people," there it shall be said unto them, "Ye are the sons of the living God" (Hosea 1:9). That will be when the true Anointed, the Man of God's right hand, comes, Who is not only Son of David, but also Son of man. For when grace acts in sovereign power it cannot be limited to the sphere of Israel. Such grace must be unto all. Hence the genealogy begins, not with Abraham which might suffice for a Jew, but with Adam: proof that not Israel's future blessing is alone before the mind of the Holy Spirit, but Christ in His exaltation and glory. The throne of the world is His, as well as the throne of David. The types being only of men afford much instruction over and above the great and prominent fact that God is leading His chosen man to the throne. David's trials and faith, his failures and victories, come in by the way and are written for our learning. His failure cannot interfere with God's purpose. Rather do they bring out more manifestly the unchangeable decree

of God, that David as the great type of his greater Son must sit upon the throne of Israel. For David had done enough to be righteously thrust aside; his willingness (real or feigned) to fight under Achish against Israel was alone sufficient to have debarred him from the throne. But he was the man chosen to be type of Him Who could not fail, and so there was a divine necessity that he should reign. Therefore David's failure in offering his services to Achish is not mentioned in Chronicles, nor any part of his life previous to Saul's death. Not God's grace in meeting David's failures in the path of suffering is the point, but the accomplishment of His purpose. David is king. This purpose fulfilled, and a glimpse of the glory seen in Solomon's day, when the temple was finished, and we may say consecrated by the fire of Jehovah consuming the sacrifice, His glory filling the house (2 Chronicles 7:1-22 :), the proper typical aspect ceases. The exaltation of the king becomes the sphere of his responsibility. Soon the inherent disobedience and evil of man appears, and David's house and the whole nation are speedily corrupted. On Israel's throne we see man in his best estate; the glory of the greatest Gentile monarch pales before the glory of Solomon, who truly was in honour, but where of himself he could not abide. The kings sinned and the people followed them, and God closes that period in judgment. The kingdom so bright in Solomon's earlier days ends in Babylon, and an alien if any occupied Israel's throne afterwards.

Ruin was stamped upon the kingdom long before the Babylonian captivity. For when the ten tribes were cut off through the revolt of Jeroboam, Judah alone could in no wise answer to the thought of God respecting His King as the Son of David. Not two tribes but the whole twelve form the kingdom over which Christ the Son of David must reign. Even if Judah had been faithful, and no evil king ever found on the throne, Christ could not be shorn of His glory in having only two tribes instead of twelve. But in point of fact Judah became more offensive than Israel, Jerusalem more guilty than Samaria. While there were entreaty and warning, promise and threatening to Israel, but never one ray of goodness from the throne, while in Judah there were some good kings, and the channels of governmental blessings, yet we have the testimony of the prophets that Aholibah was worse than Aholah. God had His own among them. The righteous are distinguished from the wicked, but the condition of Judah as a whole appears far deeper sunken in idolatry and iniquity (see Ezekiel 23:1-49 :).

Idolatry was always dominant in Israel. In revolting against the house of David the ten tribes forsook the ground of covenanted blessing. Patience waited long, and called with wondrous evidences of mercy and power in the days of Elijah and Elisha. The signs and wonders wrought by these men were proof that they (Israel) were off the ground of God's covenant. Israel as a nation rebelled against God. Judah as a nation remained professedly true, inasmuch as they clave to the house of David, and outwardly to the temple and worship of Jehovah; yet were in heart as rebellious as the Israelites. God said of them, "This people draweth nigh with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." The hypocrisy of Judah was more hateful to God than the open apostacy of Israel. God had His remnant in both kingdoms. In Israel He had His seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal, and righteous ones were found in Judah with whom it should be well (Isaiah 3:10). Both kingdoms sinned till each filled up the measure of its iniquity: their land given to strangers, themselves captives.

Aholibah took no warning from the fate of Aholah, but became more idolatrous. If Judah is worse than Israeli why is Judah in captivity preserved as a people? Why not dispersed and lost among the nations, as are the ten tribes? Because there was a purpose of grace to be accomplished and

full judgment was delayed. God had set David upon the throne, and it was a pledge that Christ must sit there also. For Christ on the throne of David is God's centre of blessing for this earthly sphere. Accordingly the tribe whence the King was to come is preserved till the appointed time when Jesus is born in Bethlehem. So this tribe is preserved while the ten are hidden in the dust of the earth, and has the prominent and sole place in the books of the Chronicles, and the family of David pre-eminent in that tribe. It is the royal tribe, and David's is the royal family. The line of true heirs, during the captivity when the Gentile was in possession of the throne, is sacredly preserved, and after the return from Babylon carried on by Matthew to the birth of Christ in Whom it ceases.

Wonderfully, yea divinely, kept are these family records, so that the title of Jesus of Nazareth to the throne might be established both legally and naturally: by law the Son of Joseph, by birth the Son of Mary. Then when the Christ has appeared Judah is overtaken in full judgment: there was no reason for further delay.

II. 1890 145. When Christ was born, a usurper was on the throne, but God has preserved the genealogy of the rightful heir of David, who is also heir of the promises made to Abraham, in whose Seed all the nations will be blessed. "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3-7). This promise was verified to Abraham as regards the former part, surely, but as a whole goes very far beyond him; it looks onward to the Seed, "which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Eternally will they be blessed who bless Him, and eternally will they be cursed who curse or despise Him and reject His salvation. Not all Israel were blessed in faithful Abraham; but in his Seed, in millennial glory, all Israel and all the nations are to be blessed. Israel will be pre-eminent in blessing, but all nations are included in the far-reaching promise. In Luke it is not the royalty of the Son of David, but the genealogy there is traced up to Adam. Christ is presented as Son of Man in likeness of sinful flesh, but in real flesh. "The Word became flesh," and thus He takes up the cause of lost man, for it was a too light thing to raise up only the tribes of Israel: "I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:5-6). Messiah has special relationships with the Jew, with Israel; but, the Word having become flesh, in due time God's salvation must be to the end of the earth; 1:e., His salvation cannot be limited to a few (Titus 2:11), it is "unto all." In Matthew, there is His royalty as from David, but as from Abraham all the promises are fulfilled in Him, for He is the Object of them all. And as regards Israel and the kingdom, it was best that he (Matthew) should not begin with Adam. In the genealogy here in Chronicles, Adam, Abraham, and David are the three salient points, each the head of a class; the first including all men, the second (Abraham) all the seed of promise, the third (David) a line of kings. As from Adam, He partook of flesh and blood (for which humanity is as true of Abraham and of David, yet faith and rule marked these respectively), but that which gives the character to Adam and makes him so fatally prominent is that he FELL. As descended from Abraham, the father of the faithful, the first who lived by that faith which separates from the world, we see Jesus our Lord (who must in all things have the pre-eminence) the Head of a new race, a race marked by faith, righteousness, and a divine nature, not lying under sentence of death because of sin, but having justification of life (Romans 5:1-21) a new line, separate and distinct from the world. As from David, not the Head of a race, but as the heir to the throne, as having the dominion not only of Israel but of the world. If separation from the world (John 17:1-26 :) is seen under the Abrahamic aspect, the Davidic shows that same world in subjection to Him who is alone able and worthy to

reign.

1 Chronicles 1:1-54. Adam is the starting point, and the Holy Spirit leads on through a list of names, yet no unmeaning list, till we come to David, the type of Him who, amidst other glories, is called the last Adam, who will shortly have all things put under Him, and in whom all families of the earth shall be blessed. The King is before the mind of the Spirit, Who hastens onward and with seven names covers the whole time from the creation to the deluge, a space computed to be nearly one thousand seven hundred years. In all that time only two men are singled out for their faith till we come to Noah, Abel and Enoch of the old world; Noah links the old and the new, as it were, the last of the old and the first of the new, though that prime place he could not keep in honour. In Noah's sons we have the heads of the three great divisions of the human race, with characteristics so different as developed in this present day that infidels dare to deny their common blood (Acts 17:26). In Genesis, as here, the order is, Shem, Ham and Japheth; not that we can assume this to be the order of birth, for in Genesis 10:21, where Shem and Japheth are mentioned, Japheth is called the elder, and it is a question with some whether "younger son" in Genesis 9:24 refers to Ham or to his son Canaan. Be this as it may, another order than the natural is before us, for the natural order, i.e., priority of birth, is constantly departed from when it traverses the order of grace and of God's purpose of blessing; and if Japheth and his descendants are noticed first, it is but briefly and then dismissed. That which brings the children of Ham into prominence here is that they are so often in collision with the people of whom came The King. From Genesis 10:1-32 ;, we learn that the isles of the Gentiles are the portion of Japheth; but, if far from being prominent in the beginning, these names re-appear in the prophetic record of the close of this world's history (see Ezekiel 27:1-36 : — 39: and Revelation 20:1-15 ;, where the names of Japheth's sons recur). They spread over their allotted portion of the earth noiselessly, hidden by their own insignificance and in the darkness of their idolatry, unnoticed in the history of God's dealings with nations who at the first interfered with Israel (for that which makes any Gentile prominent is his having to do with Israel, whether with them or against them), but to come out in fearful prominence at the close, when the Son of David is about to make good His title to the sovereignty of the world. The sons of Ham have had their day of supremacy. The race of Japheth is now dominant, and will be a little longer. That of Shem is yet to come, when, in the person of the Jew, the glory of that race shall be manifest to all. But the Anointed of Israel must first come; for if the earth is to be blessed through the Jew, the Jew will owe his greatness to the presence of Him to Whom these genealogies lead. Until then the pride and haughtiness of Japheth will increase, and when it has reached its climax will be suddenly destroyed; for are not the first Beast, the future Emperor of the West, and the King of the North, all of the proud and domineering race of Japheth?

Then comes Ham, of whom was Nimrod. Worldly power is first seen in that line, which is now the most degraded. With him is the first mention of a kingdom (Genesis 10:10.); its beginning and its end was Babel — confusion. Man would be a power independent of God; if individually powerless, what would not combination do? Therefore they would make themselves a name and have a place of union lest they be scattered. The attempt to prevent scattering was the occasion of it. No scattering so complete and thorough, rendering intercourse impossible, as the confounding of their language: they could not "understand one another's speech." Man away from God begins to build a city, his first city, but never finished it, "they left off to build the city, therefore is the name of it called Babel" (Genesis 11:8-9.). Returning to Chronicles, we come to the familiar names of

Canaan and his progeny. The Philistines were not of Canaan, but as descendants of Ham, were congeners; our attention is called to them that we may know the origin of these most troublesome enemies of Israel. The descendants of Canaan have special notice because it was their land that was destined for Israel.

Now we come (ver. 17) to Shem. One of his sons, Asshur, built Nineveh (Genesis 10:11), one of the cities prominent as an enemy of Israel, though the founder of the race of Shem. Thus, though destroyed in judgment, it was nearer to Israel than Babylon, the city of Nimrod of the race of Ham. But the line of blessing did not run through Asshur, but through Arphaxad. Another event is related in connection with Shem's race, whose effects are of far wider range than the past greatness of Nineveh or of Babylon, however solemn and portentous their judgment and destruction may be. The names Shem and Arphaxad lead to Peleg, and in his days the earth was divided. Peleg lived in the time of Nimrod, when God scattered men by confounding their language. We may remark here that while in the cases of Japheth and of Ham, the Holy Spirit just records names, though Nimrod is called a mighty hunter, it is nothing but the mere fact without a word of praise or blame; when we come to Shem we are, as it were, in a higher atmosphere, we find that God is the Lord God of Shem, and the moral aspect, or character of things appears, and not merely names or history. This dividing of the earth no doubt put an end to Nimrod's kingdom, but is not mentioned in connection with his name. The Lord God of Shem appeared in judgment upon man who was seeking to make a name in the earth. This intervention of God is in connection with the name of Peleg. The moral dealings of God are constantly seen in connection with the race of Shem, yet not with all his posterity, only with a chosen line. Joktan, Peleg's brother, has many sons to continue his line, but Peleg must wait for another occasion when his son shall appear in the renowned line that leads on to David. Besides this title to have his name recorded in this genealogy, it is associated with the judgment of God. The name of Peleg will be a continual reminder until the new heavens and the new earth of the judgment upon man through sin. Even the day of grace met the sin, and rose above the judgment in God's wise way, not by annulling the judgment, or obliterating the sin, but by giving power to the Apostles at the day of Pentecost to speak to men in their own tongues wherein they were born — to their amazement — thus proclaiming the grace of God amid the evidences of His judgment; yea, using the tokens of judgment as channels to proclaim His grace. Go where we may, the differences of tongues meet us, and proclaim God's rebuke of man's pride and ambition; and the unfinished Babel is a monument over the departed greatness — at least the potential greatness of man (Genesis 11:6). So with Shem are connected both the judgment and the grace of God, Who is the Lord God of Shem. Previously there was but one language. Now the history of nations begins, and men soon learnt to hate and fight. It is a solemn thought as we look round upon the many and diverse nations of the earth, that all these nationalities have their origin in sin and judgment. In the eternal state when the last trace of this moral ruin is effaced, the tabernacle of God will dwell not with nations but with men, nationalities will disappear. A fresh start is made (ver. 24) and the Holy Spirit goes back again to Shem and from him direct to Abram — the same is Abraham. No collateral branches are noticed. And here is another dividing. Not of the earth as in Peleg's day but a dividing or separating from among the nations of a people by God for Himself. Judgment did the former, grace works now. The consequences of the former are wars and hatred among the nations, which will cease in the time soon to come, when "He shall judge among many peoples and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not

lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Micah 4:3, Isaiah 2:4) But the dividing which began with Abram has eternal results. The Gentiles surrounded Abraham though he lived apart from them. Israel was enclosed in a vineyard and forbidden to mingle with Gentiles. The church is by grace separate from the world, though as to present circumstances in constant touch with it. But what will it be in heaven? no touch of evil there! And as between believers and the world we may perhaps say "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." Only grace is active in calling and saving. But this recommencement with Shem and going direct to Abram is one of the many indications that Christ — the Son of David — is the object of the Holy Spirit in this genealogy. Up to this point the chosen line has not been definitely distinguished from others. Now it is, and the call of Abram is given, the starting point of a new race in relationship with Jehovah-God, and all other nations outside.

Yet, not all his descendants are included in Abram's call. Outside the line of promise are many sons and they are noticed first. We see here a well defined and established principle in God's ways with man, first that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual. The family of Ishmael, and the children of Keturah are given. Then Abraham is named again, of whom is Isaac, and from him Esau and Israel. Not Jacob, the name given at his birth, but Israel, the name afterwards given when as prince he had power with God and with men, and had prevailed: the name points onward to the ultimate purpose of God. It was in his distress and fear that God gave him the name of "Israel," a pledge to him that in no subsequent trouble would God fail to deliver him. Esau the first-born had no such title from God. He was a prosperous man; kings and dukes sprang from him. His family are given, and the place where he acquired his power. He was a descendant of the man who was called out from his kindred and country, to be separate from all peoples and to receive the promises. Esau returns to the people that Abraham left. Neither the call nor the promise was for him. In his sons he rises to supreme power. This may be the reason why the sons of Seir are so abruptly brought in (see Genesis 14:6; Genesis 36:6-20, Deuteronomy 2:12-22.) Seir was a Horite that inhabited the land and as a chief may have given his name to Mount Seir. The Horim were dispossessed by the children of Esau. "By thy sword shalt thou live," said Isaac to his firstborn; and his became the dominant race. Yet soon the two races were blended in the persons of Eliphaz, son of Esau, and of Timna daughter of Seir: a union of one who could claim descent from Abraham with one of the race of Ham. What could the result of such a connection be but Amalek, the bitter and first enemy of Israel in the wilderness? And where now do we see the greatest hostility to such as would be faithful to the heavenly call? Among those who, despising their birthright — separation and its privileges, have allied themselves with the world.

III. 1890 162.

Amalek's hand as against the people of Jehovah is against the throne and kingdom of Jehovah. Therefore the LORD said "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Exodus 17:14). The last phase of the world's hatred and opposition to the kingdom of Christ (before it is established in peace and power, and His throne is the throne of Jehovah) will be when the Assyrian leads his hosts to Jerusalem. But his overthrow will be complete and eternal. Amalek is the first enemy that opposes the establishment of the kingdom after the Lord has visibly led out a people for it; the Assyrian is the last before the millennium; afterwards the final gathering of Gog and Magog, the host that comes against the camp or city of the saints but to be destroyed for ever, their remembrance utterly put out. Do not the words "from generation to generation" include all

who dare oppose Christ and His kingdom, thus stamping the name of "Amalek" upon all that is specially opposed to the kingdom of the Son of Man? Therefore the LORD hath sworn that He will have war with the generations of Amalek for ever. Balaam's prophecy concerning Amalek may contain the thought that the Amalek spirit will be seen in the latest attempt of Satan against the dominion of Christ. "Amalek was the first of the nations [not in power, but in active opposition after redemption was known, typically] but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever" (Numbers 24:20). If the "first of the nations" points to Satan's first attack against the people now visibly declared to be the people of God, and manifestly under His protection and guidance, may not the words "latter end" lead our thoughts to that future day when the last hostile gathering against the people of God, but gathered to meet their doom, shall be immediately followed by the casting of all enemies of Christ into the lake of fire? In both the past and the future (i.e. Israel in the wilderness, or the camp of the saints after the thousand years), it is the earthly people of God who are in view, not the church. But we see another thing; the Lord is gathering His people for Himself, and at the same time noting their enemies. To touch them is to touch Him. And if the people are written up for blessing, so surely are their enemies marked for judgment. The adversary may escape for a time, but his day is coming; "seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (2 Thessalonians 1:6). This may not be the highest motive to endurance during this present time, but it is one divinely given to those who with John are fellow-partakers "in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Seir rose to power in the earth (verse 43) even as Nimrod, and the Horim had their dukes. Esau joined himself to them, and after a time his descendants rose apparently to greater power, for kings are named among his posterity. Violence seems to have characterised them, for not one king is succeeded by his son. As one faction prevailed over the other, so from different cities arose different kings, till (as it would appear) the kingly authority was abridged, and they were followed by dukes. And in this change of form of authority, not unseen in our day, there is a characteristic element — we might say flaw — in human power, viz., its instability. Man is unable to retain supreme and sole power in himself, and though there may be the semblance of it (as in some European countries of the present time), yet are there secret springs and influences possessing a power which autocrats dare not disregard. At first the head may be gold, but authority becomes gradually diffused, decentralised (civilization, some say), and will until even the clay will not mingle with the iron, but dare to contend with it, and dispute its authority and power. The vox populi was never in accord with the vox Dei, and soon will be openly antagonistic. All popular commotions and combinations should be distrusted. Let Christians fear and beware. From the fact that no son succeeded his father, some think the Edomite monarchy was elective. But this supposes sufficient power in the hands of the people to choose their own ruler: — a democratic principle which we have no ground to suppose existed in those early days. Violence and lust of power were there, and bore fruit. The ambitious unscrupulous man will seek to sway the masses, and on them ride to power, but this is a different thing from an elective monarchy. What we do see in Esau's descendants, and what has characterised the world, is the contending of adverse factions for power, and where of course the strongest arm wins, God lets the world show itself, and its power, or rather lack of power, first. Then come His purpose and its firm foundation. For there were kings in Edom before any were found in Israel. The Edomite kings are gone, but God's King abideth for ever. This special mention of Edom is because of their great hatred of Israel, not the least implacable of all the nations round about them, (Numbers 20:14-21), which was seen long years

after when the Edomite rejoiced at the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Psalms 137:1-9 :). On this very account they are remembered for judgment (Obadiah 1:10).

There is no name in this first chapter so prominent or so connected with the purposes of God as that of Abraham, neither that of Adam nor of Noah, standing as these do in solitary grandeur, each in his day, as the heads of the human race. Abraham is the head of a peculiar race. Only three generations are given here, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (mark, not Jacob) in the direct and chosen line (verse 34). Ishmael and Esau have been already noticed (verse 28, etc.). They are dismissed (save to notice Esau's rise to power, and connection with the Horim) and the Holy Spirit returns to Abraham (34) as the true starting-point of the peculiar race. In these three names, 1: 100: the names themselves as given to these three men, the promise of God is intimately interwoven. It is Abram who is called out from his country and kindred. The name "Abraham" is given, the pledge that he should be the father of many nations, and a witness of the covenant "between Me and thee and thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:1-27 :). This covenant is repeated to Isaac (Genesis 26:1-35 :). In like manner the name "Israel" is bound up with the promise. God appeared to Jacob, and on two occasions changed his name to "Israel" (Genesis 32:28; Genesis 35:10). Surely this genealogy is no unmeaning list of names, but where we may read the promise and the ultimate purpose of God.

Turning to the history of these men in Genesis there is a marked difference in the way God speaks of them, a difference indicative of their walk as saints. For God speaks of "Abraham" by his new name after it was once given; but of Jacob for the most part as "Jacob" not as "Israel." Occasionally he is called Israel, and on each occasion to remind him that, notwithstanding his failures and crooked ways, God was mindful of him and faithful to His promise. Jacob trembles and fears on account of Esau. God appears, and trembling Jacob becomes Israel, a prevailing prince. Weeping Jacob sets a pillar over Rachel's grave, but as Israel pursues his journey. Jacob suffers from want of corn, but it is the sons of Israel who go into Egypt to buy. Jacob may need, but in the name of Israel lay God's pledge to supply all his need; and at the close of his life it is Israel that blesses the sons of Joseph and foretells that God will bring them all again into the land of their fathers. In all these instances and every other, the Holy Spirit tells us, not of Jacob doing his own will, but of Israel the object of God's care and the depositary of the promise. May we pause to enquire why no new name is given to Isaac, as was to Isaac's father and to Isaac's son? Abraham was a faithful pilgrim on the earth, and Jacob for the greater portion of his life a failing pilgrim. But as pilgrims both had new names. Historically Isaac was a pilgrim even as they. But a higher truth was to be taught the church of God by means of Isaac. Typically Isaac is a child of resurrection; and teaches us what our place is as risen with Christ, and in Him seated in the heavenlies. No need of a new name there. But as pilgrims and children of God down here on the earth we have a new name given to each of us, that we might know how God sets a mark upon us and distinguishes us from the world, and that we may not forget that we belong to another country, even the heavenly. (Hebrews 11:13-16).

1 Chronicles 2:1-55. — Esau with his kings and dukes are outside the chosen line. God's people are now in view. Not all Abraham's sons, not all Isaac's sons, but of Israel's, not one excepted. The offshoots of the elect stem Abraham, Isaac, Israel are lost in the common herd of Gentiles. Nay, even the people themselves are scarcely noticed till the KING is seen: hence the rapid run from Judah the son of Israel to David (verses 3-15). The king is presented with just enough of his

line of descent to show that he is of the tribe of Judah, and he is presented in the person of David, who was chosen of God to be a type of the kingly power of Jesus the Messiah, hence for this reason, called a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22). The ancestry of David, is the human ancestry of our Lord Jesus. Of the twelve sons of Israel, Judah takes the first place, not now to tell us of Judah, but of Him who sprang from Judah, the KING first, afterwards the children of the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit hastens to present Him Who is and was ever the Object before God.

Only a list of names from Judah to David! But can we find in the whole book of God a similar space as brief as this which contains so much of grace and of God's unchangeableness in purpose on the one side, and of the vileness of man's nature on the other? For the names here given are inseparably connected with both. The crucifixion of the Lord goes infinitely beyond all in declaring the grace of God and the wickedness of man; but what do we find in this list? Names renowned in the world and honoured among men? nay, but associated with the worst corruption and with disobedience to God and dishonour to His name. Like Judah himself married to a Canaanitess, take Er, Tamar, Pharez, what vileness and shame! There is a Hezron and a Boaz, and with them greatness and piety, but there is also an Achar [Achan] who is prominently marked as "the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed."

Yet what line of the world's most glorious pedigree can he compared to this of divine choice? Their names are linked with God's purposes of glory. Ennobled by a connection with Him Whose Name alone will be exalted in the earth when the world's nobility and glory shall be forgotten, a thing of the past. But now, before the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, if we turn to Genesis 38:1-30 : we see what Judah is, as he, the head of the tribe, there appears. Would not this dark but brief glimpse of Judah's domestic life have been suppressed if a good estimation of his character by man had been a necessary quality of the tribe, or at least of the head of it, from which the Lord was to come? Even the world would now cry shame upon such a man. But the Lord casts contempt upon the estimation of man. Of no other son of Israel have we such a picture; and there is no reason to suppose Judah worse than his brethren. But the light is let in on his private life that time grace of our Lord Jesus Christ when He humbled Himself to become a man might be more manifest. He chose this tribe of Judah, which is continued not through the honourable tie of marriage but through sin. Look at Pharez, the next link in the chain — a child of incest — the stream was polluted at its source. What honourable man of the world would boast of ancestry like this, with the bar sinister across his escutcheon? The heroes of paganism pretend descent from their gods. All fable and imagination, you say. Most true. But they did imagine even a celestial origin: not one would admit that he sprang from the despised and the ignoble. The semi-civilised aborigines of Mexico claimed for their chiefs descent from the sun and moon, the objects of their worship. The Brahmins claim Brahma — a sort of demi-god — as their ancestor; the Chinese boast of a quasi-celestial origin.

Nearer home we find those who having no honour of their own acquiring, claim it by inheritance. But this phase of pride so natural to man has its corrective (!) in the amazing discovery made by the wisdom of the nineteenth century that neither from the sun nor from the gods are we descended, but from an ape! And have we to choose between gods, or monkeys? Naturally one would prefer a descent from the gods and heroes of antiquity than from the grinning be-tailed ape. But such is this world's wisdom, either among the stars according to ancient fables, or from

monkeys according to modern absurdities (and what did monkeys spring from?) Pride is the common source of both the ancient and the modern fable. The modern boasts of profounder wisdom which sweeps away the trash of ancient fable — a small matter — and denies the truth of God, but cannot sweep this away. The ancient fable is simply the pride of birth; the same criterion by which men estimate the value of race-horses and other cattle.

What did the Lord inherit from His human ancestry? But this is the glory of the Lord Jesus. He humbled Himself, made Himself of no reputation, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. In the likeness of the earth's most honourable would still have been sinful flesh, in the likeness of it. But He came in the line of Judah and Pharez, a tainted line even in the eyes of the world. What ineffable grace! Could the Son go lower? Was there a more degraded family to choose than that of Judah? And Judah is chosen! Truly He humbled Himself, and grace shines from the beginning.

IV. 1890 177. With what care and precision the sons of Jesse are given, named and numbered in their order: evidently to tell us that David is the seventh. He alone fills the mind of the inspired writer. The six are numbered only that David might appear the seventh, for with that is bound up the purpose of God; so that "David the seventh" has a meaning far beyond the mere numerical order that he was the seventh; and indeed, as a fact, David was the eighth son, not the seventh. Before God he was both; but in His book God is giving us His thoughts, and not here enumerating natural events.

Turn to 1 Samuel 16:10, et seqq. "Again Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither." And this one, unthought of and, in a manner, cast out from the family — for whom Samuel must pointedly ask when all the others were present — this lad keeping the sheep must be sent for, and lo! the neglected one is the chosen one. "And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he." Not one of the previous seven are chosen: the youngest therefore must have been the eighth. Again we read (1 Samuel 17:12) "And he had eight sons."

If, then, the seven are refused and the eighth chosen according to Samuel, why here in Chronicles is he numbered the seventh? Some have supposed that one of Jesse's sons died, and therefore David would be the seventh. Is this supposition satisfactory? Be that as it may, is there not a truth intimated in Samuel which is not necessary for the Holy Spirit's purpose in giving us the books of Chronicles? We know that "eight" is right in Samuel, and "seventh" in Chronicles: as divine in one as in the other; and each in perfect accord with the truth God is there communicating. The numbers seven and eight have a symbolic significance in Scripture as well as a natural. Seven is clearly connected with rest in creation, and eight with rest in resurrection power and glory. David, being in Samuel the eighth, points to the true David who will restore all, and reign over Israel Himself as the risen Man. For rest in creation was impossible after sin came in. Eight signifies the intervention of God in grace when all is lost; so the coming kingdom, though it is for the earth, must have a link with resurrection, that it may be stable. That connecting link is the glorious risen Man as 1 King. Man — Israel — could never have entered into the kingdom but for that grace, nor could the earth ever know its blessedness. The glory and the dominion will be centred in the risen Man, the eighth. And is not the inspired account in Samuel in perfect accord with the symbolic

significance of "eight?" Was it not as a resurrection from the dead when David, who for a little time was lost to Israel, hidden in the court of Achish, came into the scene of Israel's ruin? when Israel was crushed upon the mountains of Gilboa, and the Philistines triumphant? For the Israelites "forsook the cities . . . and the Philistines came and dwelt in them" (1 Samuel 31:7). Was he not as one risen from the dead, and, as it were, in resurrection power, leading Israel from Gilboa, the scene of ruin and death, to the possession of Mount Sion? And apart from the symbolic character of these events, they are in themselves truly wonderful. Where in the world's history is the parallel of this so rapid rise from slavery and ruin to power and glory? And if unparalleled, is it not to convey to our minds a brief picture of a greater David who will triumph more completely over a greater enemy, and in a still more glorious fashion will redeem Israel out of all his troubles, and a nation shall be born in a day? The son of Jesse is but the type — marvellously fitted, with circumstances controlled, that the picture might be as near the future display as was consistent with God's government at the time — David was but the type of Christ, Who, as the risen Man, is the "eighth." But He is also God's rest in creation. And here, in connection with the earth and God's earthly people, Christ is the "seventh." He is the Creator, and "God rested on the seventh day." Chronicles does not give the wondrous quasi-resurrection power found in Samuel. David appears abruptly on the scene on the death of Saul, and the tribes gather to make him king; it is simply the earthly kingdom, and its establishment among men. And wonderful as this picture is, how immeasurably below the reality when the Lord shall reign in glory! What is the power of David or the splendour of Solomon compared with the millennial glory of Christ? How could it be otherwise, seeing that the honoured types are only poor failing men? "Arise, O LORD, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength." "For the Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (Psalms 132:8; Psalms 132:13-14). David, the type of God's rest in His Son when He sits upon His earthly throne, is here numbered the seventh. It is God's rest in the renewed earth. But even this would not be but by One Who had passed through death, so that this seventh-day rest can only be by Christ in quality of Risen Man. How wondrously the "seventh" and the "eighth" are combined in the Person of Christ!

Satan, whose most subtle and destructive power is seen in his imitation of divine counsels, will soon bring in his man . . . the blasphemous parody of the purpose of God — and his man will be eighth, yet of the seven. "And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth and is of the seven and goeth into perdition" (Rev. xvii). Satan's power in the world is a solemn fact even now, and will be greater then when He that letteth is gone out of the way. Now God has put bounds which the devil cannot pass, but the limit is far beyond the conception of mere man. There are some who ignore altogether the personality of the devil. But this denial of his personality is a proof of his power; he hides himself behind the proud ignorance of men (which they think wisdom) and thus blinds them, that he may the more easily ensnare and ruin them. "Devil," they say, is a mythical and poetical personification of evil. As a necessary corollary the gospel is hid from them. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not," etc. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The mind of the unbeliever is blinded to what is plain to a believer. To hide, pervert, and deny the truth has been the aim of Satan from Eden downwards to the Jew that crucified the Lord of glory Whose words and works bore testimony that He was the Son of God, and that He was come to destroy the works of the devil. How could the Sadducees believe that He was manifested for this purpose when they did

not believe in angel or spirit (Acts 23:8)? To the Sadducees of the present day, as to those of old, Satan is only a fable; but to God and the believer he is a reality, a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, a wolf that scatters (but cannot devour) the sheep of God. And if we ask why such power is permitted to him, the answer is, It is for the glory of Christ, that after Satan has done his utmost, Christ may he and must be displayed to the whole universe as the Conqueror of Satan's extremest power. He Who is now acting in grace, and giving eternal life to as many as the Father gives Him, will soon appear in judgment. Satan will raise up a man the direct and personal antagonist of the Lord Jesus - even the "Antichrist but both he and his abettor, in whom is the power of this blinded world, will the Lord cast alive into the pit. The destruction of the enemy, as well as the salvation of believers, proclaim His glory and His power. From Judah to David there is only a succession of names without any distinguishing mark with the exception of three, and two of these are prominent through their sin. Er, whom the Lord slew, Achar, the troubler of Israel, and Nahshon, the prince of the children of Judah. Having brought the line down to David, the Holy Spirit, as it were, pauses and notes the sons of Hezron (Esrom, Matthew 1:1-25 :) other than Ram (Aram, Matthew 1:1-25 :), 1:e. to Jerahmeel, and to Chelubai, the same is called Caleb (see vers. 9 and 18). The honoured line passed through Ram, but his natural connections have a place in the archives of Judah. Doubtless every one named was prominent for some quality or excellence, or for some special blessing conferred which would confer still greater eminence. Hur is the son of Caleb. This is the Hur that with Aaron held up the hands of Moses when Israel fought and overcame Amalek, and was associated with Aaron in the care of the people when Moses went up the mount (Exodus 17:12). Bezaleel, grandson of Hur, was named of God and endowed with wisdom for a very special purpose, taught to make all the furniture for the tabernacle (Ex. xxxi). This gave greater eminence than all the riches of Jain, who had twenty-three cities, and took sixty more. But even Segub is named, though only half-brother to Ram. Is it not because of his connection with the ancestry of David, with that line which was always so choice with God that even the least affinity with it entitles to a place in these genealogies? Were not these named ones counted among God's elect ones? Would they be mentioned at all if among those who fell in the wilderness through unbelief? Unless such as Achar, whose sin brought such momentous consequences upon Israel, all whose names appear here, are among the worthies of that people. This special mention of Hezron's family and descendants is not a mere genealogical list from Judah to David where the evil take their place in successional order with the good; but these are men of renown, and while the book of God is read, their names will stand forth as of those whom God would honour.

V. 1891 198. Of the family of Jerahmeel there is little but the names. The Ram here (1 Chronicles 2:25) is nephew to the Ram, son of Hezron, and brother to Jerahmeel (1 Chronicles 2:9). But there is in this branch of Hezron's descendants one man most prominent on account of what he was and what he became through the favour of God, and in so sovereign a manner that, while Israel is under law, a Gentile is honoured and prominent in Israel. Sheshan had no sons but daughters. Would not his name and family soon be lost among the thousands of Judah? Nay; for his daughter, though given to his Egyptian servant, stands at the head of thirteen generations (1 Chronicles 2:35-41). When Israel came out of Egypt, a mixed multitude was with them, who became the means of temptation and led them to murmur (Numbers 11:4). But one of the Egyptians that followed Israel had learned to bow to Jehovah, and had found it for his honour to be a servant in the house of Sheshan. He is raised afterwards to be a son in the house of his

bondage. Thus a Gentile slave is brought into the commonwealth of Israel, and has inheritance among them, and is in touch not very remote with the family of David. Is this a specimen of that grace which will come upon the Gentile, even upon Egypt, when the Son of David reigns over the whole earth? For here it is not, as of old, Egypt oppressing Israel, but Israel admitting Egypt to partake of his blessing. The day is coming when the Egyptian and the Assyrian shall serve, and Israel be a blessing in the midst of the land (Isaiah 19:24). The Gentile shall serve Israel, and Israel shall bless the Gentile.

How sovereign the grace which will not overlook the outcast Gentile! The Gentile element is found in the direct line of David's ancestry, for Boaz is the son of Rahab and the husband of Ruth. But the collateral line has its Jatha. And how irrespective of persons, the low and vile, and the high and noble! Gentiles are interwoven with the two tribes, the most prominent as being leaders in the house of Israel: Joseph, through Ephraim, ruling in virtue of the birthright, and Judah, of whom is the true David; Egypt's noble daughter, Asenath, with Joseph; the ignoble Tamar, with Judah; lower down the line, Rahab, of the doomed city; and Ruth, a Moabitess. Here too in a collateral line to that of Ram, an Egyptian slave is found. God would not be limited to Israel when it was a question of showing grace; He was as to law, but even under the old covenant, which was special to Israel, He chooses from among the Gentiles whom He will bless. Now that the work of the cross is done, how much more is the illimitable character of grace — God's grace — proclaimed. From Ephesians we know how it brings poor outcasts now into — not the commonwealth of Israel, but more — the enjoyment and possession of highest privilege, far beyond that of the favoured Israelite. Once we were aliens to the commonwealth, but now we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and — what Israel was never called, and never was as a nation — we are of the household of God. In 1 Chronicles 3:1-24 we return to 1 Chronicles 2:15 and David's sons and successors are given down to Josiah in regular succession from father to son. It was God's order, and was maintained even when the father was slain by conspirators. So that the interruption of this orderly succession would be strong evidence that God had cast off the nation. And as a fact that order was broken in upon after the death of Josiah, and the wrath began to be poured out as it had not been before. And God no sooner ceases to appoint to the throne than Satan steps in, and by his emissaries, the kings of Egypt and of Babylon, sets up men on the throne whom God rejected and gave up to judgment. Jehoahaz succeeded Josiah in the established order; but, not being confirmed on the throne by God, his reign only lasted for three months. The king of Egypt puts him down and carries him to Egypt, and sets Eliakim (Jehoiakim) on the throne. These were the immediate consequences of Josiah's rashness and folly in going to fight against Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt. God had given victory to Israel over larger armies than that which defeated Josiah. But this was pre-determined, and the Judge was at the door. See how God makes all to bow to His will. If Judah bows to the king of Egypt, then must both Egypt and Judah bow to the king of Babylon, for that is the place where their period of captivity is to be endured, and we can see now, the only suited place, for God was going to give rule and dominion to Nebuchadnezzar, and the people who had rebelled against God, as their king, would have to feel as captives the power of the world. For eleven years Jehoiakim — Egypt's nominee — reigns. The king of Babylon appears and takes Jehoiakim to Babylon, and places a child of eight years on the throne. And after three years and ten days he also is carried to Babylon, being still a child. Zedekiah the third son of Josiah and uncle to the child-king taken to Babylon is made king. How like making a football of that throne which Jehovah claims as His own. We know Zedekiah's

rebellion and end; with him the semblance of the kingdom of Judah ceased, and Jerusalem was destroyed. Yet wonderfully is the royal line of David preserved. Satan was allowed by his instruments — yea the instruments of God's wrath — the king of Egypt and the king of Babylon, to set aside God's order.

Here (1 Chronicles 3:1-24) we appear to have all the sons of Josiah; 2 Kings 23:1-37 : and 2 Chronicles 36:1-23 : give the names of those that were made kings. But Matthew gives the right line from Josiah, omitting collaterals, down to Joseph the husband of Mary. "And the sons of Josiah were the first born Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum" (Ver. 15). Not the first-born who died in Egypt (2 Kings 23:34) but the second carries on the line, and he is carried to Babylon, and his son Jeconiah who was born previous to the carrying away. This grandson of Josiah is the one that the Spirit of God singles out of all Josiah's sons and grandsons to maintain the true genealogy from David to Messiah. All the rest are, we may say, lumped together by Matthew. "And Josias begat Jechonias [Jeconiah] and his brethren about the time they were carried away to Babylon." (Matthew 1:1-25 :)

[*J. A. kindly points out the misconception in p.199, cols. 1 and 2, that Jehoiakim was taken to Babylon. This was Nebuchadnezzar's purpose (2 Chronicles 36:6), but changed probably by the king's submission. He died in shame at Jerusalem, as Jeremiah predicted. Jehoiachin also reigned three months, not years.]

Then after that, while in Babylon, Salathiel is born. Whatever changes in name may be as regards the others, there is nothing surprising in it, for the king of Babylon might as a matter of policy change their Hebrew names to Babylonish, even as he did in the case of Daniel and his three companions. He would, not unnaturally, seek to efface from their minds all remembrance of what they were, and all thought of their country, and of God's temple; and if so, equally an attempt on Satan's part to swamp God's line of kings in the common mass of Gentile names. God, who holds all in His hand, may have led the writer of the Chronicles and Matthew to give, the one their own names as Jews, the other the names as they were known among the heathen. Yet in that confusion when driven as captives to Babylon, the Spirit of God connects the last real king of Judah — Josiah — with his descendant born in Babylon. So Matthew has Josias, Jechonias Salathiel, (the dark time of Josiah's sons is abridged): compare 1 Chronicles 3:15-17 with Matthew 1:11-12. It is enough for the true believer to know that both Chronicles and the Gospel are inspired. Scripture is inspired by God, the foolish criticisms of learned infidels notwithstanding. The genealogy in Chronicles terminates of course with the return from Babylon. In Matthew the promised Seed appears, the last of the line. He will have no successor, for He lives for ever. And though the outward link between Jehovah and the throne of Judah — of Israel — is broken, and man appears to control the destinies of that land, the due time is coming when the Son of David will assert His rights to the throne and kingdom. The kings of the earth will resist his claim, as they have: Jehovah has them in derision. But what a principle of exceeding grace it is that made all Israel's blessing to hang upon the king! Most were bad, and chastisement fell on the nation. Some were good, none perfect, and prosperity followed. When He comes of Whom the prophet says, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins" (Isaiah 11:5, Isaiah 32:1), who can compute the blessedness of all Israel, when the Perfect MAN sits on His Throne? yea, who can tell the joy of the whole earth when God says of Him that He reigns in righteousness? When Matthew wrote his Gospel, the throne was occupied by an enemy. The

might and prowess of a David was a thing of the long past, the splendour of Solomon too was all gone, and the true Heir of their power and glory (yea, of much more) was in appearance a poor carpenter, the reputed son of a carpenter. But the crown is His; the royal title is, through Joseph, legally vested in Jesus the Son of Mary, and in Him it remains: and soon He will take the kingdom which is His both humanly and divinely. "For thine," O Lord, "is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Amen."

1891 213 The main object of the Chronicles is now accomplished. The King is revealed, typically by David, who is brought to the throne by the same power which will ere long make the enemies of Christ to be His footstool (Psalms 110:1-7 :); thus David becomes the pledge of the fulfilment of the promises of God to Israel.

Now that the purposes of God concerning His King are made known, the children of the kingdom are named through the heads and chiefs of families. The tribes are given in the appointed order, first, the royal tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 4:1-43). Judah was mentioned before in 1 Chronicles 2:1-55, because David is of that tribe: not the families of Judah, but David's genealogy is the point there. Here in chap. 4 it is the tribe that comes first, having the pre-eminence as being the royal tribe, next in importance to the royal family of David. Most of the great and honourable names of that tribe are in connection. with his family.

There is honourable mention made of one man for his piety. Jabez is named, not because he had possessions, but in that he prayed. "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested" (iv. 9, etc.) His prayer was in keeping with God.* promises and Israel's relationships. This is the character of acceptable prayer, and the action of true faith which rests and builds upon the revealed word of God. Earthly prosperity was the unerring mark of God's favour to an Israelite. So witnessed the Psalmist. "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25). It is not so now. The Lord Jesus Himself was here as a poor and dependent man. He had no possessions in this world. Certain women ministered to Him of their substance (Luke 8:2-3). And the word for us who now believe is, "having food and raiment, let us be content therewith" (1 Timothy 6:8). The Christian's thought, even when having possessions here, if true to his heavenly calling, is, that he is only a pilgrim, a sojourner here below, and looks not at earthly possessions great or small. There are earthly wants to be supplied, and our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things (Matthew 6:22). The foundation of faith is the same now as then — the word of God. If the word promised every earthly good, contingent upon their obedience, the same word gives us the assurance of heavenly blessing through Him Who has secured them by His death. The pathway to glory may be through poverty, reproach, and much tribulation; but the heavenly inheritance, reserved in heaven for us, is beyond the reach of thieves, or the touch of moth and rust.

"Jabez was more honourable than his brethren." Is this an intimation that his brethren had forgotten that God was the Giver of their good things? Here they are not said to pray, and they have no such answer. God grants him (Jabez) that which he requested. Among that rebellious and stiff-necked people there were men of faith, and Jabez was one.

Hezron and his children were given in 1 Chronicles 2:1-55 : because David was of that line. In this chapter (1 Chronicles 4:1-43) we seem to have the descendants of Zerah. "These are the families of the Zerathites." But whether children of Zerah or Pharez, they are of Judah. And besides Jabez we have Caleb, a well-known name, the son of Jephunneh, the son of Kenaz, if we may so conclude from Numbers 32:12. "Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite." He was the companion of Joshua in faithfulness, and they were the only two who left Egypt and reached the promised land. All others who entered Canaan were born in the wilderness. Then comes Shelah (ver. 21). So the three branches from Judah, Pharez, Zerah, and Shelah, have a place here. But though Shelah was the eldest (Er and Onan being slain in judgment), there is no name of note among them such as Jabez and Caleb; they are workers in fine linen, as others were craftsmen (ver. 14). There were princes among them "who had dominion in Moab," perhaps those who were appointed to gather gifts (tribute) from Moab (xviii. 2). But "these are ancient [past] things." Let us remember that this genealogy was written after the return from Babylon. What honour they had was lost through their sin, and "These were the potters and those that dwelt among plants and hedges, there they dwelt with the king for his work" (ver. 23). These descendants of princes seem to be gardeners to the king of Babylon. The sons of Simeon" (ver. 24). Why is this tribe in such close communication with Judah, coming before Reuben and Levi who for different reasons (Reuben losing the birthright, Levi gaining the temple service) are both prominent after Judah? The reason is found in Joshua 19:1, "their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah;" and turning to Genesis 49:6-7, both Levi and Simeon were to be scattered in Israel. Truly Levi was scattered, but how honourably and blessedly! appointed to maintain the worship of Jehovah; no care nor anxiety but that which pertained to the worship of God. Simeon was small in Israel. "Neither did all their family multiply like to the children of Judah." Notwithstanding, those mentioned by name were princes, and the house of their fathers prospered (ver. 38). Five hundred of them smote the remnant of the Amalekites that had escaped and dwelt in their cities. This down even to Hezekiah's day. But the word of Jacob at the close of his life was prophetic of the future of each tribe. Simeon and Levi were sons of Leah, and were bound together in the wickedness which caused Jacob to say, "cursed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."(Genesis 49:1-33 :) Simeon was the elder, and, may be, compelled Levi to share in his cruelty. They were scattered in Israel. But how wondrously and graciously fulfilled in Levi! His scattering was his exaltation. Simeon on the other hand dwindles down to little more than one-third of his number (compare Numbers 1:23, Numbers 2:13, Numbers 26:14). Zimri, a prince in that tribe, was a ringleader in the iniquity of Poor. The plague that followed slew twenty-four thousand of them and made a terrible breach in that tribe. After the plague, the Lord bids Moses and Eleazar to "take the sum of the congregation;" and Simeon is found to be twenty-two thousand, instead of fifty-nine thousand as at the beginning.

1 Chronicles 5:1-26.

1891 230 "Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel." (1 Chronicles 5:1-26 :) As such he had a prominent place. For the firstborn, or he who stands in that place, takes precedence of the whole family, and through him the principal ancestral line is ordinarily traced. But Reuben is set aside, and the natural prominence of the birthright only sank him the lower when he lost it. When did the natural order ever maintain itself according to the righteous government of God? For so it is that the order of nature is not God's order, and nothing can meet the aberrance of nature but the

sovereign mercy of God. And so it ever was since man fell. This mercy is seen in God's governmental ways; how much more in His ways of grace where as a fundamental principle, it is first "that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual"! God gave the birthright to Joseph. Yet even here, showing the sovereignty of grace, the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. Whose genealogy? Who so glorious, so exalted, as to set aside the honoured line of him that had the birthright from God, and to choose another? Thus seemingly contempt is poured upon the things that men value, but, really, carrying out His own purpose.

It is the genealogy of the Chief Ruler. In the wisdom of God the birthright and the chief rule are for a brief space separated. And necessarily so for the purposes of redemption. The birthright was Christ's when He came into the world, it belongs to Him personally. But if He had assumed the chief rule then, which then could only have been in judgment — if the Lord Jesus had taken the supremacy then, which is His officially, where would be the cross? where the glory of God, the highest glory, the glory of His grace? where redemption? He came at the first to be cut off and have nothing, and withal to be hated and rejected by His own, and not to take the kingdom; for when the people would have taken and carnally have made Him king, He departed from them. There was a prior, if not a deeper, question ere He could appear as Chief Ruler according to the counsels of God. It required a distinct type, such as Joseph is, to set forth the truth that the Chief Ruler, Whose was the birthright, should appear as One Whose birthright was denied. To three chosen witnesses He gave a glimpse of His own personal glory as the Only Begotten; and they have borne testimony, "and we beheld His glory, glory as of an Only-Begotten with Father" (John 1:14). But He the First Born, possessing every right in heaven and on earth, veiled His glory, for the fulfilling of the counsels of grace, and was cast out, rejected by His own people, as Joseph by his brethren.

These are the purposings of God's love and are shadowed forth from the beginning. This infinite love shines bright in the eternal counsels of God before the beginning when the Eternal Son said, "Lo I come to do Thy will, O God". And since sin came in, God in all His dealings and ways of old declares how great is His love, and how it could be righteously manifested to sinners.

Sacrifice and blood-shedding from the earliest time and all that was commanded under the law point to and have a link with the cross, without which nothing was possible for man but everlasting perdition. So necessary was the cross for the unlimited preaching of God's love to the world that even Jesus the Lord whose heart was overflowing with infinite and divine love — even He said before He suffered, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" (Luke 12:50) — till the righteous foundation be laid.

Joseph as the ruler of Egypt is typical of the future rule and reign of Christ: how faint the type when compared with the glories revealed for the future! The power and might of the Chief Ruler and Conqueror was foretold in the same word that announced His sufferings; in Eden the Lord God said to the serpent, the great enemy, "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel"; and before the hour of suffering came what instances of divine almighty power were seen! The triumph at the Red Sea, the victories of Joshua, of David; and the glory of Solomon, crowning all the previous triumphs and victories, present a vivid though brief picture of the future reign and dominion of the Chief Ruler, and how the serpent's head will be bruised. But the final victory, thus assured and pledged by all these, must come after the suffering. The bruising of the heel of the

Seed comes before the crushing of the Serpent's head. The cross is before the crown; the throne is set up in the shadow of the cross, and the glories of each shine out all the more. Yea, they cannot be separated, together so blended that they are one glory; even as the cherubim upon the mercy-seat gazing upon the blood-besprinkled cover were with it beaten out of the same piece of gold (Exodus 37:7). The truth is that all in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation have for their object the sufferings and glories of Christ, the rejected One but yet the Chief Ruler. And all these pictures and types are only shadows, not the very image of that divine and fullest love which had its most perfect expression in the cross, and in the glories that must follow. For all these taken separately could but faintly declare the grace and love (yea and the righteousness), which are now blended together and centred in the person of Christ, the crucified One. We can trace their then shadowy, but now well defined, outlines in the bright light of accomplished redemption, in the cross, the staple truth of the N. T., and of the O. T. also; and with clearer eye behold the coming glory. The first mention of birthright is in connection with one that despised it; and to his contempt for it the apostle alludes as a warning to believers "lest any man fail of the grace of God," etc., etc. (Hebrews 12:15-16). For all in the church of God are first-born ones, and the privileges of our birthright are inalienable, though we may if worldly minded here lose the joy, even the knowledge of them. Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage is called profane; it is as if a Christian would barter his heavenly position and character for some fancied earthly good, for present ease in this world, or to escape the reproach of Christ. Our privileges are for the present time joined with the reproach of the world; for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

"Birthright" was one of God's landmarks for the support and maintenance of due authority and order amongst men. But the radical spirit of the present age is labouring to set this aside, as well as all else that God has given for government in this world. Esau despised and sold it. Reuben lost it. Jacob obtained it by taking advantage of Esau's necessities; but though he had given all the treasures of the world for it, something more was needed than buying it. That purchase was an empty form and of no value (did Esau know this?). Isaac was the depository of the birthright, not to do with it as he pleased, but according to God's will. All our gifts are deposits from God only to be held and used according to His will. By mean trickery and lying Jacob deceived his father, for he said "I am Esau thy firstborn". Isaac was not deceived as to God's word; he knew that the elder was to serve the younger; but his will blinded him as to the personality of Jacob, though not without misgiving. There is no more striking instance than this of the over-ruling hand of God: man's will seemingly successful, but God accomplishing His. To Joseph the birthright is a gift immediate from God, with no unrighteous attempt to obtain it. In dreams it was foreshadowed to him though he knew not their significance, and with a lad's wonder related them to his father and brethren. Jacob, whose experience (for he had had his dream at Bethel) saw deeper into the meaning of Joseph's dreams; yet like Isaac not obedient in heart, forgetting perhaps his own case, he, astonished, rebuked the lad but could not help pondering on them. His brethren, too, surmised the meaning and hated him. They resented the idea of Joseph being their chief. The birthright should not be his if they could prevent it; so they sold him as a slave into Egypt. It was there that the privileges and authority of the birthright were seen in him. The means they took to prevent were God's means to accomplish. Their sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to his sheaf (Genesis 42:6, etc.). Yet another dream foretells a wider sphere of dominion, for "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars" bowed to him. So it will be in the coming day. Joseph takes

rank in the family as firstborn, though not naturally so. And our Joseph is not the first man but the Second, not the first Adam but the Last. Yet is He the Firstborn, and when He appears, Israel as the sheaves of corn, the first-fruits of the earth, will make obeisance to Him.

Jacob's view of the prophetic dream seems limited to his own family. When he heard the sun and moon and eleven stars paid homage to Joseph, he said, "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee on the earth"? The sun and the moon were, to Jacob, father and mother. But this dream goes far beyond Jacob's family, or the nation of Israel. In that bright day, Israel as the first of the nations on the earth will be to the subject Gentiles, whose honour it will be to serve the Israelites — Israel will be to them as the sun and moon and stars, the sources of power and authority. For Christ will rule from Zion, and Israel the chosen nation shall be princes in the earth, the channels of its millennial blessings.

Joseph was in actual possession of the honours of birthright when his brethren bowed to him, and when he superintended his father's burial. But his glory and honour extended beyond this, for Pharaoh commanded the Egyptians to bow the knee before him. "Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only on the throne will I be greater than thou" (Genesis 41:40).

What wondrous truths are wrapped up in Joseph's dreams! For their fulfilment in his own person is but the type of a still more wonderful but blessed fulfilment in Him in Whom all the honours and glories of birthright and chief rule will be united. It was the will of God then to give the birthright to Joseph and the royalty to Judah. Therefore we read, "Judah prevailed above his brethren and of him came the chief ruler". For a brief space both are seen in Joseph.

"Judah prevailed." What a gracious way of declaring God's pre-determined purpose! Historically, in what did Judah prevail so as to obtain this honour? He was one with his brethren in their hatred of Joseph. If he shrank from shedding his brother's blood, it was he who suggested his sale to the slave-dealing Midianites after Reuben had interposed to save his life. As to plotting against his birthright, they were all equally guilty, with perhaps the exception of Reuben who well knew the birth-right was lost for him, and therefore would not consent to Joseph's death. Judah's prevailing is simply the will of God. Hence he prevailed, not by his goodness. The Holy Spirit has given a sketch from his domestic, or private, life; and his character and sin are plainly told. (Genesis 38:1-30 :) No other of Jacob's sons is so brought out into the light. Moreover, from his evil connection sprang Pharez through whom the genealogy is traced.

Between Joseph's dreams and their fulfilment there was a period of suffering; cast out, hated by his brethren, sold as a slave to Gentiles, yet ruling over them before his brethren bow to him. There passes before our hearts One greater than Joseph; Who endured greater hatred from His own, and was by them delivered to Gentiles to be crucified; Who now is bowed to and worshipped by the called out Gentile (Acts 15:14), while the Jew is yet in the land of famine.

1891 246 Jacob did not know the glories of Him Who was hidden under the symbols of Joseph and his dreams. He did not know that they pointed to One Who will not only be the First-born and Chief Ruler with regard to Israel, but also of all creation, One to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess. Whatever of authority there be on earth — sun, moon, stars, symbols of rule here below — must pay homage to the Supreme, the Chief Ruler, when He appears. Yea, as

if earthly sphere were too limited for the extent of His dominion and the display of His glory, God saith, "Let all the angels of God worship Him". All things in heaven, on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers, must pay homage to God's great First-born.

Yet is there a birthright even higher than this, this which gives title to reign over all things above and below, the works of His hands. As First-born of creation He is necessarily "Chief Ruler", and such the Lord Jesus was as soon as born in this world; but He was much more. Of that Child the prophet Isaiah (ix. 6) gives the glorious names, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Though to human eyes He only appeared as a helpless babe which would have fallen if His mother had not held Him, yet at that very time, apparently an unconscious babe, He was in communion with God. "Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts" (Psalms 22:1-31 :). And why wonder, why deny the divine Person of the Lord, whether presented to us in holy writ as the Babe in the manger, or as the wearied Man sitting on a well? Let us remember, as our heads are bowed before Him, that He is the Word that was God, and did not cease to be God when He became flesh. Were we humble in His presence, and bowed to the word which says, No man knoweth the Son but the Father, there would not be such unholy, not to say blasphemous questionings and assertions about Eternal Life. He was that all through, from His birth to His death, and could not be otherwise; for He was the Word, the eternal Word; in Him was life, 1: e. the source of life, and that He might give eternal life to whomsoever came to Him, became flesh, died, and rose again. And John, who gives this wondrous fact at the beginning of his Gospel, closes his Epistle with the words, pointing (not to a "sphere," but) to the Son, Jesus Christ, "This is the true God and Eternal Life". He was and is the Eternal Son, and therefore personally the Eternal Life. To return to the genealogy, He is presented as the Chief Ruler of the tribes of Israel. This was but a light thing in comparison with all the glories enwrapped in the title "Chief Ruler". Though the title was His as born in this world, yet there was but one pathway to enter into the glory. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke 24:26). He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9). Death was the path to these glories, but only the pathway, for He could not be holden of it. And now as the risen Man He takes His place as the Chief Ruler over all things. But another name He has won, which crowns many other names and glories, He is the First-born from the dead. His name as the First-born of creation is merged — not lost — in that of being the First-born from the dead. And as such, the risen exalted Man, God gave Him to be Head to the church, a place more precious to Him than the throne of Israel, or of the world. Not as incarnate is He given to the church, but as the risen glorified Man, seated on the throne of God. How exalted is the church in her Head! Without death and resurrection there could be no church. Even for the stability of earthly blessing there was no other way. But the glories are distinct. As Chief Ruler His human ancestry is given, and as the Son of David on the throne of Israel praise is waiting for Him in Zion (Psalms 65:1-13 :). It is the praise of millennial saints, who will worship Him in the full blaze of His official glory, when He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Herein is one distinction between millennial worship and that which the church now offers to God. They see His manifested glory, and praise. We believe His glory, and in faith worship Him before He takes the kingdom, while He is still hidden from the world, and on the throne of God. When He takes His own earthly throne, there will be worship suited to His manifested glory: not the inner court of the temple thrown open, and every believer as now entering through the rent veil. A sample (so to speak) is given of millennial worship, and a special tribe is chosen for it: the same tribe that was appointed by Moses — Levi; who in the future will stand in the same relation to the other tribes as in the time past. Only how faint the shadow. with all its splendour in Solomon's day, to that which shall be displayed when the great King is present, He Who is greater than Solomon. In giving this genealogy, the throne and the temple are prominent before the mind of God. For both must be set up on the earth. Jesus the Lord, the Son of David, fills both. The throne is His proclaimed all through scripture. The temple is His declared as emphatically, if not so widely, in the word of God. The Psalms and the Prophets abundantly speak of the temple of the Lord, and in the Gospels the Lord Jesus Himself said, "My Father's house". We have had the throne, and Judah in connection with it. Next in promise — if not equally — is the temple, and Levi in connection with it. Not that the throne is separate from the temple, or the temple without the throne. For David — the throne — superintends the service of the temple, and arranges the order of it. But before the tribe of Levi is given, there is a brief mention of those who were content to remain outside the promised land. They were attracted by the fertility of the land east of the Jordan, and regarded not the promise. It was not falling in the wilderness, but it was failing of the grace of God. The land of their choice might to their eyes possess every advantage, fertile and suitable for "much cattle", but it was not the promised land. So far from labouring to enter into that rest, they pleaded to be left outside, outside that good land which Moses so longed for. As a whole Israel failed to enter; as a whole the nation came short of the glory of God, and then most of all.

Reuben and Gad (Numbers 32:1-42 :) are the two tribes which seek an inheritance other than God had provided, and doubtless their influence drew half of Manasseh. So two and a half tribes choose independently of God. Moses rebuked them, thinking (as appears from his words) that they would not help their brethren in the war with the Canaanites. But when they assured him of their willingness to go fully armed to the war with the other tribes, Moses was pacified, and gave them the land they wished for. Nay, more, Moses said that if they went armed over Jordan, then afterward "ye shall return and be guiltless before the Lord". Guiltless! So said Moses, but not the Lord. On the contrary, here in 1 Chronicles 5:25 the divine record is, "And they transgressed". The words of Moses convey no reproof for choosing possessions outside the promised land. But was not this their transgression? which the Holy Spirit emphatically marks. All Israel were transgressors; these are held up to view as having an evil prominence among transgressors. Even in the records of the returned captives who had themselves been carried away to Babylon on account of their own transgression, these two and a half tribes are called transgressors. "And they transgressed" points to their great sin in choosing for themselves when God had chosen for them. If these words refer only to the following: "went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land", they were not worse in this than all the other tribes. But they are prominent here as despisers of God's gift, for evidently they thought they had chosen a better land than that which the Lord had chosen for them. Yet though they so transgressed, they are not omitted in this genealogy, for they are sons of Israel, a part of the chosen nation. But, because of this sin, only brief mention is made of them. God did not forget them while He noted their sin. He helped them in their wars because

they trusted in Him. They cried to Him in their need, a sort of faith in God; but where was their obedience? where His honour?

God always hears those who put their trust in Him, and call upon Him in time of danger, even though they may be in a wrong position, and practically forget Him, when things around them seem prosperous. And is not this one of His gracious ways of rebuking our unfaithfulness?

These two and a half tribes did not cease to be Israelites; but as outside the promised land, the special privileges of the temple were lost to them, as also the consciousness, such as the other tribes might have had, that the manifested power of Jehovah in the battles with the Canaanite was for them. All their armed men went over the Jordan to help their brethren in the war, yet not to conquer an inheritance for themselves where God had chosen for them, but to return to their own choice where they made their home, not a temporary home, for there they built fenced cities for their children. As tribes, Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh did not enter the land. They became mere onlookers of the triumphs of Israel. The salutary lessons in connection with Ai, with Gibeon, etc., were only, so to say, second-hand to them. Not for them the mighty power was displayed at Jericho, which might have remained standing, so far as their possessions were concerned; not for them the victories over Adonizedek and Jabin. Not for them, as for the other tribes, did the sun and moon stand still, or the Lord send great hail-stones upon the army of the allied five kings (Joshua 10:1-43). Indirectly they partook of the resulting prosperity, for all the nations feared Israel. But God's purpose was — and is — to establish all the people of Israel in that land. This will yet be done, but, humanly speaking, these tribes frustrated that purpose in the past. God in grace rising above responsible man's failure will fulfil His purpose, and prove that, where sin abounded, grace yet more abounds. Their beginning seemed fair; there were men of valour among them. Though renowned, there was this fatal charge against them, "And they transgressed." They were shut out from the peculiar blessing of the land. How great their loss! Yet their loss is not the most solemn part of their disobedience, but their preference of their own liking to the goodness of God. The consequences are two-fold, moral and judicial. They went after the gods of the people of the land — they became idolators. This was the moral consequence of their position. And the judicial is that the "God of Israel" brought upon them the king of Assyria, who carried them into captivity, far away from the land that they valued above God's land.

Perhaps it was the same time that the Assyrian overthrew the kingdom of Israel under Hoshea. Be that as it may, their tribal history is summed up in three prominent facts: they refused God's land; they went after other gods; they were carried away by Assyria. The first inevitably led to the second, and then came judgment. If their captivity be at the same time and by the same power that executed the Lord's judgment upon Israel in Hoshea's reign, why is their end so early brought before us, their beginning and their end contained in a few verses? Of the other tribes we have the beginning, not the end so distinctly told. The answer is found in the words, "And they transgressed". They are dismissed seemingly before Levi is given, which had special charge of the temple, and to lead in the worship of God; as if being outside the promised land they had cut themselves off from the privileges of the temple and the protection of the presence of Jehovah in the midst of them. Sovereign grace will bring them back at the end, and Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh will stand in their lot with the other tribes, and in equal numbers (Revelation 7:1-17 :), at least symbolically. From the moment of their choosing a possession, they were morally on different ground before God. To despise the promised land is a greater sin than failure in the land.

This was the case of the remaining tribes, and brought down heavy judgments upon them; but the sin of despising God's land is over and above the sin of failure in the land. And God marks it, "they transgressed". When Joshua encouraged Israel to go and possess the land which the Lord gave them (Joshua 1:1-18), he has a different word for these transgressors; he speaks of their land as that which Moses gave them; and these go through the Jordan, that is, their warriors, for their wives and children remain behind, to fulfil their promise to Moses: the nine and half go to the war on the ground of God's promise to Israel. God's promise on the one hand, man's promise on the other. What a difference!

1 Chronicles 5:25-26.

1891 265 The God of Israel stirred up the King of Assyria against them (ver. 26), "God of Israel" is significant. It is God in relationship with Israel. Israel's God resented Israel's choice of other lands than His own. It was a slight put upon His wisdom and His love, and was sure to bring judgment. The judgment might be delayed; there might even be blessing during the delay. Valiant men did arise, and their enemies were subdued. But when their cup was full, when they added idolatry to their transgression the God of Israel used the King of Assyria as His instrument of judgment. The Lord has called His people now to a good land which is to believers what Canaan was to Israel. Canaan is not heaven by-and-by. In heaven there is rest, in Canaan there is fighting. Our Canaan is the knowledge and enjoyment of heaven's blessings while we are yet dwelling on earth. This enjoyment is inseparably bound up with practical separation from the world, and from the things of the world. The love of this world is incompatible with the love of the Father (1 John 2:15). But to enjoy the blessings, the Jordan must be crossed. Passing through the Red sea is surely redemption. The power of the enemy was broken. Israel went through it, led by the miraculous power of God, under the efficacy of the sprinkled blood. It was the "salvation of God," but it landed them in a desert, and there was no water. When passing through the sea they were as fugitives fleeing from the enemy, here in crossing the Jordan they are as a conquering army going to subdue and possess. But (symbolically) they are on holy ground, where all that is of the flesh must be judged as in the presence of God. Hence Gilgal. And here let us remark that circumcision is no preparation for going through the Jordan. Gilgal comes after. The knowledge that we are on the resurrection side of death ought to lead us to circumcise our hearts, that circumcision which is not made by hands, but the mortifying our members which are upon the earth. It was after Gilgal that they did eat the old corn of the land, and with believers now there must be the judgment of all that is of the flesh before we can rejoice in heavenly blessings. Crossing the Jordan for us is complete separation practically from the world. The Lord Jesus said "they are not of the world even as I am not of the world." This is true of every child of God now, as to his standing in Christ but to realise that position, so as to say with Paul "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" is to enter practically into that good land which is our possession, although living on the earth.

Alas, the "transgression" of the two and half tribes has been repeated by those who live in this present day, whose guilt is therefore greater, even as the spiritual blessings of the church of God are higher and greater than the earthly blessings of Israel. Do not similar consequences flow now? Then the disobedient ungrateful tribes fell into idolatry. Now not to speak of images, relics, saints so called, what of those who boast of deliverance from all these idols, but who are really enslaved by that far subtler phase of idolatry, loving and striving for the world's riches and honours, or its pleasant things? This brought these tribes into captivity to the Assyrian. And is not the

world-church in captivity to the world? Are not its forms, ceremonies, ecclesiastical order, all controlled by the exigencies of the powers of the world? And the same judgment awaits it, yea a more fearful doom than overtook them. Let the predicted fall of Babylon the Great testify. But as God raised up valiant men among these tribes, so has He raised up upright men among those who have followed in their steps. What a valiant man was Luther, and according to their light, Wesley and Whitfield, not to name others as valiant as they, to whom God gave victory.

1 Chronicles 6:1-81.

1891 278 The tribe of Levi is next in importance to Judah. Judah must have the first notice, for He Who came of Judah has the pre-eminence in all things. The well-being and happiness of Israel and of the whole earth depend upon His presence. Equally depends upon his presence the perfection of earthly praise and worship. It will not be then in the coining day, as it was in the wilderness, where a prophet and a priest are found; then there will be a temple, and for the temple there must be a King. And the Lord will come to His temple, and He is Prophet, Priest, and King in His own Person: as Prophet revealing God, as Priest the people's representative before God, as King providing for and appointing the order of worship according to God. And so David, as type, ordered all the temple service. The offerings upon the altar of burnt-offering, the altar of incense, the work of the most holy place and to make atonement for Israel. All this is the special function of Aaron, who has a prominence in Levi similar to David's in the tribe of Judah; and none could interfere with Aaron or his sons, or their appointed work. But each branch of the tribe of Levi had to look to David for the detail of their service, and always according to. all that Moses, the servant of God, had commanded.

There is great care and minuteness discernible in the genealogy of the Levites. And this is what we might expect; for they had sole charge of the temple service. It was theirs to keep constantly before the eye of Israel the outward means of worship, to guard them from idols, for what is there of which God is more jealous than the purity of His worship? Before the Son was manifested, what was it that moved Jehovah to jealousy? What but Israel's forsaking Him and transferring their homage to idols? At the beginning of their course Jehovah declared Himself, "For thou shalt worship no other god; for Jehovah Whose name is jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14). The word is emphatic: not only is God a jealous God, but His name is Jealous. He takes this name in view of idols. If that was His name under law when commanding men to worship Him, can He be less jealous now? Connected inseparably with the worship of God, is the worship of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Worship centres in Him; any other centre makes false worship and is abomination to God. God the Father is now seeking worshippers, who are to worship Him in Spirit (? in the Spirit) and in truth. The praises of the past day were surrounded by types and shadows, God dwelling in the thick darkness, where all the value of these shadows was that they were only shadows having no light of their own. They pointed to a better thing.

Levi is dedicated to the service of God, and separated from common Israelites. No inheritance is given to them as to the other tribes. They are Jehovah's pensioners. He provides for them out of Israel's abundance. Each tribe gave a portion to the Levites, few cities from them that had less, many from those that had more. But God's care for His holy things is manifest in His preserving thus the record of Levi's sons so minutely, and appointing to each his particular work (see Numbers 3:4 :) Of Levi's three sons Kohath has the first place, from him Amram, then Aaron and

Moses, and Miriam too is named; and from Aaron the line of priests. These were prominent in the tribe of Levi, they were leaders of the people (Micah 6:4). Miriam led the first song, a remarkable position of honour. Aaron as high priest led the people in worship and stood before God for them. Moses the prophet led them in their journeys through the wilderness. And he stands alone in his peculiar place as prophet. Aaron had sons to succeed him in the priest's office, for that line of priesthood must continue until the appointed time. Moses looks far away into the then distant future, over the times of Samuel, and Isaiah, and of all the prophet band and sees the Prophet as his successor in the Lord Jesus Himself. Of Whom Moses by the Spirit of God says, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto Him shall ye hearken." Yea, God Himself thus speaks, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). "Like unto thee." None like Moses till He came, but then how infinitely He surpassed the mediator of the old covenant!

We have Aaron's family down to the Babylonish captivity. His family was as distinct from ordinary Levites, as the Levites were from common Israelites. The priestly line is given without a break from Aaron to Jehozadak, who "went into captivity when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar." But there is in this list special mention of Azariah, "he it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem" (vi. 10). He was high priest when Uzziah was king. There were extraordinary circumstances in his day. In spite of the king's presumptuous interference, Azariah, firm and valiant for God's truth and order, resisted the king, who, censer in hand, was proceeding to burn incense. A mere time-server would have yielded to royalty. Not so Azariah: faithful and zealous for the maintenance of the established order, he went in after the king, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, valiant men, who could and would use force if necessary. There he fearlessly and as with authority says, "Not to thee, Uzziah, to burn incense . . . Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed." In the list of priests Azariah stands prominent. It is honourable mention of his unflinching courage where others might have yielded. No other such instance is recorded, whether we look at the king's transgression or the priest's fidelity. God's order in His own temple must be maintained, though confusion be everywhere else. That sanctuary was a worldly one (Hebrews 9:1), and is not now in existence; yet is there a heavenly sanctuary, a better tabernacle, in which God is as jealous of His order as in the past. There is order now, even when we are called to walk by faith, and not by sight. This to man is confusion, for all men have not faith. Walking by faith, unswayed by sight, constitutes the difference, truly immense, between the present time and the dispensation of law. It was necessary, and the law demanded a sacerdotal order, a tabernacle or temple, and a service to be performed in it, which would be unlawful elsewhere. All this is past for the present time; while the Lord is absent and unseen, we walk by faith which will only cease when we see Him. There is now no priestly order according to natural birth or of man's selecting, but the Lord Jesus as Master calling and appointing whom He will from among the lowly and poor as from the rich, the unlearned as from scholars. And He gave "some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." He divides among them the work, and bestows His gifts as it pleases Him. It would be inconsistent with the walk of faith if there were a caste known by birth or by outward garb who were in a nearer position to God, who had a call or place of nearness exclusive of other believers. There was such a place in Israel. No such exclusive place is now in the church of God. The believers are children of God, are priests of God, and have access to the Father, as they have the Holy Ghost. The ruin of the professing church is not more apparent in any thing than in men's going back to the old

thing, turning again to the beggarly elements of the world (Galatians 4:9). To take up these is to reunite the torn veil which was rent in twain when Jesus our Lord accomplished redemption on the cross. The will of man ever contrary to God seeks to re-establish that which God has set aside, and places a barrier between God the Father and His own children. Where is access to the Father if a self-asserted priest must intervene? But this is Christendom, whether we look at one system or another, whether the autocratic, the oligarchic, or the democratic aspect prevail, it is the will and order of man, which is high treason against the Lord. The church is not left without order, but it is God's; and the single-eyed believer may surely learn it from God's word. Alas! what we see advancing with rapid strides in the secular world, and in the religious, even attempts to show itself in the assembly of God. May all saints of God be preserved from the spirit of self-exaltation which is so closely connected with the spirit of infidelity. It is the sure precursor of ruin for that in which it is found. Like the raging waves which foam out their own shame. Human power and order may for a while force a calm, but it is the calm of the Dead Sea.

1 Chronicles 6:1-81; 1 Chronicles 7:1-40; 1 Chronicles 8:1-40; 1 Chronicles 9:1-44.

1891 296 The inspired writer begins again with the sons of Levi (1 Chronicles 6:16). The special line of the priesthood, the sons of Aaron, are as prominent in Levi, as the line of kings, the sons of David, are in Judah. Here the three branches of the tribe, Gershom, Kohath, and Merari, the sons of each, and the appointment of one from each family to be a leader in the service of song. The importance of song as part of the service to be rendered to God is seen in the particular care taken that the leaders in that choir should have a sort of double witness or attestation of their right to the name of Levi, and therefore of their qualification to be leaders of song, and to the privileges of the Levitical tribe. Of the sons of Kohath, Heman; of Gershom, Asaph; and of Merari, Ethan. These had been included in the general list of descendants (16–19) now the genealogy of each is traced backward to Levi (1 Chronicles 6:33-47). There is no such care manifested for any other branch of Levitical service. Why such particular care about the singers? Because none must be allowed to sing, but those who have the right. And who now have the right to sing? Redemption gives the right. Should there be songs for slaves? Whether to a willing or a groaning slave, deliverance must first come, and in that comes the appointment to sing. The care with which God by David assigns the service of song to these three leaders has a meaning for the church now, where all are, or should be, singers, making melody in the heart.

Song is the outward expression of melody in the heart, and could not be omitted in the order of temple worship. What melody there will be in the millennial temple, what a "joyful noise" from all lands when Messiah reigns, when the ark shall rest in its place prepared by the true David, Who will appoint the singers then, and set them over the service. The scene given in 1 Chronicles is but a transient glimpse of what the earth shall see and hear. The psalmist looks over the (to him) unknown gloom and darkness of intervening years to that brightness which will in Messiah's reign rest upon the temple and upon the land of God, and exclaims, "Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion" (Psalms 65:1-13 :). What a service of song will be then! Above will be the twenty-four elders, saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned" (Revelation 11:17). On earth will be the shouts of responsive joy; the courts of Zion will answer to the courts of heaven. Our hymn says, "Let earth and heaven agree" and so they will then, when He Who is the joy of heaven is the object of praise on earth. No agreement till He reigns. What a wondrous thing to look

forward to is this, angelic voices and human choirs blending together and singing the same song!

We hear now of "service of song," where the mixed multitude join, where those who are not reconciled to God, whose hearts are at enmity against Him, pretend to sing His praise! It is mockery. Israel did not sing till they were redeemed. There is no song for this world before He comes Who will purge His kingdom from all things that offend. Then acceptable song will burst from all, a universal hallelujah from heaven and earth. But is there no song now? Yea, truly the choicest of songs, which more than anticipates that to come. When that future song is heard, all the surroundings will be in harmony with it; now we sing surrounded with evil, by things out of tune, the discords of sin and sorrow and death. But our song is the melody of the heart that knows redemption, a present redemption through His blood. Song in the heart is what God now looks for, and without this, however sweet the song may be as mere fruit of the lips, it cannot be acceptable to Him. The melody which rises from the church of God is richer and sweeter than that from Israel in the future, even as faith is a closer link with God than the sight of the glory. But was there no heart worship in these three chief singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, (— Jeduthan, see 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Chronicles 29:14)? Let their psalms bear witness. There are twelve ascribed to Asaph, one to Heman, and one to Ethan. The line of priests had been already given down to the captivity (1 Chronicles 6:4-15). Here (1 Chronicles 6:49) we have them again but only to Zadok and Ahimaaz, to the time of David, the period when authority in the things of God was transferred from the priest to the king. David takes the supremacy which had previously been vested in the priest, and the picture is complete of the time when Christ the true King is present; Who, when here in humiliation, rejected by His own people, gave a momentary glimpse of His authority and power when He drove out from the temple of God all those who had made it a den of thieves. Nothing human can account for this, that a crowd of sellers and buyers see their tables overturned, and yet all flee from One! He came as the prophet announced. "Behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9), and so Matthew describes His entry into Jerusalem. . . . But it was thy King Who was coming. And the first place in the city that the Lord goes to (Matthew 21:1-46 :) is the "temple of God." And as King the crowd flee before Him. It was the power and authority of God's great King, and the throne and the temple are in accord. When the King came first, He was lowly, meek, no pomp of earthly glory, riding on an ass, and a crowd of humble followers. When He comes the second time, it will not be in humiliation, but in the brightness of the glory of God, and creation will flee before Him. Not on an ass but on the clouds of heaven He will ride; not then to cleanse the temple only, but to purge His kingdom, to take vengeance, and destroy His enemies.

1 Chronicles 7:1-40 gives the remaining tribes with the chief men among them. The two divinely important things, the throne and the temple having been given with care and detail, all other tribes not so immediately connected with them as were Judah and Levi respectively are passed over with exceeding brevity. One event is recorded in connection with Ephraim which is not given elsewhere, namely, the disaster that befell some of the sons of Ephraim (1 Chronicles 7:21). The men of Gath slew them "because they came down to take away their cattle." This happened during Ephraim's life, perhaps before that Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph. The land of Goshen bordered upon the land of Gath (the Philistine's land). And no doubt the inhabitants of each land made inroads upon the other, and in one the sons of Ephraim were slain. The moral state of the

children of Ephraim was no better than that of the Philistines. The law had not yet said, "Thou shalt not steal." It is not probable that this could have happened when the Israelites were slaves under the last Pharaoh. A son was born to Ephraim after this, whose name, Beriah, was commemorative of their death, "because it went evil with his house." And there was blessing in his daughter Sherah, and other sons were born to him. This was a healing of the breach.

Benjamin has a second notice in chapter 8:, and stands next as to detail to Judah and Levi. What was there in, or connected with, Benjamin to make his tribe prominent in these genealogies? Judah is connected with the throne, — the king; Levi with the priest and temple service, it was fitting that these two tribes should stand out prominent before the others. But what had Benjamin? It was from that tribe came Saul, the hater and persecutor of God's chosen man, and he has a fearful prominence among them. He was approved of men, but given of God in anger (Hosea 13:11). He brought the kingdom to ruin. It was right in the wisdom of God when He is presenting the true King in David that the enemy should also be seen (typically) in Saul. And even as Saul the man of the people ruled when David appeared, and as Cesar ruled when Christ was born, so when the rightful King appears by-and-bye the usurper will still occupy the throne, but to be hurled thence into the abyss. All will be in arms against God's King then, as it was in time past. From the opening of chapter 9: we learn that these genealogies were compiled after the return from Babylon, and "the first inhabitants of the land" are those who returned first, and the chief among them are named. There are the children of Judah and of Benjamin with remnants of Ephraim and Manasseh. The two tribes that clave to the house of David, and the representatives of the children of Joseph. So that in this comparatively small remnant, there are both the royalty and the birthright. And before they were driven out again, He appeared Who is both King and the Firstborn. Who alone is such before God. By rejecting Him, this favoured remnant lost both. Grace will at the right time restore both, and bring all Israel, the ten lost tribes together with the Jewish remnant into the privileges and glory flowing from both.

We see that 1 Chronicles 8:29-38 are repeated in 1 Chronicles 9:35-44. In the former it is as the sons of Benjamin, though on account of Saul the false king coming from that tribe, with more detail than in 1 Chronicles 7:6, etc. But in chap. 9 it is simply the false king's family and connections, his immediate ancestors. And they are joined with the ruin of the kingdom. The sacred penman leads from the enumeration of Saul's sons to the condition of Israel, utterly broken, and flying from the Philistines, compare 1 Chronicles 8:38 and 1 Chronicles 9:44. The former part, 1 Chronicles 9:1-34, is a kind of parenthesis, stating those who returned from Babylon, and their employment; and we see that those who were necessary for the due temple service are carefully mentioned. We return to Saul's family (1 Chronicles 9:35) and plunge into Israel's ruin. A remnant is brought back not for the sake of history, but that history may tell how sovereign grace interposed, and is yet to interpose when Christ comes: else irreparable ruin in common with the Gentile. But God was foreshadowing His great purpose of all Israel's restoration. The remnant's return is the pledge of the nation's return. The worship of Jehovah is (nominally and outwardly) re-established. The old men might weep at the diminished splendour and glory of the house, but there it was, an immense fact for this lost world, where idol temples abounded. One temple to Jehovah! It was the link then between God and His rebellious people, and through them with man. What is it now? Not the temple, but the cross.

All who are necessary for the service of the temple are there, priests, Levites, and porters. Of the priests it is said, "very able men for the work of the service of the house of God" (1 Chronicles 9:13). If Solomon's temple exceeded this in glory, so that old men wept when they thought of it, so and much more will the future temple exceed that of Solomon. There will be no old men to weep then.

1 Chronicles 9:1-44; 1 Chronicles 10:1-14; 1 Chronicles 11:1-47; 1 Chronicles 12:1-40; 1 Chronicles 13:1-14; 1 Chronicles 14:1-17.

1891 309 With the family of Saul (1 Chronicles 9:35) a new section begins. The first terminating in a brief but prophetic glimpse of the future restoration of Israel as foreshadowed in the return of the captives from Babylon, and their settlement in the land (1 Chronicles 9:1-34). Faint when compared with the future, but in itself a marvellous event. For their Gentile oppressors are by the overruling hand of God, made to aid and encourage them and to restrain their enemies, as Ezra and Nehemiah declare. The going back to Saul after counting up the returned captives is confirmatory that the object of the Holy Spirit in the Chronicles is not history — save as subsidiary — but the bringing in of the Son Who is to reign over all; that the sin and failure of man, Satan's determined opposition, as seen in Saul, are but occasions for the display of sovereign grace and of Almighty power. That Christ the Son shall not only be the King of the Jews as Son of David, and the Inheritor of the promises as Son of Abraham, but shall as Son of man be King of kings and Lord of lords. Hence His genealogy down from Adam, that He the last Adam should win back the headship over the lower creation which the first Adam lost. Other names come in and shine among their fellows, and collateral purposes are accomplished, but the great purpose of God centres in His Son. The genealogy points to Him.

Saul slain, the Philistines triumphant, is the moment when David appears and drives back the Philistine, and the ruined kingdom rises in splendour never seen before. If the past shows how the kingdom was lost and won, much more the future when He Who is both Son and Lord of David shall come and restore all things.

1 Chronicles 10:1-14 seems to come abruptly; we are brought at once into the closing scenes of Saul's life. No record of his life in Chronicles, only God's summary of it, but which comprehends in few words his life, death and judgment. "So Saul died for his transgressions which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it, and enquired not of the Lord; therefore He slew him and turned the kingdom unto David the Son of Jesse" (1 Chronicles 10:13-14). Saul passes before us as a spectral vision, save for the reality of God's judgment upon him. David is brought to view as abruptly as Saul, no record of his previous life; only his lineage, as that of Saul. And surely the reason is plain, — not these men on their own account are so prominent personally, but the kingdom is in the mind of God, and the Holy Spirit hastens to present it. The Lord turned the kingdom unto David. It was a marvellous turning. The hinderer is no sooner removed than all Israel seek David, and say, "Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh" (1 Chronicles 11:1, etc.), and the blessing conies. David takes his fore-ordained place, and a nation is born in a day. Brighter than this will be seen when Israel from a deeper fall shall rise to a higher position of glory. With what cleaving of heart will all Israel gather to the Son of David in the day of their deliverance. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psalms 110:3).

Let us look for a moment at 1 Samuel 28:6. "And when Saul enquired of the Lord" and compare it with 1 Chronicles 10:14. "And enquired not of the Lord." Samuel records the outward act, the Holy Spirit in Chronicles pronounces the judgment of God upon the inward condition of his soul. It was the pressure of despair which wrung out of his heart an unavailing cry to the Lord, but no real turning to Him Who never shuts out the most despairing cry from a soul truly contrite. All help was gone, and he in his fear enquires of the Lord Whom he had habitually disobeyed and neglected, as many others since, and like him have sunk deeper into the slough of despair. Bear the judgment of all such from the Lord Himself, "But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me but I will not answer, they shall seek Me early [diligently, R. V.] but they shall not find Me" (Proverbs 1:25-28). The Lord would not listen to the cry of the persecutor and hater of His chosen man.

Saul remembers Samuel, his former friend. If Jehovah answered him not, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets, would Jehovah's servant help him out of his misery? And he invokes the aid of Satan to bring up Samuel! Wretched Saul — what darkness on his heart, as if Satan had power over the spirits of departed saints! What despair, to seek for one of those whom he had in outward zeal sought to destroy! What had brought him to this? Permitted of God the prophet appears, and the wretched king's doom is confirmed; it is near, imminent. But Saul's seeking help from one having a familiar spirit is a true index of the heart. He had no faith in God, but in the witch of Endor; therefore he enquired not of the Lord. He had in earlier days clothed himself with zeal as with a garment. Extreme danger strips him of his borrowed robe, and he appears in his own naked infidelity. God judges the heart. "Behold Thou desirest truth in the inwards" (Psalms 51:6.). The piercing eye of God saw no truth in Saul. Therefore the Holy Spirit in Chronicles says that "he enquired not of the Lord."

All Israel seek David. This turning to David as with one mind is marvellous. A greater marvel is yet to come. Not David, but the Son of David will appear; and when they see Him, all Israel will seek Him with a greater oneness of mind, and will know Him, and in gladness of heart will shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest." The picture given by Matthew (xxi. 9) is prophetic of the coming display of His glory, when He takes His own. It is in a smaller frame but in brighter colours, inasmuch as it is the King Himself personally present in the scene given in the Gospel; it is only His type in Chronicles.

God immediately surrounds David with mighty men of valour. And the tribes of Israel send their thousands, "men of war that could keep rank," or as we should say, well disciplined. Who had disciplined these men, that just before had forsaken their cities and hidden themselves through fear of the Philistines? God's chosen man was there, who was anointed to be king over Israel, and the kingdom was turned to him. This is the reason of their sudden endowment of valour and might, and some of the wonderful deeds of the renowned men whom the Holy Spirit names. Some of their astonishing deeds are told, yet not astonishing when we remember Whose kingdom is really before us. For this is not the striving together of the potsherd of the earth; these great acts are only the natural consequences of the presence of His power Who is giving samples (so to say) of what the power and the glory will be when He personally takes the kingdom. Then greater deeds will be done. The Lord of hosts is marshalling the strength and power of Israel. And the Holy Spirit

gives a list of tried men of might. They are presented in the halo of their own prowess. The foremost of these worthies joined David while he was a fugitive and an outcast (1 Chronicles 12:1-22); their origin is given (1 Samuel 22:2) and is an instance among many of God's taking up the despised of men and exalting them.

David is crowned, and there is great feasting in Hebron; for the neighbouring tribes "brought bread on asses, on camels, on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and lunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly, for there was joy in Israel" (1 Chronicles 12:40). But David thinks not of his rapid exaltation, and of the mighty hosts around him (not long before he was hiding from Saul in the court of Achish); his ardent desire is to bring up the ark of God. But Jerusalem as the chosen city is the right place for the ark, and that city is still in the possession of the Jebusite. The city taken (2 Samuel 5:6-7), (which is not given in Chronicles) David said unto all the congregation of Israel, "If it seem good unto you and that it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us; and let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul" (1 Chronicles 13:2-3). David's thought was right, but there was levity in the act. He and all the people gathered from Shihor of Egypt to the entering in of Hamath, 1:e., from the southern boundary to the northern. They unite to fetch the ark from Kirjath-Jearim. It was an occasion of great joy, but fleshly zeal meddled with the ark. And in these scenes, we behold David the responsible man, not David the type of the perfect One. The Holy Spirit shows us that however blessed and honoured a man may be, yet he is only a man, and here his imperfection is seen. If his thought was right and acceptable unto God, it was God Who gave it. But their starting point was wrong. How could they expect to carry the ark to its place when, instead of the Levites carrying it upon their shoulders, according to the ordinance of God, they put it in a new cart? A "new" cart; but this could not condone their want of attention, and consequently their disobedience to God's commands.

If obedience be imperative in the common things of everyday life, how much more in the things which are special to the service of God?

David was responsible. His was the prerogative as king to regulate and order the right way of bringing home the ark, which must be according to God. The same forgetfulness of the ordinance of God, and what the ark symbolised, made Uzzah put forth his hand and touch the ark, and thus brought on himself instant judgment, his unauthorised interference completed the disobedience manifest from the first. Man might say the motive was good, but that could not be good which leads to the neglect of God's word. God must and will vindicate His own honour, and the authority of His own word. Uzzah's act was but the reflex of the want of care on David's part. There was much gladness with them all, but the joy of saints must not compromise the authority of God's word.

David was displeased. With whom? Alas, here is more than mere failure — it is disloyalty of heart. Fear succeeds his want of care. Carelessness in the things of God hinders communion, and so it was that David was afraid before God. For a time he loses the blessing; both the ark and its accompanying blessing are carried into the house of Obed-edom (1 Chronicles 13:14; 2 Samuel 6:11).

If David is afraid of God, it does not turn aside God's purpose with regard to David. After the needed discipline in his soul and hearing how the ark brought blessing to Obed-edom, he regains faith and brings the ark to its place. Yet though he is seen here as a failing man, his typical position is not lost. For the truthfulness of the type takes precedence of the restoration of faith in the soul. This position was not contingent upon his faithfulness, but was the appointment of God's sovereign will, Who by David is unrolling the volume of the honours and dominion of the Only-Begotten when He shall be set upon the holy hill of Zion (Psalms 2:1-12 :). Then will be seen perfectly what can only be partially presented in these typical scenes. For apparently before the ark is brought to its place, the Gentile submits to him. If the natural hatred of the Gentile appears in the persistent attacks of the Philistine, the power of God compels the king of Tyre to send "messengers, and timber of cedars with masons and carpenters to build him a house." In David and Hiram are to be seen, as with a borrowed light, the glory of Christ's kingdom, the submission of all nations to Him. Into the millennial Jerusalem kings shall bring their glory and honour. So does the king of Tyre own the greatness of David, and contribute to his glory. But the past is but as the first droppings; the rushing shower is yet to come.

1 Chronicles 14:1-17; 1 Chronicles 15:1-29; 1 Chronicles 16:1-43.

1891 325 Though the Philistines are smitten, they are not yet subdued; they were the most inveterate and persistent of all Israel's enemies. The reign of peace is not come, and David finds that there are other powerful foes to contend with. The Philistines had overcome Saul, and were doubtless astonished at the rapid recovery of the kingdom after the crushing defeat on the mountains of Gilboa. They were soon to learn that it was not with a Saul, a king disowned of the Lord, but with a David, a king specially chosen of Him, with whom they would fight. And this chosen man was only the type and representative of One infinitely higher. As the representative of Him, David was bound to conquer, whatever his failure might be as a saint, or he would not be a type. The Philistines soon learnt his might. "And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David" (1 Chronicles 14:8). It is against David, Israel does not seem to count for anything, their strength is in him. The Philistines war against the anointed king, so when the true David comes to take the kingdom, it is against Him that the world's power will be arrayed. Against Him will "the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together." Something like this combination was seen when Jesus was born, though then within a limited area. It was the same spirit of hatred and hostility that united Herod and the rulers in Jerusalem and which then proved itself murderous, which will show itself in its strength and be all but universal when He comes the second time in glory and power to sit upon His throne. The Philistines are not enemies such as Assyria and Babylon, who were afterwards executors of God's wrath on a nation of rebels. Assyria carried away the ten tribes, and Babylon the kingdom of Judah. At that time there were found in the armies of Israel no mighty men performing astonishing deeds of valour, but on all great dismay and terror, all fleeing from their enemies. These wars were the pouring out of God's wrath upon them after every remedy had been tried, and had been found ineffectual. In earlier years judgment and chastisement had been blended together, in their distress the people had cried to the Lord, and He had never failed to raise up a deliverer (see Judges), and even then we find Philistines, in the days of Shamgar, of Samson; notably in the days of Saul. Now in the days of David it is neither judgment nor disciplinary chastisement, but the bringing of the enemy to feel and own the power of the man God

has placed upon the throne. For David is God's king, and Jerusalem is God's city, and the ark of God is about to be placed there, and all is in the sunshine of God's favour. The very servants of David are mighty, wonderful men. All to prove the power and manifest the purpose of God, which if dimly seen then will soon shine in the glory of God, perfectly accomplished according to His good pleasure. But even what was seen then might well raise the feelings of wonder and awe, if of joy. For the Lord God Himself fights their battles and overthrows their enemies, so that Israel has to pursue rather than fight. On one occasion David is to turn away from his Philistine foe, and not to move till he heard a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees; then he would know that God was gone forth before him (1 Chronicles 14:15). Did the Philistines hear that sound? If they did, they could have no true intelligence as to its cause. No doubt it would excite superstitious fears, but even so it would be a proof to them that a mightier sword than David's was against them. David's fame is spread abroad, and Jehovah brings the fear of him upon all nations. In his prosperity David does not forget the ark of God. The same earnestness of desire, but now obedience to the ordinance of God. With what carefulness he now brings it to the place prepared for it. "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites, for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto Him for ever." All is done according to the law. But the king directs, he takes the first place, not the priest. He assembles the priests' families, arranging their order. And besides this present carefulness there is a confession that on the former occasion "we sought Him not after due order." Now the singers are duly appointed, it is a true and acceptable service to God, and a service of song to Him; for why indeed should they not sing? At the former time there was gladness of heart which perhaps vented itself in unintelligent and uproarious shouting, not the orderly and reverent joy of those who worship God; at that time David and all Israel played before God with all their might (see 1 Chronicles 13:8). Now the singers are appointed; Heman, Asaph, and Ethan take the lead. Then, it was fleshly joy intruding into holy things, and God in vindication of His own order and majesty was compelled to judge them all in the person of Uzzah. This fleshly joy manifests itself in its own true character by its immediate reaction when rebuked; for David was displeased and afraid. The joyous procession never reached Jerusalem. Now it is holy joy, David's heart is bowed and laying aside his royal robe, he arrays himself in a priestly one, a robe of linen, as the Levites and the singers, as it were, humbling himself to take part in the song as one of the company, yet was he the true leader. Again, as constantly through these scenes, we are reminded of Him Who said, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee."

These outward expressions of praise (David in a linen robe and dancing) are not for the saints in the church of God now, whose melody is made in their hearts, and more acceptable to God than the best harmony of voice and instrument, even though the singers and the players, yea, the instruments be all appointed by Him, as they were at that feast of joy (1 Chronicles 16:42). For the song of the church exceeds that song of Israel infinitely more than that song exceeded the perhaps disorderly singing and shouting which characterised the previous attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, but which ended in failure.

David abased himself to be as one in that holy congregation, to join in that service so acceptable and well pleasing to God. But there was one looking upon it whose heart was not in unison with it, one who scorned the idea of laying aside kingly dignity on any occasion, not even to join in praise to the King of all the earth, and such an one could only feel contempt for a king who would be

happy in being more vile, provided it was abasing himself before the Lord (see 2 Samuel 6:22). David's heart was overflowing with fulness of joy, Michal's was occupied with the thought of David's appearance. The ark of God has not the first place in her soul, and so she is here called not the wife of David, but Saul's daughter. In her father's time the ark was unthought of, and she, educated in that neglect, thinks not of the ark now. For though she loved David (1 Samuel 18:20), she had no heart for God, she was still Saul's daughter. The nearest of earthly ties with the saints of God cannot bring the unrenewed heart into communion with Him.

Now (1 Chronicles 16:1-43) the king blesses the people in the name of Jehovah; all share in the joy. "To each one a loaf of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." The king appoints certain Levites to minister before the ark, Asaph to sound with cymbals. They are to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. But the song itself is given by David; he is inspired of God to give thanks to Him in a psalm which, while boasting in a covenant already made with their fathers, embraces in its onward look the future wondrous actings of the mercy that endureth for ever. This psalm is suited to the then time, for the ark is not yet in its final resting place. It was in a tent all through David's life. There were enemies to be subdued, more victories to be won, before the final aspect of triumph and peace could appear — the ark in the temple. But this psalm while in keeping with the circumstance of the ark being yet in a tent, looks onward to the time when the heavens shall be glad and the earth rejoice, and when men shall say among the nations, "The Lord reigneth." It has a prophetic character, it brings to the eye of faith what did not then appear. It opens with a burst of praise — Give thanks unto the Lord, etc., and then, which is an essential part of Israel's worship, looks back to the covenant with Abraham, made for a thousand generations. Made with Abraham, repeated with an oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant. Made when they were but few people and wanderers from one kingdom to another. But the covenant stood firm. Yea, He reproveth kings for their sake, saying, "Touch not mine anointed and do My prophets no harm" (see Genesis 12:17, Genesis 20:7). Now, all the years of unfaithfulness and ruin passed over, he strikes at once the chords of praise at the future mighty intervention of God for His still beloved people. All the earth is summoned to sing unto the Lord; for the blessings of Israel as from a centre will radiate over the whole earth. First it is the intelligent creation called to give the glory due to His name, let men say, "The Lord reigneth." Then the heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice. We sometimes sing, "Let earth and heaven agree," etc. But this can only be when the Lord reigneth. The time contemplated in this psalm seems not full millennial peace. But the Lord reigns, and both the heavens and the earth rejoice in the blissful change. The Lord will make His power felt before the ark is in the temple. Then we know how at His presence even the inanimate creation shall cease its groaning and there will be fulness of joy. The fields will rejoice and the trees of the wood sing. Yet these words have a deeper meaning than the blessedness of inanimate creation, figuratively expressed. Under this beautiful imagery is the joy and conscious security of saints while yet the sea — the world — is roaring; not yet the full millennial blessing. "Let the sea roar;" but "roaring" is not suggestive of peaceful rest. It may be with conscious power as when a lion roars over his prey (Isaiah 31:4), or with a sense of impotency as the waters roar (Psalms 46:1-11 :) — the enemies of God against His saints. "Roaring" is in scripture connected with tumult, battle, war, vengeance, and wrath. Even the wrath of the Lord upon the heathen is His roaring. "The Lord shall roar out of Zion" (Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2). It is used to express deepest distress of soul from temporal calamities, as in Job 3:24. The burden of sin upon the conscience made the psalmist roar (Psalms 32:3; see also 38: 8, which, if referring

to our Lord, shows the disquieting pressure of our responsibilities which He in grace took upon Himself). Even the Lord Jesus Himself when on the cross suffering under the forsaking of God cries out, "Why art Thou so far from the words of my roaring" (Psalms 22:1). The millennium will be peace and rest. This verse (1 Chronicles 16:32) expresses the state of the world just before the reign of peace, but after the church has gone, and its testimony to the long-suffering and grace of God, passed away for ever. There will be saints on the earth, but their rejoicing and testimony will be different from that of the church, then at that time in glory with the Lord but whose past testimony on the earth was grace, not judgment. The saints at that time, under the emblem of rejoicing fields and singing trees, will rejoice because the Lord cometh to judge the earth. So when the Lord shall execute judgment and shall roar like a lion (Hosea 11:10) there will be also His chosen ones in conscious security, saying, "God is our refuge." Nevertheless the fields will rejoice and the trees of the wood will sing. Mark the contrast between the turbulent* roaring sea, and the calm quiet rest of joyful fields and singing trees. The blessedness of saints is given not infrequently in pictures of natural beauty. Sometimes the saints themselves personally are "trees of righteousness" as the righteous man in the first psalm. Or it maybe their state of happiness, as "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters." So also Balaam in prophetic vision as the future happiness of Israel passed before him, "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, as cedar trees by the waters" (Numbers 24:6). This psalm does not actually reach into the time of millennial rest though in near view of it. All enemies are not subdued, nor are all Israel yet gathered, for they say, "Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together and deliver us front the heathen that we may give thanks to Thy holy name and glory in thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever." All the people say, "Amen," and praise the Lord.

*[Turbulence here may be questioned, as well as the application to the nations. "Roaring" is hardly uniform. Ed.]

Portions of this psalm are found in others, but that does not make this to be mere quotations from them. This as a whole is most suited to the circumstances then — (1) the ark in a tent, (2) the sea roaring, and (3) the prayer for deliverance while praising God for His mercy. There will be a similar experience just before the Lord enters upon the Solomon character of His reign.

1 Chronicles 15:1-29; 1 Chronicles 16:1-43; 1 Chronicles 17:1-27; 1 Chronicles 18:1-17; 1 Chronicles 19:1-19.

1891 342 David appoints those who are to minister before the ark, but ho himself returns to bless his house. A daughter of Saul may be there, having no sympathy with the feelings of David, but that does not hinder his blessing it. His soul was filled with the thought of the ark of God being brought home, and, overflowing with thanksgiving, would have his house to share his joy.

Dancing in public before the ark may not have been a kingly act; but the dignity of the king was forgotten in the joy of the worshipper. And when twitted by Michal for demeaning himself as a vain fellow among his servants, his answer was, that he would yet be more vile, he would be base even in his own eyes when it was in praise to the Lord (2 Samuel 6:20). What a constraining power there is in joy and gladness; and when this joy is from God and with God, how unworthy earthly appearances and earthly considerations become. The church of God now has greater motive for joy than had David then. But it occurs to David that it is unseemly, while that he himself dwells in a

house of cedars the ark of the covenant should be under curtains. He purposes to build a house for it, and Nathan the prophet encourages him. But however pleasing to the Lord such a purpose is, He sends Nathan to forbid it. "Thou shalt not build Me a house to dwell in." David was a man of war, and as such was not allowed to build the house; for only when the words are fulfilled "on earth peace" will the temple be built. The Lord is a man of war (Exodus 15:1-27 :), and when He comes to reign over the earth will be first known as such. When every knee bows and every tongue confesses, and every thing that offends is taken out of the kingdom then peace shall dwell upon the earth. He, the Lord, is the true Melchizedek, the King of righteousness, and puts down all evil; then He shines forth as King of peace. First is war and judgment, then peace and rest. These two periods differ in character, and two men are used respectively as types. Two kings set forth Messiah's glory and reign. Yet there is no break in their reign, as when one dies and then the accession of the other. Solomon is anointed king before David dies. The throne is not vacant for a moment. Typically David and Solomon are one. The Lord is the true David and the true Solomon. But David's thought is pleasing to God, and God unfolds His purpose in a special revelation to him. David had the thought to build a house for the Lord. God will be a debtor to no man and will build a house for David. In the days of Solomon both houses (typically) were built, the king's house and the temple; but when man's obedience and faithfulness came to be reckoned as a factor for their unbroken continuance, then all is lost; the temple is destroyed, and David's house is carried into captivity. But the inability of man to maintain the first condition of the temple, or of David's house, was known to Him Who made this promise. Therefore in God's message to David, or even in David's thanksgiving (led by the Holy Spirit) to God, there is much more indicated than the transient glories of Solomon's reign. For in God's message it is not man's responsibility, but His purpose. To accomplish His purpose God took David from the shepcote to be king of Israel, and to the shepherd boy gave a name like the name of the great men of the earth. But his faithfulness, or that of his children, as a condition, does not appear in the book of Chronicles. If we turn to 2 Samuel 7:1-29 : all there seems to hang upon man's behaviour. "If he commit iniquity," etc., etc. Why is this omitted in Chronicles 17:? Because a greater than Solomon is before the mind of God. It is Messiah's kingdom that shall be established for ever, and there is no room for such a word as, "If he commit iniquity;" abundant reason for their utterance in view of Solomon. It has its right place in Samuel where man's responsibility runs side by side with the promises and the foreshadowing of the kingdom, as if all depended on him. And so it did for its continued manifestation then. But for its ultimate and triumphant establishment it rests on God's unassailable purpose, far beyond the reach of man's failure. It may be that David did not intelligently apprehend the fulness of the promise; but God looked onward through the intervening dark clouds of sin and long years of judgment to the establishment of a greater throne than that of Solomon. Its glories were yet below the human horizon. In his thanksgiving David praises God for what He is. "O Lord, there is none like Thee . . . Thy people Israel didst Thou make Thine own people for ever, and Thou, Lord, becamest their God." But it is the Lord's special promise to build him a house that brings him before the Lord. "For Thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that Thou wilt build him a house," etc. God's promise is absolute and unconditional, yet David prays that his house may be before Him for ever. It is the certainty of its accomplishment that brings David before the Lord. If there had not been such a sure foundation as the promise of God, it would have been presumption thus to pray; but with such word before him, his prayer becomes the expression of his faith. What can tell his experience better than his closing words, "For Thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for

ever."

Let us learn from this that the certainty of God's blessings in no way obviates the necessity of prayer. Rather should we pray in faith, doubting nothing. We have the assurance of all things needful. Therefore it is that in making our requests to God, supplications and thanksgivings go hand in hand. God's word gives boldness — confidence — to draw near to the throne of grace. The following chapter (1 Chronicles 18:1-17) is the record of David's triumphs and increasing glory. His enemies become his servants. Gentile kings become vassals. One infinitely beyond David is mirrored forth here, Whose glory shall fill the whole earth. Ton, the king of Hamath, hearing of David's victory over Hadadrezzer and the Syrians, congratulates him, and sends all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass. The Lord is bringing costly things for His temple. Once before He prepared gold and silver for His tabernacle in the wilderness, for Israel came out of Egypt laden with jewels of gold and of silver, "And they spoiled the Egyptians" (Exodus 12:35-36). Now the Lord is spoiling the near Gentile nations. For all this is for the temple. Some are compelled by war, others give freely. All contribute.

God's picture of the coming kingdom is nearly complete, that is, its first phase, or Davidic period. Only a few more touches by the Master's hand to bring out in clearer prominence the enemy's malice, and how God overrules and turns aside his envenomed shafts. But David has now reached the place to which he was called. "So David reigned over all Israel, and executed righteousness and justice among all his people." The prophet Isaiah says of the Branch out of Jesse's roots that righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. And if David executed judgment and justice, can a human type come nearer to Him? The kingdom is established (in type), and David is king. Who seeks to overthrow him? Who thought to unfit loins in past times for the honour to which he was called? He who was always the enemy of the Son of God, tried to dethrone David by three principles which he uses now to bring discredit upon the Christian, and dishonour on the Lord's name. The friendship of the world, the power of the flesh, and pride, are three potent things in the armoury of Satan, and it is only the watchful and the prayerful that can escape their insinuating and deadly power.

Three events are given in which David's faults appear. Yet not to tell us of his faults, but to bring out to view the unchangeable counsel of God, Who, having led David through human enemies, yea, delivered him as a youth from the lion and the bear, now lets us see after a while the prime instigator of all the enemies of David. It is the glorious purpose of God rather than David's slips that the Holy Ghost has before Him. The first event is God's interposition to deliver David from the consequences of an unholy friendship. The second is the dreadful result of an unwatchful saint falling under the power of the flesh, and the third is vain glory, the pride of life. This chapter (1 Chronicles 19:1-19) opens a fresh aspect of David. Hitherto prosperity has marked his course in which no false step is recorded, save his first attempt to bring home the ark; and then not the desire of it, but the manner of doing it was sin before God. The Lord still preserves. He had preserved him from his open enemies, now we see how He delivers from the consequences of his own errors. The occasion is the death of Nahash, and David's sending messengers to comfort his son. To receive presents and homage from the king of Hamath was according to God, but to carry on friendly intercourse with the Ammonite was contrary to His word. In the former it is the Gentile bringing presents; in the latter it is David seeking to comfort a natural enemy; not receiving homage but giving friendship. God interposes for His own name's sake, and the suspicions of

Hanun and his princes rejecting the friendly offers of David become the occasion for the execution of God's judgment on Israel's enemies. Kindness from the father leads to war with the son and well nigh to the extermination of the Ammonites. On mere human ground a righteous retribution for their shameful treatment of David's ambassadors. But there was a deeper thing than that. There was God's judgment, and the human occasion fades from view.

There is another point from which to look at this war. It is God teaching a saint the consequence of receiving kindness from the world when he should have had faith in God. Abraham refused the world's gifts (Gen. 16: 22-24). To show kindness to the world — to sinners — in God's way is acceptable and pleasing; for He is sending His gospel and the promise of eternal life. Only let saints of the heavenly calling remember that showing true kindness to sinners is not friendship with the world.

David accepted kindness when he was (it would seem) a fugitive, he feels the consequence when he is a king. Slips and failures are sometimes far reaching in their effects, God in His wisdom may allow a long time to elapse before the results appear. Saints now fail and slip; but there is a gracious word for us if we discern and judge ourselves, for then we shall not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:31, etc.). How important to bring all our circumstances into the light of God's word! There we have an unerring mark, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). This word is a sharp sword for the Christian. How many friendships would be cut asunder, and how many prevented if we knew how to use it!

1 Chronicles 19:1-19; 1 Chronicles 20:1-8.

1891 358 The Ammonites fear the vengeance of David and combine with the Syrians and others against him. This is the result of his well-meant kindness. It suggests a future combination of this world's rulers against Christ. Against Him Who has manifested such boundless love, but Whose mercy and kindness has been denied and spurned. He, the Lord, sent His ambassadors to men worse than the Ammonites; and how were they treated? And now Jew and Gentile are joined together in rejecting the kindness of God our Saviour. But for these rejecters, as for the Ammonites then, a day of vengeance is coming; that day is fixed, known only to God. There is a tarrying, a delay; but there is a limit. David told the men to tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown. The Lord is now waiting until the appointed time, and His long-suffering is salvation. But the judgment sore and certain is approaching, and that day will break up a wider confederacy with a more fearful overthrow.

David hears of their alliance and sends Joab against them; and with him all the host of mighty men. The Lord did not want Joab and his mighty men, He wanted David. He gave them victory, but not with such a visible manifestation of His presence and power as when David overcame the Philistines, and the tops of the mulberry trees proclaimed the presence of the Lord of hosts. Is there not in this absence of David a forgetfulness of the special place God had given him? He was anointed to be the leader of the people. Even Abner could say that by the hand of David God would save His people out of the hand of all their enemies (2 Samuel 3:18): "by the hand of David" is certainly more than sending Joab to lead Israel in the fight. It is David's presence that God requires, so that the victory might not be claimed by another. For here is not the type of Him Who by His own arm — Himself, personally — fights and overcomes — of Him of Whom the past bears record, and the future yet more wondrously will proclaim His mighty deeds.

It was a personal victory He gained over the foe for the church, though that victory was won by dying (for Israel too). But for them He will show His power in future not by being smitten, but in smiting, but not less personally in this than in His dying. And have not all His interpositions on Israel's behalf against their enemies been personal? Was it only a remarkable providence when the first-born in Egypt were slain, when their enemies were drowned in the Red sea? In the destroying angel that went through the land of Egypt on the Passover night, in the pillar of fire that came between Israel and the foe, I see a personal interposition of the Lord for them. And again, Who came as Captain of the Lord's host and as such appeared to Joshua at Jericho? (Joshua 5:13). And when David went to war, Who was with Him whithersoever he went? And in the future crisis Who wins the battle and destroys the enemy? Will not the deliverance of the people depend on the personal presence of that same Captain of the Lord's host? What do the prophets say? "And He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor [none to come between Israel and the foe] therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him" (see Isaiah 54:16, Isaiah 63:1-6). And is David exalted to represent, though ever so faintly, this glorious mighty Conqueror? What forgetfulness of his high calling! He was as it were entrusted with Messiah's honour and glory, and he puts it into Joab's hands, who having no true faith in God exercises a little human foresight in order to guard it. But if we see forgetfulness in David, not less do we see in Joab a great assumption of piety mingled with the absence of faith; a condition not unknown in this day. God for His own name's sake gave victory to the armies of Israel; but there could be no sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees when the chosen leader was absent, and only a clever strategist leading the armies of Israel. The wisdom of the man is seen, human care and provision, contingencies provided for, yet not fully; he calculates upon help afforded by one brother to the other, but suppose both needed, where was the help? "And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then will I help thee." And with this insufficient provision for all possible contingencies, there was the appearance of dependence upon God and of strengthening himself in God, and encouraging his brother. "Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God, and let the Lord do that which is good in His sight" (1 Chronicles 19:12-13). How easy at times to imitate and repeat the words of faith and humble dependence on God! But the confidence of faith which can sing of victory before the fight begins is found only with real believers. In the following chapter (1 Chronicles 20:1-8) we come to the second event in what we may call an appendix by the Holy Ghost to His account of David's succession to the throne of Israel. Led by a mightier hand than his own, in triumph he is seated on the throne through enemies, through failures which in Chronicles the Holy Spirit does not stop to relate till he is on the throne and executing judgment and justice (1 Chronicles 18:14). Then the Spirit of God "after this" tells us of the death of Nahash and the results of David's receiving kindness from him which happened so many years before; yet even now not to notice David's failure, but to show that God would accept no kindness from an enemy, would suffer no interference with His purpose, nor permit any delay to its accomplishment, although in the righteous government of God David must feel the consequences of seeking protection from an enemy. Yet even in this the sovereignty of grace appears. Even here all things work together for good. The account of David and Bathsheba which occupies in Samuel two chapters (2 Samuel 11:12 :) is here in Chronicles passed over, save the first step in that steep incline, "But David tarried at Jerusalem." Sovereign grace passes on to David's taking the crown from off the head of the King of Rabbah, a crown of gold and set with precious stones, and it is set

on David's head. Here is not the restoration of the soul of a failing saint, but God's restoring David to his official position as the type of Him Who is yet to come.

Why is the sin not recorded? Was it not heinous? (Job 26:9-11). Yea, verily, but the Holy Spirit is here showing how vain is the attempt of Satan by means of David's failure to ruin the kingdom through him. For David was to Satan the expression of the kingdom of God. Satan might wonder but could not tell whether David was the real king, or only a type. The counsels of God concerning Christ were not revealed to Satan however, for satanic wisdom might learn the purpose of God in the course of events on the earth. When he did meet the real King, though in a wilderness and not in a palace, he felt His power and fled. In the Chronicles it is Satan's opposition rather than David's faults.

1 Chronicles 20:1-8; 1 Chronicles 21:1-30.

1891 373 "And it came to pass after this" (1 Chronicles 20:4). Now that David is restored to his true position, such is the super-abounding of grace that his servants become mighty men. Their valiant deeds do but proclaim who is on the throne. And we may note it is after David is firmly fixed on the throne and executing judgment and justice that the Spirit, as it were, turns to look upon the servants. Until that time it is only David that the Spirit speaks of, or in association with others necessary to exalt him yet more. Not so here (1 Chronicles 20:1-8). Apart from his typical position the Lord may be teaching David that the glory of His kingdom, and the renown of His faithful ones, cannot be put under a cloud, because the most honoured among the Lord's servants has failed and yielded to selfish ease and its consequences. Be that as it may for David, it is a lesson that we may learn. The Lord uses, and honours men by using them as His servants now; but we are not necessary to His power. But David is more than an honoured servant. As type he must be on the throne, and then there is no limit to the outflow of grace, and the servants are mighty because David is on the throne, and giants are slain by them.

We do not read here of giants among the Ammonites and Syrians; these rather represent the external forces of the Enemy — for us, the world, and its hatred, persecutions, slaughterings of the saints. But when brought to face the Philistines giants are found, and these are rather an internal enemy; for they immigrated into Palestine at different times, and as being somewhat within its borders,* was an internal enemy, and were the most persistent of all; for the Israelites do not subdue them by one victory, not even do these noted warriors deter them. They may be defeated, again and again, and yet again there is war. And they come with increased power. There is a man of great stature, abnormal; he has twenty-four fingers and toes. But he was the son of the giant, and the slaughter of Goliath is the pledge of his own. This man defied Israel like Goliath (1 Samuel 17:10). It was his death-warrant.

[* They appear to have had a footing in the South-Western Lowland of Palestine.] The flesh may not be inaptly set forth by this man of great stature. And though the world and the flesh are servants of the devil, yet does the flesh appear as more powerful than either, to the Christian an enemy more to be dreaded, more to be watched against, and the reason is because it has its rest in the old heart, and so terrible its onslaught that at times it appears as a giant "with six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot" respectively. But the faith that slew Goliath also gives us the victory over this man, however terrible in appearance. And because our David — the Lord Jesus — is exalted and on the throne, we conquer in His Name. The world and the flesh are brothers, we

may say twin brothers, for both came into existence at the same moment, i.e. at the fall. At that awful moment man became "flesh," and this creation, before so good, became the "world."

Satan, knowing well David's sin with all its aggravations, might be astonished at the prowess of the king's mighty men. Would God uphold the kingdom when the sole link that held earth to heaven was found defective? David proved to be a transgressor, adulterer, murderer. Will not God now find another Moses and make a great nation of him, and consume this people and their king with them? Nay, God is not man, His gifts are without change of mind. And now, if we may so reverently speak, persistence in His purpose is more than ever imperative: else what a boast for Satan that he had compelled God to annul His promise to Abraham! The Holy Spirit is still showing the glory of the kingdom, and these mighty deeds are not the cause, but the results of that glory which has its source in the King alone.

Satan has to learn that, however formidable his own servants might be, they were nothing before the mighty men of David. The sons of the giant are slain, and the kingdom becomes all the stronger through the war wherein the choice servants of each side are face to face.

Hitherto Satan has used instruments and persecuted David, perhaps before he knew for what purpose David was called and anointed. And the more distinct God's purpose became, the more intense and murderous the persecutions became. But these never weaken God's saints. It is the flesh that makes them weak as other men, and the crafty foe succeeds in his attempt, and David falls. But in His grace God comes in, which Satan did not count upon, and Satan is defeated upon the battle-ground of his own choosing. "Yet again" he will attempt the destruction of God's kingdom; he has hitherto as it were worked behind the scenes. Now, no longer in secret, he "stands up" against Israel; and so plainly does he show himself that even his own servant Joab endeavours to dissuade David from his purpose. "And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1). Turn to Samuel, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah" (2 Samuel 24:1). We might suppose that "he" refers to "Lord"; and if so, it is because His anger was kindled against Israel and the sin of numbering the people is the judicial consequence of previous sin which the Lord would now judge. Therefore the Lord permitted Satan to stand up against Israel and provoke David to number them.

How marvellous the ways of God! Here is David, originally a shepherd boy, called to be king over Israel, and as such to be the honoured type of Him Who is to reign over Israel and all the earth. And in this typical place he is upheld by the mighty hand of God, and no enemy without or within, nor his own failures, can deprive him of that wondrous position; yet at the same time God remembers that he is but a man, and as such, though a greatly honoured saint, needs correction and reproof. Doubtless there was sin among the people, for the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel. And such sin as made the king — the means of blessing — to be the means of judgment upon them as well as of bringing chastisement upon himself.

Another thing we do well to mark, that the unwatchful and unfaithful saint is, surely unwittingly, but not the less really, the tool of Satan. It may be that pride and vainglory found a lodging place in David's heart, and so Satan found it no difficult matter to provoke him to number Israel. Satan, himself, glad of the occasion, stood up against the kingdom. The cunning Serpent has learned by this time that all his mighty efforts by means of enemies without, or (mightier still) through enemies

within, only end in bringing increased honour and renown to the king, and that the only way left to him is to destroy the kingdom (if possible) through the king himself. He has tried fleshly lusts and failed, now he turns to the lusts of the mind. If that which is common to man and to the brute has failed, he will try that which betokens affinity with himself, namely pride. For man's nature is now not only sensual, but also devilish. Satan allures David to think of his own greatness apart from God, and to number the people as if they were his people, and not the people of God.

1 Chronicles 21:1-30.

1892 6 The world in its friendships and the flesh in its worst forms have under the cunning wiles of Satan rudely shaken the king on the throne; and he would have stumbled to rise no more, but that the word and the purpose of God are in question. So grace meets and triumphs over the sin, for God is pledged to bring the king through all. "Yet again there is war." David is still the point of attack, as it were the citadel, hitherto found impregnable, of the kingdom which stands or falls with him. After proving that all attempts have as yet only visibly established David more firmly (if possible) in his kingdom, Satan turns to other means to attain his end. David's heart is lifted up with vanity, and he seeks to gratify himself with his own glory, as if independent of God, forgetting that it was God Who had clothed him with honour and renown as with a garment.

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

David's sin lies not in the bare fact of numbering the people; for they had been numbered by God's command before. God looks at the hidden spring. Fleshly and worldly ostentation, springing up in his heart, for the moment shut out the thought of God. Had David forgotten the grace that took him while yet unknown, and even unthought of by his own family, and anointed him to be king? His heart swelling with his own greatness, as if acquired by his own power, he would know the extent of his rule from Beersheba even unto Dan. God judged the secret motive, and later on David judges himself. "I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing; but now I beseech Thee do away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly" (1 Chronicles 21:8). Does not Psalms 30:1-12 refer to this time when prosperity for a moment hid God from his soul? "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." When restored, all breaks into the praise of God, "To the end my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent; O Lord my God. I will give thanks unto Thee for ever." To trust in prosperity, in earthly riches, is a danger for most if not all saints. It was so in the days of old when prosperity in earthly things was a mark of God's favour. How much greater the folly of trusting to them now, when our true riches are revealed to be heavenly and not earthly! To boast of spiritual gifts and attainments as if acquired by our own skill is even more offensive to the Lord, Who alone gives as it pleases Him. It is to put God's blessings and favours in the place of God Himself. If the perishable things of this life are His gift, how much more the spiritual and eternal! Forget not all His benefits, but bless the Lord.

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

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

Daniel 4:1-37 : appears to be in the main the confession of Nebuchadnezzar after his restoration to his throne. He relates how he was warned, his exceeding pride and sin, and how great the judgment upon him; how at the end of the days he lifted up his eyes, at the end of the seven times meted to his punishment; and his reason came as suddenly as it was taken from him; and his first thing is to honour Him that liveth for ever. Therefore he thinks it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God had wrought towards him (ver. 2). And he tells of a miracle at his return to his kingdom as striking as when men drove him away (he was not shut up in a madhouse). "At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me, and I was

established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto me." That his lords and courtiers should seek him after seven years' estrangement, that excellent majesty should be added unto him, mark the miraculous controlling power of Him Who holds all things in His hand. Nebuchadnezzar, in the opening and closing verses of this chapter (Daniel 4:1-37 :), praises the King of heaven, the One Who had shown signs and wonders to him.

David's praise rises higher, but then his confession was deeper, "I have done very foolishly." This was an intelligent saint, that an ignorant heathen. But the word of God closes its history of the mighty man of the earth, the head of gold, with his being a worshipper by grace. There is a faith that believes "that He is," and God is a rewarder of such. Shall we not see him in the kingdom of God among those who come from the east and the west, from the north and the south? There was not "much" given to him, but God looks to what a man hath. This attempt of Satan against Israel is also baffled, and becomes the occasion for a further and greater display of that grace which is the only foundation of God's kingdom among men. If the sword of the Lord is drawn out against rebellious man, His grace lingers over him, and puts back the sword, for a time into its sheath. It is here as we read in the prophets, "But I wrought for My name's sake." That wondrous name had been declared to Moses. A name which shot forth bright but transient rays before the glorious light was displayed in Christ. Oftentimes mercy and goodness rose above the law on which man had perched himself. What more glorious proof of that name could there be before Christ came than when Jehovah restrains the avenging sword that was already stretched out over Jerusalem? In Chronicles this is the last recorded attempt of Satan against the kingdom during David's life. In it David failing, but grace triumphing, brings to view, in a little, the grace now fully displayed in Christ; for here in result an altar is built on the floor of a Jebusite, a Gentile. The ark of the covenant was in the tent in the city of David (1 Chronicles 16:1). And the old altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle of the Lord which Moses made in the wilderness, "were at that season in the high place at Gibeon," and David is afraid to go there, because of the sword of the angel of the Lord. This sword is always connected with the old altar and the tabernacle that Moses made. But here is an altar altogether new, built by the man who feared to go to the other. Is not David's son made the occasion of showing that grace without law is the only foundation even for the kingdom, and that the priests of the Aaronic type have nothing to do with it? For it is David the king that builds it, and sacrifices on it, and the Lord answers by fire. It is a new way, unknown to the law, where are found both Israelite and Jebusite. What right had the priests who served at the altar in Gibeon to the altar built by the king? And what right have those who plead works as a ground of acceptance with God to the altar which is the expression of pure, unmingled, sovereign grace, without works? Here is a transient ray from that name long before declared to Moses, and now in far fuller character to all that have ears to hear.

1 Chronicles 22:1-19; 1 Chronicles 23:1-32; 1 Chronicles 24:1-31; 1 Chronicles 25:1-31; 1 Chronicles 26:1-32; 1 Chronicles 27:1-34; 1 Chronicles 28:1-21; 1 Chronicles 29:1-30.

1892 20 The opening words of chap. 22 taken in immediate connection with ver. 28th of the preceding chapter (of which the 29th and 30th are parenthetical) show David, as it were, recognising and bowing to the truth that neither himself could stand, nor the kingdom be established, save as the fruit of grace without the works of law. For that was the great truth stamped upon the altar built on Oman's threshing floor. It was in connection with, and the immediate sequence of, the word of grace, "It is enough, stay now thy hand," 1:e., mercy free and

pure. The old altar is connected with law, and judgment, and the sword; and David is afraid. His fear is not the result of having no confidence in the Lord, but rather a tacit confession that he deserved death and could not stand before the sword. He builds an altar and turns to it where there is no angel with a drawn sword to fear, and says, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel." This is the altar of thanksgiving for the mercy which rose above the law that demanded righteous judgment. With what deep feeling of heart David would say, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalms 148:1-14 :), and while fearing the just judgment of God, yet peacefully resting upon His grace symbolised by a new altar exclaim (as in Psalms 144:1-15 :), "I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God." A new altar demands and necessitates a new song. But the time was not yet come for the full display of this grace, indeed could only come by Him of Whom the Holy Spirit wrote by the pen of John, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). So afterwards Solomon and all the congregation go to the high place at Gibeon, the place of law, turning from the new altar on the threshing floor of the Jebusite, where only sovereign grace untrammelled by the requirements of the law was found. There were deeper evils in man yet to be brought into the light before God's due time came, when His grace revealed in the cross could meet the need of the worst. Therefore a little longer for Israel to continue under the law, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." This is the last attempt of Satan, recorded in Chronicles, against the kingdom during the life of David. He failed, but grace triumphed, and brings to view a better blessing, with victory through the grace of God, deliverance from the snares of the devil. Satan was bruised under his feet; and in the same manner we shall be victors, for it is written, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20) — your feet!

David's closing days are in peace, and the house of God is his uppermost thought. Though not allowed to build it, it is his part to prepare all the material, to give the patterns and appoint the order of service; and in giving these he was greater than Solomon who only built according to the prepared plan. God made David to understand (1 Chronicles 28:19), even as He made Moses understand when He showed the patterns for the service of the tabernacle, "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5). Besides the things, there were the twelve legions and their captains, and their monthly service. Surely all this care and minute arrangement will have its answer in the peaceful glories of Messiah's reign! Not without a special divine purpose are all the sons of Moses reckoned among the mass of common Levites. "Now concerning Moses, the man of God [he himself is most prominent, and distinguished by that title], his sons were named of the tribe of Levi." (1 Chronicles 23:14). No succession here of that kind of which a Judaising Christendom boasts. His immediate successor in leading Israel into the promised land was Joshua. the son of Nun. It was according to the wisdom of God in that dispensation that the sons of Aaron should inherit his honours, and ordinarily that the eldest should be high priest after him. All this necessarily passed away when the True and Great High Priest came, Who abides for ever. But to be the leader of His people was an appointment that God kept in His own immediate hand (Joshua 1:1-2); and both were needed.

We pass over the names and the apportioned work in the following chapters; not that they are unimportant, but the full meaning of their enumeration may be only clearly seen when all shall be accomplished under the reign of the true Solomon. But we may be allowed to point out that in all this the singers have a prominent place (1 Chronicles 25:1-31 is all about the singers). How the

Lord delights in the songs of His people! He names the families of the singers, and gives through David the psalms to be sung; and so we read as the heading to most, if not all, of the psalms, "To the chief musician," etc. Is it only Israel who is called to sing? Is it not so now, while the church, the future grand choir of the courts above, is now below? Yea, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice" (Php 4:4). In the presence of the assembled chiefs David encourages and warns his son: a word for him, but as in their hearing, for them also. Solomon was foremost among them, and the earthly link between Jehovah and the people. But this picture of the future glory and the kingdom will be soon dimmed; for the glory of its then appearance is to be committed to the hand of man. Will he maintain it? Solomon is warned that his present glory and magnificence, which was not of his own acquiring but a special gift from God, would soon pass away if he were not faithful. And with the glory of the king would pass away the happiness of the people. How intimately the king's glory, the kingdom's prosperity, the people's joys and obedience to the law of God are interwoven; and he, Solomon, would be responsible for all. How earnestly David exhorts him to be faithful and to take heed (1 Chronicles 28:1-10).

David in the presence of all the congregation blesses the Lord, ascribing all his glory to God. The people and he were but strangers and sojourners as all their fathers were. And of the gold and silver which they had so abundantly given, after all it was what God had already given them, and he acknowledges God's claim over it all; "for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." How beautiful and acceptable to God this low but only right place of humility and thanks-giving; how different from the human boastful spirit that led him to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1-30)! But now he has reached the end of his course, a point where for the display of the future glory of God's King he must give place to another. He has risen, step by step, through changing scenes, through sorrows and victories, and not without slips, personally to this point where Israel are now found worshipping God, and the joy is great, "And (they) did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness" (1 Chronicles 29:22). In this joyful festive scene how apparently abrupt the transition appears from David to Solomon. The man of war makes room for the prince of peace. David vanishes, as it were, swallowed up in the glory (we may say that in the person of his son), clothed upon with immortality; not here in the typical scene taken away by death, but, as the poets sing, like the star of the morning absorbed in the surpassing light of the rising sun. Surely a fitting close for him who was chosen to be a type of the Lord as a Man of war; and more by this divine silence was he honoured than was Jacob when all the elders of Egypt, with the chariots and horsemen, followed him to his grave. Nor need we ask how, for it is not David nor yet Solomon that fills the eye of the Holy Spirit, but the Christ and His never ending and unbroken glories. The last act of David is to call Israel to the feast, and his last words are "Now bless the Lord your God" (1 Chronicles 24:20). The congregation respond, and bless the Lord God of their fathers. But there is in this feast more than meets the natural eye. This was a feast of the Lord, and anticipative of a greater feast, and of a greater congregation, when the Son of David will say, "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation" (Psalms 22:25). Though not many souls might then have been able to be glad in its prophetic light, yet none the less it does point to a future feast, never to be thrown into the shade by succeeding rebellion and shame. For then a new heart will be given to the people, and clean water will be sprinkled upon them, and all shall know Jehovah. David begins the feast, clothed with the renown of a mighty conqueror who was never defeated, but whose course was marked with power and victory from the time that he rescued the lamb from the mouth of the lion and the hear, until the sons of the giant, the last of his enemies, fall

by his hand, or by the hand of his servants (1 Chronicles 20:8). But these warrior glories are mellowed in the golden splendour of Solomon, of peace and plenty and undisputed supremacy.

"And they [the people] made Solomon, the son of David, king the second time." This marks a change. David disappears. Solomon sits upon the throne of the Lord. Looking for a moment at this scene apart from its typical aspect, what a coronation (to use an earthly term) had Solomon! In the annals of the world, of its triumphs and rejoicings, was there ever such a national rejoicing as this? Yet how short even this magnificence falls of the exceeding glory and gladness to come! And this future gladness is unmingled with woe of any kind, while there is not a scene of the world's glory and apparent joy but has beneath its surface in not a few hearts a feeling (it maybe) of incurable sadness. Here is no masked grief, but joy unfeigned. Yet it is not the very image, but a shadow of that to come. For Israel, David, and Solomon, in this first book of Chronicles, are but the frame containing God's picture of His Son in His earthly glory. What if some of the colours in that picture are human and therefore dark? They only enhance the brightness of Him Who stands in the foreground, Who is the centre of all; the sun illuminating not only Israel but the whole world. The last verses (1 Chronicles 29:26 etc.) are an addendum; for the 25th verse is a fitting close to the announcement that Solomon "sat on the throne of the LORD." What other in such a position could there be that "the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel." The picture of the glory is rolled up. The following verses are but the notice of David's death, and where the records of his reign may be found — his death as a man, not in his typical aspect, (that has ceased,) and Solomon takes his father's place.

S. Thoughts on the Parables in Mat_13:1-5

Thoughts on the Parables in Matthew 13:1-58.

Original Contributions.

R. Beacon, Bible Treasury, 2nd Edition, Volume 1, January 1857.

(1st. Edition, January 1857 [01:130])

The Sower The Tare-field The Tree

Leaven The House The Hid Treasure The Pearl of Great Price The Net

(1) [01:129] The rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the Jews, and their being cast off in consequence, for a season, was the occasion, foreseen by God, of bringing to pass His gracious purpose, that salvation should be offered to all men, whether Jew or Gentile. Jesus takes to Himself a new name, and fills new offices. Servants had been sent to the husbandmen keeping the vineyard, and at last the Son: we know how they were treated. "He came to his own [things], and his own [people] received him not." The miracles, which He wrought in their sight, were by them attributed to Satanic power; and the unpardonable sin was committed in blaspheming the Holy Ghost. Had they received Him, doubtless the kingdom would have been immediately established, and the Son of David would have sat upon the throne of David. But "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and they would not have Jesus to reign over them. Does judgement immediately overtake them? No: their sin opened the floodgates for the display of God's most wondrous grace. He is about to gather some of every clime, and, by the operation of His Spirit, to unite them into the Church, in which the names of Jew and Gentile should not be known, where there is neither Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free; where there is only one bond of union, but that the most intimate — Christ the Bridegroom, and the Church the bride; He the Head, she the body; each individual a member of this body, and all members one of another, where the Holy Ghost Himself, by His actual presence, and personal indwelling in each saint, is the bond. There is formed and exhibited a union such as the Lord Himself referred to when He prayed, "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." Meantime the earthly kingdom is in abeyance, — the kingdom, of which Isaiah gives the moral picture in Isaiah 11:1-16, Isaiah 12:1-6; of which Ezekiel gives the sacred and metropolitan relations in the latter chapters of his prophecy, viz., the service of the temple, etc., the manifestation of the visible presence of God in a higher degree than was effected by the Shechinah of old, insomuch that the name of the city shall be "the LORD is there." Daniel, also, gives its external relations with other kingdoms — if the term might be used, I would say the political aspect of the kingdom. It breaks up and destroys the Gentile powers. The Stone smites the image, and the wind carries away the very dust of it, and every vestige is effaced. "He shall be king over all the earth." This kingdom, we repeat, is postponed that the heirs may be gathered for heavenly glory.

How great the love of our God! He became poor that we might be made rich. He put in abeyance His glory as God, the ever blessed second person of the Trinity. He gave up His power, and dominion, and government, and majesty as the heir of David's throne, as king of Israel, and as He whose name should be honoured among the Gentiles, that there might be associated with Him, in His future glory, a Bride who is to pass through the same sufferings (save that of atonement,) to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ, then to be presented perfect to the Bridegroom, free from all taint of sin, spotless, and holy. Oh, if every Christian did but know and act up to his glorious calling! How soon might we not hail His return, and the rapture of the saints! But to return to our chapter — Christ comes not to the vine, the symbol of the Jewish nation in its religious aspect, seeking fruit, but commences a new work. He is a sower going forth to sow. The first parable is not said to be a similitude of the kingdom. The seed is called the word of the kingdom, and the effect produced upon different characters is illustrated by the seed falling upon different ground. The opposition which the seed — the word — meets with is shown also: "Some fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and gathered them up." The Lord explains, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the way-side." The truth of God makes no impression on his mind, which is under the power and dominion of the father of lies — the power of death. It is an exceedingly desperate case. The soul is completely in Satan's hands, and appears to be the farthest removed from the life-giving power of the word of God — of the word of Him who is the resurrection and the life. The second case is equally bad, though apparently not so unpromising. The seed is received into stony ground: such are they who receive the word joyfully, but yet with the mind and feelings merely. The intellect may admire the truth, so far as it is understood; the natural affections of the heart may be acted upon by the exhibition of a crucified Saviour; but it is a superficial reception. The truth, though admired, is not permitted to search the soul, and to probe the conscience, and (resting only in the affections and understanding, which are but "the flesh") no wonder that when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, such are offended. The hindering power in the third case is equally clear. The cares of this age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, are all of the world, and opposed to the Father. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

There is exhibited in these three instances the antagonism of the devil, the flesh, and the world, to the word of the Lord. There was the death-stupor of the first, no feeling, no apprehension of the truth, without understanding, like the beasts that perish. There was immediate joyful acting in the second, but the conscience was not reached. The necessity of self-abasement was not felt, and, for the time, opposition was dormant. But when self-denial was called for, when it became necessary to take up the cross, then the fleshly love of ease rose up in opposition; and they are "offended," notwithstanding the partial light and understanding, — so inveterate is the enmity between the flesh and the Spirit. The lust of the eye and the pride of life, developing themselves in the cares of this world and in the deceitfulness of riches, show their antagonism to the life-giving word in the third case. All are opposed to God; and though this opposition is manifested in different ways, yet are they all in the end fatal and destructive. Perhaps we may see, in these three cases, the opposition that is manifested to the Son, as administering the power of the kingdom against the wicked one; to the Spirit, as overcoming or detecting the workings and deceitful power of the flesh; to the Father, in contrast with the love of the world. For the way-side hearer is quite enthralled by the power of death and Satan; the stony ground hearer shows the flesh lusting

against the Spirit; and the hearer choked with the cares, etc., of this world exhibits the love of the world as an antagonistic principle to the love of the Father. The devil, the flesh, and the world, combine to oppose the Son, the Spirit, and the Father — the Three-one God. The good-ground hearer is the exact opposite of the way-side hearer: the latter does not understand, the former does. In the two other cases there is the appearance, but not the fruit. Here we have the manifestation of the power of God, by which the devil, the flesh and the world are overcome; and according to their subjection to the word sown in their hearts, they bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some an hundred fold. Has this threefold division of the good-ground hearers any reference to the three powers of opposition? In the progress of the believer from the power of death to the full enjoyment of the life of God, the Son, the Spirit, and the Father all work. We do not mean that the believer progresses from knowing the Son to the Spirit and the Father; but if the believer, although passed from death to life, through the application of the atoning blood of Christ, does not in all things yield to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is not he so far under the power of the flesh? Is he not carnal? (Compare 1 Corinthians 1:3) And if so, how can he be enjoyed, and how manifested that supreme love of the Father, which is seen only by and in those who are practically crucified to the world, and the world to them? Is it not true that the love of the world exposes us to yield to the flesh, and that the yielding to the flesh tends to bring under the power of Satan?

(2) 2nd Edition, Volume 1, March 1857.

(1st. Edition, March 1857 [01:161])

[01:159] The question may be asked, Why are the hearts of some compared to good ground, when the scripture teaches, that all hearts are "deceitful and desperately wicked?" Not because there is anything naturally good therein. Facts only are presented here; the operating cause is not; it is simply the fact of the preaching of the word, and the reception of it. In some cases there is brutish insensibility, or cold indifference; in others, a paramount love for, or fear of, the world. All this may, in the natural man, be owing to, or at least aggravated by, constitutional and educational differences; but in all cases, without the preparation of the heart by the Holy Ghost to receive the word, there would be unfruitfulness.

While, then, on the one hand, there is no intimation of the grace which prepares the heart (which is quite outside of man's exertion or intelligence) so that it becomes like the good ground, on the other, nothing is said as to the cause of the rejection of the word. Our Lord does say, "They had no root;" but even this is matter of fact rather than the cause. Man is responsible for the reception of the word; and his responsibility comes out prominently here. (Matthew 13:9.) That which the Spirit of God does present is first the preaching of the word, then its reception, or rejection, as the case may be; and this quite distinct from the secret spring which operates to produce reception.

(Matthew 13:24.) "Another parable," etc. In the preceding parable we have the word of the kingdom; the good seed has been sown, the gospel has been preached. The kingdom of heaven is now begun. We are carried forward in advance of the moment when the Lord was speaking. The kingdom commenced when Jesus had ascended (i.e. the mysteries of the kingdom); it will only be when He comes again, that the kingdom will be established in power. We have now presented to us three pictures of the kingdom under three different aspects, but all of them external. The stand-point whence we view it is the earth. We have had a parabolic description of the introduction of Christianity into the world. A new order of things was then about to take place, a new

dispensation, where the visible glory of God would not be manifested as it had been in the holy of holies within the veil of the temple, but the establishment of a kingdom on the earth to be under the rule of Christ Himself dwelling in heaven. But this kingdom would be marred and spoiled by the enemy; yet would men profess to have Christ for their king. MYSTERIES truly! — man, calling himself a Christian, in league with the world that rejected and crucified the King, condemning the world that did it, yet loving the world, and denying the right and the truth of the King coming again to take what is His own. "Why speakest thou . . . in parables?" Because it is not given to the multitude, to those outside, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And in the present hour the kingdom of heaven is a mystery to the world. Only those inside, in the house, can know them. Before the multitude our Lord proceeds to give an account of the kingdom, a parabolic and prophetic description of it, right on to the end, when the mysteries will cease, and there will be the open and visible establishment of it in power. The Lord does not speak of the Father's purpose in permitting such an anomalous state of the kingdom to exist. Of this He spoke to His disciples in the house, when the multitude were sent away. There He speaks to them anticipatively of their future position and calling while yet on the earth, viz., destined for heavenly places. They were told of their existence in the purpose of God before the world was, that they in their corporate capacity were a treasure to Him, yea, "one pearl of great price." It is only when we are in the house with Jesus, that we can enter into the views of the kingdom unfolded in the last three parables contained in this chapter. But previously (Matthew 13:1-33) the Lord sits by the sea-side, outside for the multitude, and He gives them three distinct pictures of the kingdom of heaven, the first of them terminating with the end. It is worthy of notice that the Lord gives us the plain teaching of two of His parables, which is a divine assistance to a right understanding of the others. In the parable of the tares and the wheat, the distinction between the real and the merely nominal professor is preserved. There are real disciples in the marred kingdom, as well as in the field there is wheat. Their entire separation takes place only in the end. In the parables of the tree and of the leaven, this distinction is not noticed; it is the general character of the kingdom. It would seem as if the wheat, the children of the kingdom, bear so small a proportion to the tares, that they fail to give a general character to it: they are apparently lost sight of. In fact the tree exhibits the kingdom of heaven as a great earthly power, and the leaven presents us with its doctrinal character. The position of the children, even their existence, is not noticed in these two.

Let us look a little at the tare-field. The good seed is sown by the Son of man, and the field is the world, i.e., it is the place where the kingdom is established. All that is good is the work of the Son of man; all that is evil in the work of the enemy. The tares do not represent all the evil that is in the world, but all the evil in connection with the kingdom. They have been brought into the field (the world) among the wheat, by the arch-foe, for the very purpose of marring the work of the Lord. But although the outward aspect of the kingdom be spoiled, yet the purpose of God in permitting it, — nay, strange, but sweet truth, the very purpose of God which was (to speak as men) contingent upon the rejection of the King, and the mysteries of the kingdom, — was entirely beyond the reach, if not the ken, of the enemy; for the word of God cannot fail, — "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." Let the external character of the kingdom be ruined, yet in it, though hidden, there shall be found those who are in reality "the children of the kingdom." But it is a solemn truth that the character which the kingdom takes is from those "who profess and call themselves Christians;" and of these professors so outnumbering are the tares, that the entire aspect of the kingdom is spoiled, and no longer exhibits that which it ought to have exhibited, viz.,

that which would correspond to the Sower and to the seed. The term professor is used in its most extensive application. The true disciple is symbolised by wheat, evil men by tares. These evil men are not at first visible, but by and by they are developed. "When the blade sprung up, then appeared the tares also;" and this state of things is to continue, for the tares are not to be gathered up, they are to grow with the wheat, until the harvest. So long as the present dispensation lasts, so long will there be evil and wicked men found in connection with Christianity, enjoying the outward blessings and privileges which it confers, and even in some instances professing actual discipleship to Christ. How very soon the tares appeared even during the lives of the apostles! What a character is theirs, as portrayed by Peter, by Jude, and by Paul, who tells us that the mystery of iniquity was working in his time! In the end there will be the full development of it, after the hindrance is removed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17). It is not intended to assert that "that wicked" will arise out of the professing church, although it may be so, but out of that confused and heterogeneous mass, resulting from the unholy union which now subsists between the world and the professing church.

True, there is a company of real disciples — the children of the kingdom. They are warned of the tares: the doom of Christendom is made known to them, a doom far more fearful than that of apostate man in any other dispensation. The tares will be bound in bundles for the fire. But there is a hope for the children of God, the good seed. They shall escape, and be out of the great tribulation.

These, however, as distinct from the mere professor, are not under consideration in this parable. The territory embraced within the limits of the kingdom, is that which is called Christendom, and it is those dwelling within those limits that give character to the kingdom. It is a mixed character, and such it must remain. The servants to whom the keeping of the field was entrusted fell asleep; and meanwhile the enemy sows tares: when they awake, they essay at once to remedy the evil which had crept in by their unwatchfulness. Nay, says the Lord, "lest ye root up also the wheat." Behold, here, the tender care that the Lord takes of His own! Rather than one single ear of wheat should be injured, or pulled up before it was ripe, let the tares grow; rather than the little body of true believers should be broken up in its infancy, ere the Bride be ready for the Bridegroom, let the judgement upon the wicked be suspended. The true sons of the kingdom must be perfected, whose names were written in the book of life before the world was. The Lord could not come in judgement before these are all secured. Therefore the servants are not allowed to act in judgement.* Let the tares alone. The children of God now stand in grace, and only grace must they exhibit; they have nothing at all to do with earthly judgement. Let the tares alone. If they could not keep the tares out, when the field was free from them, much less can they root them out now — "Lest ye root up also the wheat."

{* If it were a question of the Church, as such, discipline would be obligatory. "Why do ye not judge them that are within?" God judgeth those without.} Is not this same care for His people seen in the long respite vouchsafed to the antediluvians? Not only is the long-suffering of God seen, who bore long with the sinners before the flood, and gave them space for repentance, when even every day that Noah worked at the ark, and every plank, and every nail, and every stroke of his hammer, was a warning, and a threatening of the impending judgement; but God could do nothing till Noah was safe in the ark, after He Himself had shut him in: even then there was a respite of seven days (perfect forbearance). But if Noah had been as long again, until he was shut up safe in the ark, so

long would judgement have been delayed. So also in the case of the five cities of the plain. Lot must be provided for before the fiery storm could descend. The Lord said He could do nothing till Lot was gone out of the city, and the little city Zoar was spared for his sake and at his entreaty. For the sake of the righteous the wicked are spared. "Ye are the salt of the earth." Had there been ten righteous men found in those five cities, they had been spared. And the world is now preserved because the children of God are in it, for "he is not willing that any should perish," and all these; the true Church, must and will be taken out of it before judgement descends upon it. Then will the tares be not bound merely, but burnt; but the wheat will have been secured in the barn.

We have, then, this fact, that whatever phase the kingdom may present to the world, there will be some good in it. Nothing is here said as to the amount of good or evil — simply that both are there; that they are really distinct the one from the other; but that this distinction will be made fully manifest only in the harvest.

(3) The Tree.

2nd Edition, Volume 1, April 1857.

(1st. Edition, April 1857 [01:173])

[01:171] In the parable of the tree, we have the representation of what the kingdom of heaven becomes in worldly greatness. That it is not what God intended is evident from the enemy's work recorded in the preceding parable. It must be borne in mind that the kingdom was presented to the responsibility of man; but he failed here, as everywhere else, where responsibility is in question. He slept; and while he slept the enemy sowed tares. Doubtless, it is for wise purposes that God permitted it, and all must result in the exaltation of His own grace; while at the same time, the fact that "men slept" proves the utter ruin and hopelessness of man in his natural state, and also that where anything depends upon his faithfulness, nothing but loss and condemnation can follow. Tares being found sown among the wheat must necessarily alter the appearance of the field, and in God's judgement it is spoilt. The servants perceived the altered appearance, and wished at once to remedy the evil. But it was wholly beyond their power; and lest in the endeavour to remedy this evil, they should commit a greater (i.e., root up some of the wheat), they were not allowed to attempt it. It no doubt is matter of sorrow and deep humiliation to those who are instructed in the kingdom to see it thus marred; but, knowing the will of God concerning it, they are not to meddle with it, but to be separate from all that bears the form of evil. The tares will be bound in bundles to be burnt. Man may not deem them to be offensive — rather are they pleasing to him, for he naturally loves all that is hateful to God. Possibly he may imagine them pleasing to God, for his understanding is darkened. But they are the work of the enemy. The dispensation of the kingdom, then, as a whole, awaits the judgement of God; and the same doom awaits it as befell the dispensation that preceded (Romans 11:17-24). It is already been observed that these similitudes of the kingdom are prophetic; and what is presented in the tree is the picture of the kingdom as it becomes subsequently to, and in consequence of, the presence of the tares among the wheat. "Kingdom of heaven," and "Church of God," * do not signify the same thing precisely; they contain distinct ideas. But the calling of the Church takes place while the kingdom exists in mystery; and all the professors who are found in the field claim to belong, in some sort, to the Church. This greatly modifies the position of those comprehended within (if we may so say) the boundaries of the kingdom. Many things are true of God's Church (real members we here speak of) which

cannot be predicated of the subjects of the kingdom, as such simply. The being members of Christ's body, the Church, or bride, involves privileges, and responsibilities too, which are beyond those of the kingdom merely; but, seeing they assume this position, they lie under increased obligations. More than this, it follows that the professing body is here under the similitude of a tree, and whatever the character, of the tree before God, such is the character of the nominal Church.

{* The Church of necessity supposes one only body of persons, believing Jews and Gentiles, united on common ground, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven and united to Christ there and by the Spirit in each. The kingdom does not necessarily, not at all in itself, imply this union, but it is a display of government on certain given principles. Before this kingdom comes in power, Matthew 13:1-58 shows us the mysteries of its present form owing to the rejection of the King and His exaltation in heaven, and not yet on earth, as far as manifestation goes. This peculiar phase of the kingdom gives room for our blessed privileges as sharing the sufferings of Christ, to be joint-heirs and to reign with Him, when He takes His great power, and, having received the kingdom, returns. The kingdom does not rise above individual privileges and responsibility.}

(Matthew 13:31.) "Another parable put he forth," etc. The kingdom of heaven is symbolised by a grain of mustard seed, which becomes a great tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. We have not the explanation of both these symbols given us in this chapter; but we have them in God's book, which therefore alone furnishes the key by which we may unlock the meaning of this parable. To look elsewhere is to dishonour it and the Spirit of God. Every symbol in His word has also its meaning there. However contrary it may be to any cherished human theory, it behoves us to accept His explanation, and to reject every other. We find, in Ezekiel 31:3-9, the Assyrian power compared to a great tree, a mighty cedar in Lebanon. His branches are fair, his boughs cast a broad shadow, in them the fowls of heaven make their nest, under them the beast of the field bring forth their young. "I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him." It is evident here that Assyria is a vast power, for great nations dwelt under his shadow. It is under the similitude of a tree; and the fowls that nestled in his branches, and the beasts that sought protection and shelter under them, are, according to the word of God, the surrounding nations. We do not enter into the moral character of the antitype. All that is necessary now to observe is that the tree typifies a towering earthly power.

Again, we have the prophecy of the Lord's kingdom established in power, under a similar image, (Ezekiel 17:22-24,) and here also is a place for fowl of every wing. This is the millennial kingdom described in Isaiah 11:1-16 — the Lord's earthly glory, when He will reign in righteousness and power, giving forth His law from mount Zion, and holding in subjection all nations. "All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord." That the trees are here mentioned (i.e., the earth's grandees and powers) in connection with the tree of the Lord's planting is evidence that this prophecy looks forward to the millennium, when every power and Gentile dynasty shall recognise the superiority of the kingdom of the Son of David. In a word, this is the kingdom established in power (and not the mysterious form of the kingdom of heaven, which is the subject in the parables). But here, as in the former case, setting aside the moral character of the kingdom, it is a great power over the earth that is foretold. Turn now to Daniel 4:1-37. Here is Nebuchadnezzar himself under the similitude of a great tree. All the power of the kingdom was absolutely vested in his own person. More instances might be adduced; but these are sufficient to show that a tree in

scripture is used to typify an earthly power, for good or ill.

Hence we conclude that the kingdom of heaven has assumed the aspect and the position of an earthly power; that is to say, the result of bringing in the Christian dispensation has been that men have availed themselves of Christianity, and have used the name of Christ, for the development of a vast hierarchical power, for the establishment of a kingdom, which as represented by the tree, has shot forth its branches and extended itself far and wide. Shelter, protection, and a habitation are given to the birds of the air ("they lodge in the branches thereof"); and this is dignified with the name of the "Church of God." *

{* "It was the church, with its institutions, its magistrates, its temporal power, which strove triumphantly against the internal dissolution which convulsed the empire and against barbarity; which subdued the barbarians themselves, and became the link, the medium, the principle of civilisation, as between the Roman and barbarian worlds."— Guizot on Civilisation, Lecture 2.} And if we take ever so cursory a view of Christendom, (which we take to be the wheat and tare field,) the connection between the nations and powers of the world, and the nominal church, is plain. The so-called church lends her influence and authority to the rulers of the world, and they use the name of Christ to further their own political views; to extend their own power, and to crush that of their opponents, whether these opponents are professed enemies to the name of Christ or not. Does not history furnish abundant proof? Has not the pathway of the nominal Church, ever since its first union with the world in the person of the emperor Constantine, been a systematic grasping at the things of the world, seeking for power, for wealth, for worldly influence, for connection with the rulers of the world; yea, to hold even them under authority! What do we see now in Europe? The last was originated in a dispute about the so-called "holy places" in Jerusalem. The pretensions of the Emperor of Russia to the protectorate of Christians in Turkey are well known, as is the claim of the French Emperor to represent the Latin Church. All are agreed that the ruling motives were aggrandisement of self and extension of empire. Need we allude to things nearer home — the pronouncing of blessings upon soldiers, and arms, and banners? What is this but using the name of Christ for mere political purposes? A mighty engine it once was, and may yet be, to move the populace, and to make the desires of ambition popular. But in the sight of God, of Christ, whose name is thus dishonoured, how awful! That which calls itself by the name of Christ is extending its branches, seeking to be identified with every movement in the world, inviting the birds of the air to take shelter in its branches, and saying, I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow. There may be no necessity for supposing that such an earthly power as a tree represents is wicked in the abstract. Other circumstances will determine whether it be a good or an evil. But when the Church, whose calling is not earthly, but heavenly, whose city is not formed by hands but built and made of God, which is called to be separate from the world — it crucified to the world and the world crucified to it, then we perceive that connection with earthly power becomes a positive departure, an apostasy.

Alas! the professing church is a part of the world, enjoys its power and ease, seeks its emoluments and honours. To say nothing of Romanism, which is a professed ruler over secular powers, do not the Protestant bodies covet and contend eagerly for the prizes of the earth? Do we not see the means and appliances of the world brought to bear upon the extension of what they call Christianity? True, we are told that the "silver and gold," which Christendom boasts in now, is gathered for the extension of the gospel; but is this the divine way of spreading the good news?

When the Lord commissioned His disciples to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, did He mean them to raise funds from the Gentiles? Doubtless, it is the duty of the Church of God to provide for the wants of those who preach and teach, if needy; but does the going about and begging of the world a maintenance show faith or love? Is this the teaching of Galatians 6:1-18, or 1 Corinthians 9:1-27, or 3 John? And then what a complicated machinery! How full of earthly contrivances! Past history and present facts confirm the prophetic view given in the parable.

(4) Leaven.

2nd Edition, Volume 1, May 1857.

(1st. Edition, May 1857 [01:189])

[01:186] In the parable of the grain of mustard seed becoming a great tree, we have the kingdom of heaven as a power in the earth subduing other powers, and as such seeking prominency in the world. The rulers in it have had for their professed object the extension of the name of Christ, but this name in their hands was a means merely to exercise their own ambition. They sought to enlarge the bounds of Christendom, and succeeded in the attempt. In the prosecution of their design they have displayed the greatest energy and the most untiring zeal, they have evinced a readiness and aptitude to use all the appliances that the world could afford. The most astute policy has characterised the measures, framed by some, followed by most, which had for their aim the bringing of the temporal power to acknowledge the superiority of the spiritual. Sovereigns have been urged to oppress their subjects; subjects have been incited to rebel against their sovereigns; divide and conquer was the secret maxim which governed all their proceedings. The lust of earthly grandeur is discernible long before the secular power of the empire allied itself to the professing Church when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire. But this alliance once made, the corruption which adversity and persecution had in some degree held in check showed itself boldly; and flattery and intrigue, and all the arts that men use to obtain influence, were employed by those who claimed to be followers of the apostles, and to have the care of the Church. The kings of the earth were courted by the servants of Him whom these kings took counsel together to destroy. What a change came over the profession of Christianity! Christians are called to suffer NOW that they might reign THEN. But instead of suffering, the high places of the earth were coveted and obtained. Satan offered the glory of the world to Christ if He would worship him — "for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." (Luke 4:6.) Jesus would not have glory from the devil. But Christians have had this glory, Christians still enjoy and seek it. Who gave it them? By what means did they possess it? "To whomsoever I will I give it." Solemn thought! the power and the glory that Christ rejected the professing church greedily covets. We have societies composed of some real Christians, but for the most part of nominal christians and worldlings, for the avowed purpose of propagating Christianity. They yield a something to each other. The one has civilisation for his object, the amelioration of the world; the other yet professes to aim at christianising the world. But is civilisation the (yea, an) object of the christian missionary? Does he not call to separation from the world? "Let the dead bury their dead," etc. To spread the gospel and the truth is the work of the Christian, and of him alone; the means and the agencies employed should be Christian and not worldly. If the tares and the wheat join to promote Christianity, alas for the wheat! How can such concord exist? How can these two

walk together? Is it not that the place and calling of the Church of God has been forgotten, and the kingdom of heaven has rather become in men's apprehension a kingdom of the earth? If any ask why God permitted such confusion, there can be but one answer: the enemy sowed tares in the field; the work of the sower for the present was spoiled, and judgement was certain. But though known to God, it was not manifest to men, and the worldliness, the effect of the presence of the tares, must be made manifest; for it is the way of God to make evil manifest before punishing it. The persecutions which the early Church suffered were lessons of God, and might have shown the antagonism of the world; but when these divine teachings were disregarded, and the spirit of the world still infected the professing body like an incurable disease, God gave it up to follow its own will, allowing it to fall into the world's arms — to become a mere vine of the earth, doomed to destruction. The true position of the Church, as the body and expression of the glorified Christ, was very soon lost. The Holy Ghost, as the animating and directing energy, was grieved, hindered, and practically denied; and by degrees earthly hopes began to displace the waiting for Christ from heaven. The barrier which the Lord had established to prevent the influx of worldliness being broken down, there was nothing to prevent the professing body, as a whole, from becoming thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the world; and the consequence was the substituting of a religion made up of Jewish ceremonies, heathen rites, and worldly principles, for the faith once delivered to the saints. This seems to be the leavening of the lump.

"Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven," etc. Here we have the kingdom presented, not as a secular worldly power, but as a principle or doctrine which thoroughly pervades all that is submitted to its influence. There are some who conceive this parable to be descriptive of the grace of God in the soul. But while the kingdom of God is said to be "righteousness and peace," etc., it is never so said of the kingdom of heaven, which is always dispensational, and not moral merely. The kingdom of heaven is ever the kingdom of God, but the expression "kingdom of God" does not always mean "kingdom of heaven." This parable, too, be it remarked, in common with those preceding, was spoken outside to the multitude, giving an external picture of the kingdom which sets aside another idea, viz., that the leaven is symbolical of real christianity, spreading universally until the whole world be converted. But there is no such prediction respecting the gospel in the whole book of God; on the contrary, in the very first parable in this chapter, out of four classes to whom the word is preached, there is only one class which brings forth fruit. It is inferred that the word will not be universally received. In the field the tares, as such, continue to the end; they do not become wheat. In the parable of the net, there were caught both good and bad fishes. All exhibit the same truth, that evil men will be found in every age up to the end. There are many passages in the Old Testament which foretell a time when all in Israel shall know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest; a time of all but universal blessedness. But nowhere is it said that this will be the effect of preaching only; other and far different means besides will be used to accomplish this. The unprejudiced mind may easily know that all these passages predicting future peace and happiness for the world refer to a future age, to be ushered in by judgement upon those that have not received the gospel. Another reason for rejecting the above interpretation is, that it gives to the symbol "leaven," a meaning which it has nowhere else in scripture. Leaven never suggests the idea of anything good. Wherever used, it is symbolical of corruption. In the Mosaic economy all the types which have an especial reference to Christ were free from leaven. Where the worship of the saint was shadowed forth, there was leaven, as denoting the presence of the flesh, which though mortified, and by the energy of the Holy Spirit

kept under, yet will ever be present while he is dwelling in this present world. It will only be when the mortal and the corruptible shall be changed into the immortal and the incorruptible, that worship shall be free from the effects of the flesh. So in its most virulent and worst forms, as exhibiting the extreme enmity of the unrenewed heart against God, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees is called leaven. We read too of the leaven of Herod. The apostle Paul speaks of the unleavened bread of sincerity, and here, by implication, leaven symbolises hypocrisy. It may be remarked also, but with no desire to press it beyond its legitimate import, that the hiding of the leaven is not the act of the Lord. The parable, then, presents the universal diffusion of the Christian religion within certain limits — not the growth of faith or the communication of life, which is rather represented by the wheat which took root in the ground; not the rise and progress of an ecclesiastico-secular power, "a great tree," resembling the symbols of an Egyptian or Babylonish dynasty; but a definite sphere filled with the profession of Christ. It is the state of the kingdom which will bear a resemblance to the act of a woman who hides leaven in three measures of meal until the whole be leavened. To all but God the distinction between good and evil is lost. Outwardly it is an indiscriminate mass which bears the name of Christ. God simply shows us here the historical fact; and the external appearance is a lump thoroughly leavened. As the tree represented Christendom aspiring to power in the earth, so the leaven, spreading over the three measures of meal, sets forth Christian doctrine professed and propagated throughout a given sphere. It does not appear to be the design of the Lord to pronounce a moral sentence in these early parables to the multitude. Of course the spiritual man ought to judge of all things; but here the object is to represent such facts as meet the eye and mind of men outside. Nor have they failed to be observed, as will appear from the following passage of Guizot's History of Civilisation in Europe:—

"The Church was a society regularly constituted, having principles, rules, and discipline of its own, and actuated by an ardent desire to extend its influence, and to vanquish its conquerors. Among the Christians of that epoch [when the barbarians broke up the Roman empire], in the ranks of the clergy, there were men who had pondered deeply upon all moral and political questions, who held fixed opinions and energetic sentiments upon all things, and strove strenuously to propagate them and render them paramount. No society ever made such efforts as did the Christian church, from the fifth to the tenth century, TO EXTEND ITS SPHERE, AND SMOOTH THE EXTERNAL WORLD INTO ITS OWN LIKENESS. When we study its particular history, we shall perceive the full extent of its labours. It attacked barbarism, as it were, on all its sides, to civilise by subduing it." This was just the leavening process going on under the hand of the "woman." Alas! we know it was but the spread of corrupt christianity; so that here, as elsewhere, the leaven had, in fact, its usual counterpart. Nor does even doctrine remain sound where there is the mere unhallowed desire of spreading profession, and where the heart is not subject to God, and purified by faith. Thus, throughout Christendom, systematic judaising became the rule, mingled with not a few accommodations of heathen rites and practices, in order to please the multitude and facilitate their so-called conversion. The Church was regarded as an improvement and complement of the Jewish polity. Israel's restoration and future hopes were denied, and so the ruin was helped on; because the Gentiles began to regard the forfeited place of the Jews as their own. Thus becoming earthly, they rose in their own conceit, liable and sure in God's time to be cut off. (Romans 11:1-36)

(5) The House.

2nd Edition, Volume 1, July 1857.

(1st. Edition, July 1857 [01:228])

[01:224] The multitude are sent away, and Jesus goes into the house with His disciples. They say, "declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." They, had asked, (Matthew 13:10) "why speakest thou unto them in parables?" and the Lord's answer shows the awful position of the Jews. They were become a rejected people. Lo-ammi was written upon them. They had been a people separated to God. They had been a vineyard planted in a pleasant place, walled in and kept apart from the surrounding Gentiles by rites and ceremonies of God's own instituting, by a law and ordinances of His giving, and righteousness was demanded of them. They failed in producing righteousness. God looked for grapes, and behold wild grapes. Prophets, the messengers of God, were sent to them; but like the husbandmen in the parable, (Matthew 21:33) they "beat one, killed another, and stoned another." Promise and threatening, blessing and chastisement, entreaty, expostulation, and reproach were all used, but in vain. The tenderest appeals were made by God. He reminds them of all that He had done to draw them to obedience, but they will not hear. What anxiety, if we may use the word, is seen in the messages sent through the prophets, that they might escape impending judgement! Everything necessary was there to maintain them in their exalted position, had they been obedient. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God " (Micah 6:8). But the kingdom must be brought to them, that their rejection of it may be made public to the world. John the Baptist cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Repentance, confession, and baptism were the means pointed out by him for an entrance into, or preliminaries for, the kingdom. But him they beheaded. Jesus comes and preaches the advent of the kingdom. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He comes with His hands full of blessing; He gives numerous instances of His power and goodness; He went about "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people," casting out devils and banishing them from the land, samples of the blessing and the power of the kingdom, brought for their acceptance, but by them rejected. They would not have the kingdom with Christ. His citizens hated Him, saying, "we will not have this man to reign over us." They ascribed His power, in casting out devils, to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (Matthew 9:1-38). But Jesus still works in grace: it is not quite over with them yet. He sends His disciples to herald the coming of the kingdom in all their cities, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, forbidding them to go in the way of the Gentiles. Though they had rejected Christ, they had not yet publicly rejected them. But whether one lamented to them, they mourned not, or piped; they danced not; that is to say, in whatever way the testimony of God came, there was no response. The testimony of God was ever rejected by them, save by a remnant. The Pharisees seek to kill Jesus, and He hides Himself. They put the seal to their iniquity and condemnation in again ascribing His work to the prince of the devils (Matthew 12:24). Now they are judged. The Lord decidedly breaks with them. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, neither in this age nor in that to come; and Jesus severs the natural tie which connected Him, as the Messiah after the flesh, with them, and only acknowledges the relationship of obedience to His Father. They tell Him that His mother and His brethren desire to speak to Him. But who are His mother and brethren? He points to His disciples — "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." This rejection of Jesus and the

consequent destruction of Jerusalem cut short all God's dealings with them as a nation for the time. They were set aside, and a new work, as we have seen, was entered upon. Meantime judicial blindness is sent upon them, and the saying of Esaias the prophet is fulfilled. Therefore He speaks to them in parables. (See Matthew 13:11-15). Before this the Lord had not spoken in parables, but now that He is the rejected One, now that Israel is cut off for the time, He speaks in parables — none understand but they whom He instructs. And the disciples take the place which Jesus had marked out for them. He called them His mother, and sister, and brethren, and in the holy nearness and confidence of this position, they say not, "Why speakest thou in parables? but "Declare unto us." etc. They are now within the house in presence of their Lord — alone with Jesus — happy place! — the multitude, or world outside. The separation is marked and distinct. Now there is communion. And where else can the Christian enjoy communion, save in the presence of Jesus? But this is the Christian's place, and he may ever be in the house with Jesus.

Even when the outer man is necessarily occupied with the things of this life, with the bread that perisheth, the inner man may be enjoying secret communion with God. The question of sin settled, the conscience at peace, and the heart at liberty, then is God able, and delights as a Father, to commune with His children. He hides nothing from them concerning the glory of Jesus. He tells them the thoughts and counsels He had concerning Jesus and His Church before the foundation of the world. He opens out before their eyes the prospect of future glory, which He gives to Jesus, and which Jesus gives to them (John 17:22). Even concerning the judgement of the world, He reveals to them His purpose — "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Genesis 18:17.) "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15.) Dear reader, if you are a Christian, then, through the amazing grace of God, Jesus calls you His friend. He points to you as to His disciples of old, and says, "Behold my mother and my brethren." To them, to us, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Mark the care of the Lord to instruct them fully, and to unfold the meaning of His parables. His world has its theories concerning the present age, and is forming plans for the future amelioration of its citizens, but how contrary to truth! Is not judicial blindness settling (as it certainly will) upon apostate Christendom, as it did upon apostate Israel? May we not say, on contrasting the prevailing doctrines and opinions of the mass in Christendom, what the Lord said of rejected Israel, "To them it is not given," etc.? But it is given; and accordingly the Lord not only explains the parable, but gives additional information. "The harvest is the end of the age;" and then at that time "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The parable speaks of "good seed." The Lord's explanation tells us the "good seed are the children of the kingdom." There we read of "tares," here "the children of the wicked one." There, "an enemy hath done this," here "the enemy is the devil." Then there are "reapers," here "the reapers are the angels." The servant wished to do the reapers' (the angels') work. Not so; the angels are the executioners of God's wrath. So does this teach us that it is not the province of the disciples of Christ, during His absence, and the time of His rejection, to do the work of judgement. We are not taught to extirpate heresy and evil men by the strong arm of the sword; to do so is to depart from the proper place of the Christian. To bear testimony to Christ and against the evil, most assuredly; but to leave judgement in the hands of God, in the hands of Jesus; for, mark, He does not give up His title to the kingdom. Now He is patient and forbearing, but by and by He will

send His angels, and they shall gather out of His KINGDOM all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. It is His kingdom yet, though an usurper reigns in His place. But He is coming, and will show "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Then the world, delivered from the thralldom of the oppressor, shall cease its groanings, and shall enjoy the rest and repose consequent upon the manifestation of the sons of God. (Romans 8:19.) "So shall it be at the end of the world." The phrase "end of the world" is frequently misunderstood. We are not taught that the harvest is the end of the world, the earth, but that it is the end of the dispensation or age which is characterised by the preaching of the kingdom (the true king, Christ, the Son of man, being rejected and absent, till He returns and establishes it in power and glory on the earth). But the fact here communicated to the disciples was not given the multitude. In what was said to them everything took place in the field, in the world, excepting only the fact that the good seed would be taken out of it, and placed in the barn. It is a view of the present age. But in the house the Lord goes beyond the bounds of the present age, and we get a peep into the future one. There is the binding of the tares, the gathering of the wheat, the closing scenes of this age; but the curtain is lifted, and we have the terrible result of the judgement of the tares in the weeping and gnashing of teeth. On the other side, we behold the righteous shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. These are not established in the marred kingdom; it is in the kingdom of their Father that they shine; and this is the reason why there is no question of purging the field. There were better things reserved for us; and so we have now a new principle of the kingdom manifested, a principle with which the world outside has nothing to do. We have had the effects of the sowing, the facts of the mixing and the separation, and the consequent form of the kingdom. But now we have the hidden motive, a principle which is fully developed in the hearts of the "children of the kingdom," and which Jesus brings out in the two next parables. The Lord, though rejected by His own, would have a people, and He secures the object of His desire at the expense of all besides. So it is a principle with him who acts according to the understanding of the purpose of God, that he will esteem nothing in comparison with Christ. The principle of giving up all for Christ would not have existed if Christ had not been rejected: the taking up the cross and following Christ was the necessary result of rejection. And accordingly we do not get this principle in the parables to the multitude. But Christ, for the sake of the wheat in the field, suffers the rejection of the mass which rejection serves to bring out a new light upon the kingdom, and a higher glory upon them that are His. They shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The use of the term "righteous" marks the saints of God in their individuality before and after the sowing of the seed. Deborah sang of this glory (Judges 5:31), "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Daniel speaks of it also (Daniel 12:2). It was a thought common to Old Testament saints. But no saint before was ever in the house with Jesus, none was before called "my brother, and sister, and mother;" and Jesus goes on unfolding more and more of the principles and purpose which actuate God during the present state of the kingdom. To us it is given to know them. May we be kept from our own thoughts about them.

(6) The Hid Treasure.

2nd Edition, Vol. 1, October 1857. (shown in error, as Sept.) (1st Edition, October 1857 [01:269])

[01:265]

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field," etc. (Matthew 13:44). The teaching of this and the following parables is for the disciples alone; they only are addressed. Here we have displayed the motive of God in giving His Son to die for the world. We discover that in the "hid treasure," and in the "pearl of great price," the field — the world — is bought for the sake of the treasure, and the "pearl of great price" is secured in the same way; the man in each case sells all that he has, in order to be possessed of the object of his desire. The hid treasure is the Church of God; not the nominal, professing, but the true Church, composed of regenerated men. For the sake of these the field was bought. The Christian dispensation was brought in that a people might be brought into such a position and state of glory as they could not possibly be brought into under the former dispensation. Not God's people merely, but predestinated to "the adoption of sons" (Ephesians 1:5), by Jesus Christ to Himself. The pearl of great price may, perhaps, refer rather to the individual glory of the Redeemer, as the head of the Church, "who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame." For when the kingdom is established in power, the Lord Jesus will not only have glory as God, one with the Father — that glory He has eternally; He will not only as Son of man have glory, as the King over all the earth; He will not only, as Son of David, have glory as King of the Jews, — for His glory as King of the Jews is distinct from His universal supremacy over all the earth, — but He will have another glory which we believe to be far more precious to Him, the glory that He will have as the head of the Church, when the Church shall be glorified with Him. This will be, we may, perhaps say, the glory of His grace. The parables of the "treasure" and the "pearl" are intimately connected and reflect upon each other; for it is by the grace of God, through Christ, and the transforming power of the indwelling Spirit, that the Church becomes a treasure to Him; and it is because the Church is thus indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus made capable of reflecting His image, that He is glorified in it; and this glory, the especial result of the perfecting of the Church (which will be by and by), is the "pearl of great price;" the glory most prized by the Lord. These are the things kept secret from the foundation of the world. The reign of Jesus, as Messiah, the King of the Jews, as King over the whole earth, was a theme continually dwelt upon by the prophets; but it was a secret with God before the foundation of the world, that the Lord Jesus should have a heavenly bride; that a church, His body, should be formed, out of Jew and Gentile alike, to show that new glory above; for even as He has received of His Father, so shall the Church receive (Revelation 2:26-27).

Here the kingdom of heaven is not the outward external form, such as it appears to the world, but is the position and the estimation by God of those who are said, in Matthew 13:38, to be "the children of the kingdom;" not those who are nominally subjects in the kingdom, but are really the children thereof. The Lord is speaking to His disciples alone, enters more deeply into the mysteries of the kingdom; not only gives the reason why the kingdom exists in mystery, but affords room for (without developing) the further and higher thought of the mystery of Christ and the Church. Away from the world and the multitude, none are noticed but the wheat — the children. They are said to be a treasure hid in the field; and for the sake of the treasure — or the heavenly saints — the field, or the world, is bought. The field is not bought for its own sake. It is not here a question of the universal offer of the Saviour to the world; not of the declaration of the Lord, that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; but it is the elect of God who are taken up, and considered distinct from all others. This treasure was present and distinct from the field to the mind of God, before the field was bought. For its sake alone the man sold all that he had to purchase the field. The treasure in it could be possessed in no other way; or rather the

purchasing of the field was the best way, in the wisdom of the man, to possess the treasure hidden therein. God, for the sake of those whom He foreknew, gave His only begotten Son, that by His death the treasure might be secured. The Church was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Why was the Church chosen? It is according to His good pleasure. For the sake of the Church the world was bought. * The great original purpose of God was the new creation of the Church; and all other creations are and were subordinate to this. God foreknew that Adam would fall. He foreknew all the dreadful consequences of that fall, the sin, the misery, the wretchedness of mankind. Why then was such a state of things allowed to continue? Why was not the contaminated and polluted world swept away into its original nonentity? Because it was the will of God, "his good pleasure," from out of this so unpromising material, to gather souls and make His Church, — and to make it pure and holy, through and in Christ; that it might be to the praise of the glory of His grace; wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.

{* The purchase of the world shows forth the glory of God in many ways, the Church is one result of redemption; but as it is the greatest, it is here put for the whole; as in the parable, the field is bought for the sake of the treasure. After being purchased, the field may be made good use of for the owner's glory.}

Here is the secret why the Church is called a treasure; not that it is anything in itself, but because it is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Every member of that Church is originally as vile and worthless as others; but they are washed and sanctified, renewed in mind, separate from the world, called to reflect the image of God, builded together as His habitation, through the Spirit, raised to the brotherhood of Christ, nay, to union with Him, as well as to be the sharers of His throne and kingdom, constituted kings and priests for ever to God. And all this is by the exceeding riches of the grace of God; and the Church, composed of purged and sanctified men, is the manifestation of this grace, is the effect of the working of His mighty power to us-ward who believe. How could such grace be shown to us? Because of Christ dead, risen, and glorified. God could have created beings far beyond the capabilities and powers of man, and have established them in their holy state beyond the possibility of sin. He could have endowed them with wisdom, power, and intelligence beyond the power of human conception; and such would have been to the praise and glory of His wisdom and power. But that any should be to the praise of the glory of His grace, it was necessary that infinite love should be manifested to creatures utterly unworthy, yea, deserving of everlasting punishment, and eternal banishment from His presence. How could this be done consistently with the claims of divine justice? God devised the plan. Blood was shed. The Son of God became Son of man, and died to satisfy and establish divine justice, and the way was clear for the exhibition of grace. "Redeemed not with corruptible things, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ." But it is not merely redemption — this the Church shares in common with all other saints, past or future, Jewish or Gentile. The baptism of the Spirit, uniting with a glorious head in heaven, is that which gives the peculiarity to the saint of this dispensation; and upon this baptism, as the means, depends the Church's union with Christ, in the sense of being His body; and it is thus that being brought into the heavenlies, the Church exhibits the wondrous power and riches of divine grace, is the object of the Father's love, for the sake of Christ; is the fruit of the love of the Father for the Son; is the Father's gift to the Son. (John 17:9.) Here, then, is the treasure. No other could so abundantly show forth the riches of His grace; and because the Church does so glorify Christ, the Father loves and gives Christ to be head over all things to it. Not because the Church is

anything of itself, but because it is the exhibition of God's grace, it is a treasure to Christ. The cross of Christ laid the foundation, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the means, by which the Church becomes the greatest result of redemption. Christ and the Church are one — "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The highest glory, the nearest place to the person of Christ, in all heaven's hierarchy, is for the Church. It is by grace Christ's treasure, as He is, in every sense the Church's treasure. But if the Church is a treasure hid in the field, only God could discern it. From other scriptures we learn that the manifestation of the Church (i.e., in its perfect state) will not be in this world, or age, or rather, the manifestation will take place in the new age; for this will have closed when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, taking vengeance, etc., but then the Church will be revealed also (Colossians 3:4). The manifestation of the sons of God, the Church, is an event for which all creation, animate and inanimate, are represented as earnestly waiting (Romans 8:19-23.) But this manifestation of the Church refers to the future glory, and is the term put to this hiding of our life in the passage above cited, viz., Colossians 3:4, "Our life is hid with Christ in God," etc. We hear in our day about an invisible Church, as if it were the will of God and the Church should be hidden now; but there is no scriptural warrant for such a thought. It is a sad and solemn fact that there are many of God's children who walk not as children of the light, and the Church corporately is not known as a distinct and separate body from the world. There may be a few here and there who endeavour so to walk in separation from evil, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; but alas, how few comparatively! But it does not appear from scripture that God designed the Church to occupy such a position, in which it could scarcely be distinguished from the world, but on the contrary, it does appear from scripture that the word "hid" refers to the past. Nowhere do we find the idea of an invisible Church as God's intention and desire. It was set up in broad day, in the face of all the languages assembled in Jerusalem, and in an instant the tongue of the unlearned was loosened, and gave testimony to the grace of God in the various languages to the astonished multitude. Enemies reviled, and said, "These are full of new wine." There was no invisibility here. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another." God designed that unity and love, after Christ's pattern, were to be the evidence to all men that they were his disciples. This is quite inconsistent with invisibility, save as the result of man's sin; for alas! here, as in every other position in which man has been placed, is failure. The Church as a body visible, is ruined; it is broken and split up into sects and parties, and in many cases the bitterest enmity exists between the rivals. Surely this is not what was intended. This cannot be the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, but because that presence has been denied, and human authority has usurped the place of the Spirit. The natural, necessary consequence is, that, till Christ comes, the lusts of the flesh and the power and subtlety of Satan have broken up and for ever marred the visible unity of the Church upon the earth. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" etc. It was the secret purpose of God before the foundation of the world, that from the race of men living in the world, and irrespectively of His governmental distinctions, He would at the proper time form His Church. This purpose was intimated when Christ came, and developed by the Spirit afterwards. "On this Rock I will build my Church." At the day of Pentecost God put his plan into execution. He began to build His spiritual house when the Holy Ghost descended upon the saints (Acts 2:1-4). For the Church is not merely an assembly of believers, but an assembly formed into one body corporate, by the actual and personal presence of the Holy Ghost, who is just in the same sense present, as the Lord Jesus is now absent. This is the Church. It is evident that such a body could not exist previously, because

that Christ had not ascended, and the Comforter could not come till Christ had gone up (John 14:1-31, et seq.) It is true, that many things in the old economy typified the Church, or rather, Christ's members, in certain respects; but it is equally true that the Lord revealed His assembly as his purpose, and that Paul was the chosen one to bring it fully out. Ephesians 2:1-22, Colossians 1:1-29.

If the above view of the "hid treasure" be scriptural, it follows that a very prevalent idea as to its import must be incorrect and unscriptural, viz., that it signifies the religion of Christ in the soul — the effectual inward working of the Holy Spirit in the individual, and that it avers merely the fact that the communion existing between God and the believer is a thing utterly unknown to the world. Most certainly it is unknown to the world; but this is not what is contained in the parable. Doubtless too we have Christ as our Pattern and Exemplar; and as He gave up all for us, so we have the great principle taught us that we should give up all and every thing for Christ; not in the way of quid pro quo, but "we love Him because He first loved us." But this is not so much the direct teaching of the scripture before us, as it is impressed upon the mind by the Holy Ghost as a result which should be produced in us by the fact that "He sold all that He had and bought the field." The treasure, in the word, is not the Christianity of a soul, but the christian body; not the treasure that the Church possesses in Christ, but the treasure that Christ has in the Church.

(7) The Pearl of Great Price.

2nd Edition, Volume 1, November 1857.

(1st. Edition, November 1857 [01:288])

[01:284]

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls" etc. (Matthew 13:45-46.) The glory that the Lord Jesus will have as the head of the Church in glory is more precious and desirable than any other glory that He possesses. Of course His glory as God — one with the Father before the worlds were formed — is excepted. Official glory is here alone referred to. For as the saints are the treasure most prized by Him, so the glory of being the head of the Church, of being the author and maker and possessor of it, is a glory for which He was content to set aside for a time all His other glory. Even the essential glory of the Godhead was veiled for a time by the covering of humanity. There was that in the pearl which so attracted the Lord that "the word was made flesh." What is it that makes every attribute of the Godhead to stand forth so broadly marked — that makes His truth, His holiness, His love, to appear so infinite? Is it not that the Son of man, who was the Son of God, endured the full wrath of God due to our sin and thus vindicated the holiness of God, and at the same time and by the same means gave full scope to the mercy of God? A vent was thus afforded for the outflowing of that love which otherwise (shall we say) must have been for ever pent up in the heart of the Father. Jesus has done all this. The glory of doing it is His — He has declared the Father. He shows what thoughts were in the Father's heart concerning us; how that all through the long, sad, dark history of man's rebellion, there was the cherished thought with God, that soon there would be such a tide of abounding grace to poor sinners as would satisfy His heart. With what infinite complacency the Father must ever have beheld the Son! What manner of intercourse there was between the Father and Son before the incarnation, is not for us to say: but we do know the different occasions when the voice from

heaven said, "This is my beloved Son." Well there is a glory for all this which belongs exclusively to Jesus. The Church is a treasure, because, when perfected, she will be the brightest and greatest result of redeeming grace, and next to the Lord Jesus will hold the highest place in the coming glory and in the Father's heart. The Church has been made this by Christ. Christ Himself alone possesses the honour and the glory of it. He is the head of the Church, and the pearl of great price seems to have especial reference to the new thing in its unity. True it is "the kingdom of heaven which is likened," etc., but, as we have seen, the treasure and pearl are pictures, the one of the real children of the kingdom in their aggregate capacity as individuals, and the other of their unity — "one pearl." And while in the treasure we saw the kingdom under the aspect of the saints glorified, so now in the pearl we see them in the light of their precious united glory. It will be in the coming kingdom of heaven that it will be made manifest to all. Had it been the will of God, the Lord Jesus could have established His kingdom in power at His first advent; the rejecting Jews could have been crushed, and the little remnant exalted into a nation; but there would then have been no church; no treasure, and no pearl; the kingdom of heaven would never have assumed these phases. It was for the joy set before Him of bringing many sons to glory, that He gave up all that He had, that He did not take the kingdom, the power, and the glory, and reign the sovereign potentate of the earth. To bring peace and righteousness upon the earth, to rescue as the second Adam from the grasp and thralldom of the enemy all that the first Adam lost, delivering the whole creation now groaning from its bondage, to bind the foe and cast him into the pit, to be hailed as king by Israel, to sit upon the throne of His father David: all these were pearls in Messiah's crown; but to bring many sons to glory — nay, more to bind them into one body corporate by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, to bring them into such union with Himself that they and He should be but one, even as He and the Father are one — to do all this, to be Himself the Almighty divine reason why the Father should manifest such superabounding riches of grace, THIS, THIS, is the pearl of great price.

He gave up all that he had. Every other pearl for the time was sold in order to possess this priceless one. But there is more than this. As the great Atoner, He stands alone in an incommunicable place. The Church will share His glory as Lord and King, etc.; and as the suffering of the atonement were all His, so also the glory. But there is a glory as Head of the Church which is peculiar. In all that He is to the Church, all that He is for her, there are treasured up the riches of wisdom, love, and glory; and in the bringing out of these and using them for the benefit of His Church, shines forth the brightness of the Lord.

He has overcome the power of death, and is consequently the author of life. The sentence of death had gone forth upon man; there was a righteous necessity that man should die; where there is sin there must be death. Justice could not otherwise be maintained in its integrity. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Therefore is it "appointed unto men once to die." This is the general lot of mankind. But Christ by His death has obviated this doom and the still more awful judgement for those who are His; for as it is declared that "we shall not all sleep," so it is equally certain that death, as a penal consequence of sin, is moved from the Church of God. True, some have died, and we who are alive now may also die; but it is equally true that all shall not die, and that we who are now on the earth may be of the number who "are alive and remain" at the coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18). "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall

sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). And here do we see the glory of Christ. He can and does meet the demands of justice upon us, satisfying all claim by the shedding of His own blood; so death has no more dominion over us. Death may be permitted to serve us, never to be our ruler (1 Corinthians 3:1-23). Death can be only by the will of our Lord and Master, who is for us and to us the "resurrection and the life." He gives eternal life to His own, the life such as He now has as the risen and last Adam. It is resurrection life, against which there is no question of death. Natural life precedes and in us is the precursor of death because of sin. Resurrection-life comes after death and is eternal; nothing can touch it. It grows out of the death of Christ, after he had put away sin; and we who have died with Him are also risen with him, and the life which he took when rising from the tomb, He communicates to us; so that to touch our life would be to touch His life. But He is the conqueror of death, and cannot be subject to it: we are conquerors with Him, and cannot be subject to the power of death; "as he is, so are we." No other life could be shared by Him and the Church. There was no sentence of death against His life as man perhaps, indeed, we may say that it was a miracle for Him to die, as much as for any other man to rise from the dead; and He could have entered into heaven, into the presence of the Father in His own name and right. But He would have been alone. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Resurrection-life can be and is imparted. It is past human thought how God could become man; how such a man could die. God tells us it is so. He gives us power to believe it, and with joy and gladness we feed upon the precious truth. But it was conceivable that after He had become man, and had died, the life He then took would have been His own only. To communicate that life, so that it is possible that there could be a life which is shared jointly by Christ and the Church, is indeed wondrous. There might have been given a new life, and eternal life might have had been communicated, which yet would have fallen short of the glorious life actually given. The saints of former dispensations have eternal life; for all who see and enter the kingdom of God must be born again: they will be raised when Christ comes, and will enter into Christ's kingdom. But we have much more, even life in resurrection. It is the risen Lord's life that we share. He gave up His life for us. He rose again and takes life in this new condition to share it with us. What power, what wisdom, what love in God! How secure the Christian is! His life is above. Let him be ever so buffeted down here, let him be ever so trampled upon by the world, and the object of ever so much enmity of the world's god, yet he is safe. "None shall pluck them out of my hand." "Our life is hid with Christ in God." Chastisement may come, and will come upon the erring Christian, but this is in God's faithful care, and for his blessing. His life can never be cut oft; it is eternal.

It may be asked, why do any of the Lord's people die? Death is ever a dread and a terror; why are not the bought, the precious ones, thoroughly delivered from it? We answer, the death of the body touches not the eternal life which is the gift of God; and although some Christians die; all will not die; and if but one passed into heaven without death, it would establish and confirm the truth, that death, as a consequence of sin, does not happen to the Christian. If the cause be removed, so also is the effect; if sin be put away, so also is the penalty. The Christian's death is beautifully represented in scripture as sleeping in the Lord — of course as far as the body is concerned. Then it is not death, properly so called, but the spirit departing to be with the Lord (which is "far better") a little while, before He comes in the air to take all His redeemed ones to Himself. But the Christian is entitled to have the fullest joy in the thoughts of the Lord's coming. If He does delay, it is not that He is slack concerning His promise, but because He is not willing that any should perish etc. (2

Peter 3:1-18) The long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, as if He were seeking to gather as many as possible unto His Church, before He descends in judgement upon a godless world.

He is head over all things to the Church. Death is subject to him, and if the Christian dies, it is not because he is a sinner, but because it is the will of God. Therefore we say it is but slumbering till the Lord wake up the body. To say that the believer, when he dies, pays the debt of nature, is false, for death is the debt of sin; to say that it is paying the debt of sin, is equally false, for Christ paid the whole debt, to the uttermost, on the cross.

He is Ruler over all circumstances and afflictions, all and everything that can possibly happen to the believer. He can and will cause all things to work together for good to him (Romans 8:1-39) Such is Christ to the Church now; for what He is to the individual, He is also to the body. But how much more lustrous will His glory appear in the coming age, when from the whole body, and "perfected in one," praises unsullied by any infirmity, which now so insinuates itself into our worship, and stains it, shall be ascribed to Him for ever and ever! To gather up the few thoughts about these two parables, — and how very far below the mark they are! — this parable, the pearl, represents the merchant-man as seeking for goodly pearls, as if the Lord Jesus, in seeking to glorify the Father, John 17:4, (and it was His joy and glory so to do,) chose that which would bring out, in profoundest characters, the riches of His grace. And in glorifying the Father, the Son is equally glorified, for "all mine are thine and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." The kingdom of heaven, as it now exists in mystery, is likened to such a merchant-man. The treasure is not yet, de facto, complete, and the headship of a holy, glorified Church is not yet enjoyed and manifested. But the work of bringing many sons to glory is going on, the number will soon be complete. Then, and then only, will Jesus enter into the full possession of this "pearl of great price." As far as Christ is concerned, all has been sold, whether for the field and its treasure, or for the pearl and the object He prizes; in either case it is secured. The pearl is not identical with the treasure. There is this difference in the parable, that the one is found hid in the field, the other is not; the one shows where the treasure is found, so that its preciousness is relative, not intrinsic. The other, I judge, to refer to Christ Himself, as the discernor of goodly pearls. He was seeking such. And it was the beauty of the new thing in God's love and purpose, which attracted His heart and search. In the antitype He has so beautified and adorned the Church, that it is to Him, indeed, one pearl of great price.

Commentators, in general, appear to give a similar explanation to this parable as to the hid treasure, viz., that it is illustrative of the divine energy imparted, when the Christian gives up all for Christ. Certainly the child of God does willingly give up all for Christ, or perhaps we should say that the Christian must be brought to this, before he can fully enjoy fellowship with Christ. (See Php 3:1-21) But this is a secondary application, and is a line taught us by the Spirit, from the fact that Christ gave up all for us. The pearl is peerless, the price also is beyond compute; and Christ is the true merchant-man who estimates. Christ spilt His own blood and endured the agony of the cross; more than this, He bore the fierce wrath of God in the very contemplation of which He cried out in the garden, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But the cup was drained to the dregs, and in His deepest woe He cried out, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" Then the last farthing was paid. But He was heard in that He feared. He says, "Father." "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit." He "went and sold all that He had and bought it."

(8) The Net. — Conclusion.

2nd Edition, Volume 1, December 1857.

(1st. Edition, December 1857 [01:304])

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Matthew 13:47. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind," etc. In this last parable the kingdom is again presented as comprehending the whole of Christendom, not as in the parables of the tares, the tree, and the leaven; but as it is in its effects and purpose in the eye of God. We know it is His purpose to gather out of the world a people for Himself, and the means used for this is likened unto a net cast into the sea. The net is evidently the preaching of the cross of Christ — to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness. The world's religion, Pharisaism, has ever stumbled at the cross of Christ. The world's wisdom and philosophy have ever deemed it folly. But to the simple, humble believer it is the power and wisdom of God. The sea is the symbol of the inhabitants of the earth in a state of tumult and lawlessness. And such is eminently the state of the world. And it is into such a world, into such a sea casting up mire and dirt, that the gospel net has been cast, and fishes of every kind are enclosed. Within the bounds of Christendom, and under the name of Christian, are to be found, not the greatest good only, but the greatest wickedness in the earth. There are real and false disciples of Christ.

What a different view is taken of the kingdom, according as we look at it from the earth, or from the heavenly places! — standing outside with the multitude, or, in the house with Jesus. From the former we get only its external features — a great wheat-field, but the cross mingled and spoilt by tares; a great tree, with its vast branches shooting out on every side; and a certain mass of meal with leaven working till the whole was leavened. A system adapting itself to the peculiarities and characteristics of the different nations among whom it is established, as if its propagators would make a perverted use of the apostle's words, "All things to all men." A system which possesses enough of native energy to give a certain distinctive feature to all who are in it; while yet affording room for the development of all the shades of difference comprised in Catholicism of east or west, in nationalism or dissent. The aim and intent of Satan is to bring such men under the control of a priestly, quasi-spiritual bondage, compared with which no yoke is so heavy and intolerable; and this in utter contravention of God's purpose in establishing His Church in the world. God calls to separation from the world, and the taking up of the cross in practice as well as in principle. His enemy's system pursues union with the world, and, by means of this, promises ease and honour. But it is only when in "the house," and our minds under the tuition and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we see the extreme contrariety between the true position of the saint and that which is assumed by the professing world. The net is cast into the sea, and its purpose is to separate those within it from the mass outside. In the parable of the tares the reason is given why, or how, tares came to be mingled with the wheat. Men slept, and during that time the enemy sowed his tares. Here we have no reason given why the net encloses bad fishes as well as good ones; it is simply the fact — such is the case. The world sees only what unfaithfulness and worldliness have made of it; viz., the Church-world. The TRUTH shows us that the net is God's means for gathering out His own. That may be seen by the multitude; this only by the disciple in the house. So when the four empires were symbolically presented to the Gentile king, they had their worldly aspect. There

was the similitude of a great image, majestic in its proportions, composed of the most costly, durable, and useful of metals: there was in it that which recommended itself to the world, the splendour and richness of gold and silver, the strength and serviceableness of brass and iron. True, there was clay also, but that was down low in the feet and was comparatively overshadowed by the beauty and brightness of the head and breast of gold and silver. Here is the world's estimation of imperial power and successful ambition; and they bow down and worship; but when these same empires are shown in symbol to the saint, they are characterised by unclean and terror-striking beasts, beasts greedy of blood, ferocious, untameable, and indeed the last one had such pre-eminence in those qualities, that no animal known to man was able to set forth its character; and so a nondescript monster a terror naturæ was held up to the prophet's eye to symbolise the fourth empire. This gives us God's judgement about these empires, and shows us what value His saints should put upon their splendour and power. That which is pleasing to the natural man is an abomination to God. This parable and that of the tare-field bear this resemblance, that they both present to us the mixed character of the kingdom; but they differ in that the latter brings more prominently to view the kingdom during the continuance of the present age; the former most discloses that which takes place at the end. The one is the final separation and the other the co-existence of the two characters found in the world which owns Christ externally. In the explanation given by our Lord to the disciples, the issue in blessing and misery of the wheat and the tares is made known; but in the parable itself the principle thought is, "let both grow together." But in the parable of the net, the great thought is seen in the act of the fishermen selecting the good and putting them into vessels, and in rejecting the bad. The fishermen are not represented as being the active agents in punishing the bad: they simply leave them, casting them away. The angels here, as in the parable of the tares, are the executors of God's vengeance. We have not the true saints considered distinct from the mass of professors, as in the "hid treasure" and in "the pearl," nor is it an external view of the kingdom as presented in those parables spoken outside to the multitude; but a picture of the whole as it appears to God, and as He would have His saints view it, and the means He has adopted in calling out His people from the world. It is the winding up of the present age. The great net which was let down into the sea, when Christ was first proclaimed, is now drawn to the land. The sowing and ripening of the field are at an end, and the sifting time is come. The floor will be thoroughly purged, the wheat gathered into the garner, the chaff burnt with unquenchable fire. The good are first taken care of, and put in vessels by those fit for that work; after that selection, (how long is not said), the angels do their work. The parable gives only the putting of the good into vessels, nor is this confined to one act, but rather, we apprehend, gives the character of the time (so far as the good are concerned) which will elapse from the first separation to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. And we know that the rapture of the Church will take place before judgement descends upon the wicked. For when the Son of man is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God, the heavenly saints will appear with Him, and, consequently, must have been gathered to Him before (Colossians 3:1-25). Be the interval then between that rapture and the revelation of the Lord Jesus with these saints in flaming fire, long or short, the two events cannot be at the same moment. The dead saints will be raised and the living saints changed, and both shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18). This is a very different scene from the time when He and His armies shall be revealed to His enemies. It is a great mistake to confound these distinct parts of His coming or presence. The Church of God is ever directed to expect the coming of the Lord

Jesus at any moment. His disciples are always to be waiting, always expecting. This is the true position of the Church of God. There is no event given which must precede His coming to receive us in the air. There are many prophecies which must be fulfilled before His and our appearing can take place. We know that the letting thing must be taken away and the lawless one revealed, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of His mouth, and with the appearing, or shining forth, of His presence (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17). There are signs given which shall usher in the great and terrible day of the Lord. There are times and dates given, days, and months, and years, which must pass before that event. (Vide Daniel and the Revelation).

We do not enter into the questions, whether the days be symbolical or natural, whether we can compute and fix the precise date of their commencement or not, etc. We simply say that the giving of any time to elapse previously, or of any sign to precede, is incompatible with the position of waiting for Christ continually. And that this is the true position of the Church of God, has been fully proved in another paper of this periodical (p. 210), and which we need not now enter upon. When the Lord descends in the air to meet His Church, this peculiar phase of the kingdom (which we may call its Church aspect) ceases. It is the kingdom of heaven as a whole which we have here. There are other saints, outside the Church, which have a share in the kingdom and in the first resurrection. The heavenly saints, symbolised by the twenty-four elders, are in heaven before that tremendous drama of the Apocalyptic judgements begins; and, while we see them in heaven, there are saints, Gentiles, as well as Jews, on the earth, passing through great tribulation, whom afterwards, yet previous to the great catastrophe, the prophet John sees with white robes (Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 14:1-20 etc.) But during that terrible time, the kingdom takes again the same character it had before the day of Pentecost (i.e., it is not strictly the Church character). The principles of this time are found in the earlier chapters of the Acts; for, although the Church was formed, yet her peculiar position and privileges were not as yet brought out; the message or preaching of the kingdom, although extending to the Gentile through the blood of a slain and risen Christ, was particularly addressed to Jews, and in the wisdom of God it was necessary that the Jew should entirely reject it before the full development of His amazing grace could take place. It was when the testimony of Jesus on the earth, and also of the Holy Ghost after the Lord's ascension had both been rejected by God's own ancient people, that the super-abounding grace of God to the lost Jew and Gentile indiscriminately, came fully out. The gathering of the good fish into vessels by the fishermen is, evidently, a distinct act from the separation of the wicked from among the just, which last term is a very common designation of Old Testament saints and but seldom applied to the saints since Pentecost, except when the Holy Ghost applies Old Testament scripture to them, as for instance, "the just shall live by faith." But again, the action of the angels differs in character. The fishermen gather the good into vessels, to take care of and preserve them — an act of interest and value. The angels sever the wicked from among the just. It is the contrast of those who sought out the good; these seek out the bad for punishment, and "cast them into the furnace of fire," — an act of vengeance and wrath. The "just," then, we think, comprehend more saints than those standing in full Pentecostal privilege; some of them slain, and having a share in the first resurrection, and some, perhaps, who are not slain, but preserved to form the living nucleus of the millennial kingdom. At the very end of the trouble, when antichrist is judged, the angels come forth, and sever the wicked from the just. The honour and glory of the victory is the Lord's; it is His arm which strikes down the usurper. The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the pit. Then the angels come forth, and go through the length and

breadth of the kingdom, and gather out all things that offend. Then will the floor of the kingdom be purged; earthly friendships, sex, and association will be unheeded by these messengers. Two men shall be in the field, and two women at the mill: the one shall be taken and the other left. Whether abroad or at home, the angels shall sever the wicked from the just.

One remark more, in comparing the two parables, (viz., tares, field, and net), which bring before us the end of the age. The former is spoken to the multitude outside, and accordingly it is the doom of the tares which is made prominent in the parable, visible and felt by the world. "Bind the tares in bundles and burn them." The explanation gives the glory (Matthew 13:43), and is given to the disciples, and the parable gives the care for the good as the prominent thought. The explanation (Matthew 13:49-50), reveals the doom of the bad. To sum up, we have in these parables, an epitome of the history of the religious world, from the Lord's first advent to His second, given under two general aspects. There is the gift of salvation by grace to man, and then what man has made of it. There is also what God has done, in spite of the perversity of man, and the termination of the whole, bad and good. The sower goes forth to sow, and a general view of the reception of the truth follows, illustrated by the different nature of the ground into which the seed was cast. Man is looked at here in his individuality and in his responsibility. In the remaining parables the state of things is considered. The kingdom being set up (in mystery), six similitudes follow. We stand at the starting point, and look through the scene right up to the end; having, if we may so say, a bird's-eye view of the whole. Man and the enemy having to do with it, the character of the kingdom soon degenerates; the tares spread, and give character to the field. The crop is spoilt, though the Son of man had sown! But though the tares have ruined the work of God, the wheat are there also. These two co-exist until the end, when the great separation takes place. In the parables of the tree and the leaven, the evil is developed; in the hid treasure and the pearl, the accomplishment of God's purpose appears, notwithstanding the baneful influence of Satan. The tree (earthly exaltation) precedes the leaven of doctrine, and this spreads over the permitted space. But God does not forego His design. The treasure is found and secured. All is given up for the pearl, which shows forth His grace and love, and He is glorified.

Here are two threads of history, in a sense parallel to each other, and probably, also, successive; the one giving the eternal form of the kingdom, and the other the development of the purpose of God. The last parable, the net, brings out conspicuously the time of the end.

We may arrange them in the following order:

1. Introductory parable. A sower went forth to sow — the new work by Christ, when rejected as Messiah by the Jews; man before us tested by the seed of the word, and responsible for the reception of the truth.
2. Parable of the wheat and the tares. The kingdom from first to last. Men careless, and so evil introduced where Christ's name is named, and no remedy but judgement by and by.
3. The application of the two things, the wheat and the tares, in four other parables, two showing the evil, and two the good:— The Evil.

1. The great tree, or the ecclesiastico-secular body, which man had made of Christianity; and 2. The leaven showing the spread of nominal Christian doctrine over a given mass. The Good.

1. The treasure, which Jesus finds, and really has made in His people; and 2. The pearl, or His people viewed not only as severally precious, but as one precious jewel.

4. The termination of the whole in the Net. The two parties in the kingdom are seen together again, but only to be for ever separated, when the end of the age comes, and judgement falls upon the wicked. The history of Christendom is over; the millennial kingdom begins. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." — R. Beacon.

S. Thoughts on the Similitudes of the Kingdom: Part 2

Thoughts on the Similitudes of the Kingdom: Part 2

There is now going on through the mercy of God an inchoative fulfillment of that which will characterize the close of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, and which comes naturally in this parable, the last of the series. Still there is a casting of the net, though not in the same sense precisely as given in the parable. For then it was cast into the sea of Idolatry and Judaism. Now in Christendom the gospel is preached among those who already bear outwardly the name of Christ. That is, if the preaching of the gospel in Christian countries so called, be the casting of the net into the sea (in the sense of the parable), we should have a second net cast in among the fish already caught. There would be professors outside as well as mere professors inside.; but the sorting is made only from those inside the net. That is, profession would not be confined to those inside the net which was drawn ashore; but there would be others who were never drawn to shore at all. Not so. The casting the net into the sea is the first announcement of the kingdom, and the drawing of the filled net to the shore is the outward establishment of the doctrine taught, and the nominal obedience to the 'Lord Jesus. This is the kingdom-point of view; and here we can hardly call Christendom, where we have a nominal - Belief in the truth of Christianity, "the sea." Neither is the net symbolical of the Church, unless the professing world-church, and then I see, in respect to the truth taught in this parable, no difference between it and the kingdom.

If the Church of God be here at all, I should look for it or for what represents it, under the figure of the good fish put into the vessels. Certainly those who are of the Church of God are there, but they are not viewed as on church ground. Nor are they confined to the Church. Those slain for the testimony of Jesus after the Church has gone, will have their place among those in the vessels. It is the judgment that puts an end to the present condition of the kingdom, and the mysteries go on till that time, and the Lord's appearing. Then the just are left living on the earth, and the wicked are cast into the fire. All who have died, martyred for the sake of Jesus before this, will be found among the good. The parable being a Similitude of the Kingdom in its present state, applies, until the present condition is terminated, by the appearance of the King to take His great power and glory, and to reign.

We have seen that what Christendom now presents, is the establishment of certain doctrines, and the outward bearing of the name of Christ. Also that the sorting takes place after the kingdom has been a certain time in existence. We may now ask, when that action began, which is set forth here by "putting the good into vessels." The writer of this paper does not pretend to answer save in a general way. That there is a time when such sorting is made is clear. And the seven Epistles to the churches in the Revelation contain, if not the same thing, yet that which is analogous, and I doubt not synchronizes with the sorting of the parable. It may be that there was always a remnant morally separated from the rest of the professing body. But the separation in the parables is not merely moral, it is distinct and visible. And this clear separation of a faithful remnant is first marked in the epistle to Thyatira, (Revelation 2:24, which read thus, "But to you I say, the rest in Thyatira,"

&c.) Previous to this there had been the Ephesus, the Smyrna, and the Pergamos state. In these three the call to hear was addressed to the whole assembly. But in the fourth epistle there is a change, and the call to hear is to a plainly distinguished remnant. The professing church was in the Thyatira phase when this separation commenced. And as the kingdom assumed a church-form, we may say that the "sorting" of the parable began at the same time; though to be more distinctly made as the end draws near. The Reformation has undoubtedly something similar to that which will be by and bye. And this great event in the history of Christendom is generally placed when Thyatira became the type of the professing church. A more practical question is, "Where is the sorting, who are the fishermen now engaged in putting the good into vessels?" Men have invented many kind of vessels into which they put as many fish as they can get. Nor are they able, or careful to separate the good from the bad. Other motives influence them. And the vessels they have are not such as God has provided. They have National Vessels, Dissent Vessels, Protestant and Roman Vessels, beside smaller ones, such as Baptist, Independent, Methodist, and many others. Are these what the Lord provides for His saints? No. These all divide the saints from one another, and join them to the mere professor. The vessel provided by the Lord is separation from all evil, avoiding the unequal yoke, owning no name but His, submitting to no ordinance of man in sacred things. And beside those which give character to the outward man, there is the spring and source of it all, the daily communion and intercourse with God, without which all else, however correct, is a snare, and affords room for the display of the worse and baser principles of the flesh. The Lord's fishermen are separating His saints from the evil and bringing them around His Name, and not to human names. And this holy work is now going on. Every one who brings souls to Christ, who endeavors to build them up in Him and to know no center but Him around which to gather, is separating souls from the surrounding ecclesiastical evil, and in effect is putting them into vessels. This is a course so very different from all others, that those who follow it, who are really apart from the sect-making of the day need nothing else to mark them out. And this is seen in many parts of Christendom. It is not confined to one country. There is one trait peculiar to the true fisherman-his sole concern is with the good. There are many so-called fishermen who concern themselves with sorting the bad. I do not mean the carrying of the gospel to them, this is imperative upon all. But it is the separating of the respectable and the reformed from the profligate by means of associations, institutions, and pledges. Such fishermen are engaged in a work, and are striving to attain an object, in which they are co-workers with the world. And the end they have in view only regards social position, the great thing which now occupies the worldly philanthropist, whose professed aim is to ameliorate the mass. The true fisherman has an eye only for the good, he takes care of that. The bad are left alone, they are no concern of his, others, not he, will deal with them. As the end approaches no doubt the process of separating the good from the bad will become more manifest, and the separation itself more distinct and defined. How it will be finally accomplished is not for us to say. One means may be a far greater subjection of heart to the word of God. And persecution from without may be used of God to bring the faithful together; but this would only be an indirect means. It is expressly said to be the work of the fishermen to put the good into vessels, and therefore the direct and immediate means will be the energy and power of the Spirit of God in each servant, working on the saints and bringing them all together into one spiritual condition before the Lord, waiting for His coming. Still as the superstitious and infidel world are drawing closer together in their hatred of the truth, so it will press closer together those who are the Lord's, and so far will obliterate the differences which

Satan has so assiduously labored to establish among the children of God. But the distinction between them and those of the world will become more and more visible.

Then there will be seen but two great parties in the world-the Lord's and Satan's. The former as one compact body, known by all to be separate from all else; the latter exhibiting the greatest contrariety among themselves, but united in its antagonism to Christ. Then the present liberality (rather latitudinarianism) of the day will cease. At the present time there are so many petty and independent religious associations that anything like persecution on a large scale is simply impossible, because this demands more or less of power and authority, which no single body, whatever its influence, now possesses. Even now in these lands we see the greatest religious community in the state, and which is supported by secular authority, tottering on its base, and soon to descend to the level of its dissenting rivals. An infidel liberality is the spirit of the age, which allows man to set aside the word of God and exalt his own notions. But a religious domination may be again felt; and when the whole world are joined under one head, whatever form it may assume, superstitious or infidel, bigot or liberal, it will not permit a small minority of real Christians to live in peace. There may not be violent persecution, a rekindling of the fires of Smithfield, but there will be increasing scorn and contempt, and the saints will realize more than ever that they are not of the world, but the objects of its intense hate.

Thus shall it be in the completion of the age, the angels shall go forth and sever the wicked from the midst of the just, &c., &c. The main idea in the parable is the separating the good from the bad under the figure of putting the good fish into vessels, the bad being simply rejected. But here we have another thing, not given under a figure but in plain language, the separating of the wicked from the just. Both events take place in this world. The latter is the wind-up of the present age and ushers in the future; the former is rather during this present time. It is not the rapture of the church; which is not found in the parable. We may know where to put it, or before what events it will take place. And here we see the rapture takes place before the angels come to search out the wicked. Observe the difference; fishermen select the good, angels gather up the wicked. The Lord uses man as the instrument of blessing to man. He uses angels as the instruments of His judgments. The point of resemblance between the action in the parable, and that of the angels is that there will be a separating process at the end as there is now. But how different the object in view, how different the means or agents employed. The angels shall come forth and having gathered out the wicked, shall cast them into the furnace of fire. So it was in the explanation of the tares. They shall "bind them in bundles to burn them--and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." (5: 30, 42.) They will gather out all offenses, and purge the kingdom. They will know how to find out the wicked, and will separate the one from the other even though they be fellow-laborers in the same field, or two women grinding at the same mill.

We read in Hebrews 1:1-14 that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation, but the higher office of separating the members of His body from the evil of the world is given to the fishermen, i.e., to the Lord's apostles and servants. Even as He told Peter that He would make him a fisher of men. The ministry of angels is rather to the individual; that of the Lord's fishermen has special reference to the church. So when actively engaged in the apostolic work of caring for and teaching the church of Jerusalem, Peter was the object of angelic care. Twice were the prison doors opened for him by the agency of these ministering spirits. At the time of the end the angels will not only be the executors of the wrath of

the Lamb, but they will be the active agents in gathering the Jews back into their land. (ch. 24:31.) They serve God and do His bidding in respect to His providential dealings with Israel and with the world. But the Lord Himself and those who have His Spirit are the chief shepherd and shepherds of His flock. The solemn judgment of the wicked marks the close of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens. It is not the judgment of the great white throne. It is a judgment of the living not of the dead. It is described in chapter 25. Remark also that while we have not the final destination of the good in the vessels, nor of the just in the following verse, we have that of the wicked. Why are we told of the wicked being cast into the fire, and not of the good being taken to heaven? Because it is a Similitude of the Kingdom which has reference only to the earth, the scene of the rule of the Son of Man' and when all offenses are taken away, only the just will be left and righteousness shall reign over the earth. Hence the reason why the terms "wicked" and "just" are used here. They are Old Testament terms, and the term "just" is applied to New Testament saints when there is allusion made. to Old Testament Scripture. So far as this parable shows we might conclude that the "good" in verse 48 are the same as the " just" in verse 49. From other Scriptures we learn that they are two distinct classes. The term "just" can include all believers in every age, and is so used; here it has a special application to the saints at that time, it is the contrast of the " wicked."

According to the calling and circumstances of the saints, so the special appellation given them of God, even as God Himself is made known by different names, which His divine wisdom saw fit, to the different conditions of His people on earth. To Abraham He was El-Shaddai, (God Almighty.) To Israel, Jehovah; to the Church, Father. Now just or righteous is a name given to the saints before Christ came, and is also specially given to those whom the angels leave in their discriminating judgment in the parable. In both these times the righteous or just have an earthly calling in contradistinction to a heavenly one. But there are two other classes of God's saints distinct from those, and from each other. They are the church, and secondly those who are martyred after the church is gone. These latter are called specially "witnesses" or martyrs, inasmuch as they are all slain by the persecutor. The church is called, or rather the saints in the church are called "saints" as a special name. Not that it is not applied to others, even to things. The utensils of the tabernacle were called holy (same word as saint), and the essential signification of this word is separation. So the vessels were set apart for the use of the sanctuary. The saints of the Old Testament times were such because they served God, and were thus distinguished from the rest. But God, through Israel, was in direct communication with the world and the saints, the holy ones, were not called to be separate from it, (from its evil of course, or they would not have been just): but to acquire riches, power, to seek and hold a place of authority, to share in the government of the world were things not incompatible with devotedness to God. All the good things of this present life were promised to them; indeed they were both the evidence and the reward of righteousness. " I have been young and now am old "said the Psalmist-" yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." In short, the Old Testament saints were to be separate from the evil, but were not called to forego their rights and position in the world. For God was maintaining His relationships with the earth in a direct and immediate way, as being the Governor of Israel. These relationships do not now subsist, they are in abeyance; and others of a higher and very special order are established. When the church is gone God will resume the old relationship with the earth, and the new will find its place in heaven. There cannot be on earth, and at the same time, both an earthly and a heavenly position for the saints of God. And there is absolutely now no such connection between the New Testament saints and the earth,

as there was in Old Testament times. Neither the place of authority, nor the striving for wealth are lawful for us. There is no promise to us that if faithful we should never want; rather we are promised afflictions and persecutions. That is, our place is not only separate but antagonistic; and consequently we must expect to feel the world's anger.

Hence we are "saints by calling," (Romans 1:7, and 1 Corinthians 1:2, not called to be saints.) The word is applied to us, not as a mere adjective, expressing a quality or condition as it was to the believer of old time, but as a name, a substantive; the special and distinctive name given to those who are the church of God. None beside are the called saints. And so it must and ought to be. The believers in all ages were to be in communion with God; and if He was maintaining relationship with the earth, so must the saint in the same way. But man has as far as he could broken the last link that connected him with God. Is not Christ rejected? Did not the world cast Him out? They killed the Son whom they ought to have revered to possess His inheritance. Thus man is stamped by the Word in the treatment of the Lord Jesus as a robber and a murderer. Well, now is the judgment of this world. Where then the place of the saint? Outside all-a complete and broad separation. The called saints are separate not only from the evil, but from the world as such; because Christ is on high, and is there as the rejected One. We are privileged to share His rejection. We do not accept the world's honors, nor are we to have any place in the world, save that of a pilgrim. We are, in regard to the position God has given to us, THE SEPARATE ONES; and no other body will ever have, or indeed would have a similar place.

So, too, the apocalyptic saints, they who are slain because of their testimony are specially the witnesses or martyrs, these are found on the earth after the church is gone, and- when there is direct interference of God in judgment. There is no calling out from the world as now. The saints then will have their special character according to the circumstances. All believers are witnesses, but none have, or will witness in such tremendous times as they, when certain and violent death awaits every confessor. In the same way a particular class is meant by the "just." They may have been hardly contemporaneous with the martyrs, but not having been slain for their testimony, form no part of the class. The church, the first-born ones, are seen in heaven before these martyrs are slain, after their death the angels come forth to purge the Kingdom by taking away all things that offend. All saints previous to this judgment are found among the "good put into vessels." The "just" points solely to the living on the earth who are brought through the tribulation. The saved remnant which form the nucleus of the people, and the center of the nations of the millennial earth. When this is accomplished the "mysteries" will have ceased, the Kingdom proper will commence. The purging of the Kingdom while introductory to the reign of Christ, is yet a part of the present course of this age. The eclectic separation of the good is during this age, but more manifest as the end draws near. At the end the angels come. How they will do their work we are not told. I believe it will be a short, and perhaps a very sudden work. But we do know that it will be thorough and complete. "All things that offend" shall be taken.

What a solemn thought for the world. No tremendous change will take place to give warning of the immediate execution of wrath. The warnings of grace are now given. Grace which while inviting lost man to Christ, declares clearly and solemnly that that day will come as a thief. But the hardened and rebellious are then dreaming of security and progress. The business, duties, amiabilities, and pleasures go on as for years before. The wheels of the vast system do not appear ready to fall off from the axle. Not a part of the great machine but seems to work smoothly, and

progress and civilization seems to point to the future greatness of man, and peace is the word on their lips. Suddenly as the lightning out of the east shines even unto the west, the Son of Man will appear. And the wicked severed from among the just will be cast into the furnace of fire. This is the way in which this busy thriving world will be brought to a sudden stand. Thus will the whole social fabric be crushed to its very foundations by the stone, and as chaff be driven before the wind. In the parable it is the angels who do this. They are the executioners of the King's wrath and judgment.

How touching the anxiety of our Lord that his disciples should understand. Before He warned them, saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Now He asks, "Have you understood all these things?" It is the anxiety of His love, that would bring us intelligently into the apprehension of His counsels. What a portion is ours? We shall be taken away before that time comes. Our Lord Himself will come for us. That rapture unnoticed by the world; or if our absence be marked, will occasion as much joy as wonder. They whom the world hated are gone, it knows not whither. But what marvelous grace that has so saved us, and brought us so nigh to God that He reveals His purposes of judgment to us, and what He is to do after we have left this world. What effect should such a revelation have upon us? "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Let Peter answer even as he put the question, "wherefore beloved seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent that we may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless." Amen. R. B.

S. Thoughts on the Similitudes of the Kingdom; Part 2

Thoughts on the Similitudes of the Kingdom; Part 2

"SOME fell on good ground, &c." (5: 8.) We come now to the bright side of the scene, though not unmingled brightness. There are shadows yet of the old darkness, the effect of this bad ground which in the three former cases hindered all fruit, and which here brings a checkered result, "and brought forth fruit some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold." Why if the ground be good is there such a varied crop? In the first place, let us inquire what is meant by good ground, and without hesitation we answer that it does not mean that any heart is in itself good and capable of bringing forth fruit to God. Every child of Adam is without understanding, as Scripture declares, consequently can produce no good fruit, and must be placed in one of the three preceding classes. That is, wherever the word is preached, let it be the word of the kingdom as then, or the word of His grace as now, the hearer will be found in one of them. There is nothing in his nature which, in itself, can be compared to good ground. But our Lord says (5: 23), that He that receiveth the seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it and bringeth forth fruit. How clearly beside the sowing of the word by the Lord Jesus, there is another work by the Holy Spirit which is not at all alluded to here. Not because it is unimportant, yea, absolutely necessary, but because our Lord is simply giving facts and results which are manifest to all. That which is seen of men-not the internal operations of the Spirit. We have seen how the wicked one (Satan) operated in the first case, and the hindrances in the second and third. In the fourth, while there is no hindering power seen at work, neither is there visible on the other hand, one to aid in the production of good fruit. It is the external fact-the ground was good. Good seed was sown, and there was good fruit. So a man hears the word, understands it, and produces good fruit, he repents and believes, and lives a godly life. He is likened to good ground. But if we seek to know how a soul understands the word and bears fruit, Scripture is plain that it is only by the direct and inward operation of the Holy Spirit-where He acts, and there alone. is found the power to understand; and good fruit borne, without Him, whatever the appearance, there is no reality. This fourth case is the contrast of the others. In the first the hearer does not understand, in this he does understand. In the second and third cases, while it is not said that the hearer does not understand, it is said that he is unfruitful, either dried up by the sun, or choked with thorns. Here he bringeth forth fruit. Even to understand the word without bearing fruit is as fatal as not to understand. But whence arises the difference in the quantity of fruit borne I We know from the word of God that the heart remains evil to the last, and that kind of hindrance, which is seen in the three former cases respectively, exists in the -hearts of the "good ground" hearers, and if not thoroughly watched and judged, will manifest itself, and hence the varied results ever from the good ground. This proves that it is not the absence of an evil nature which here makes good ground. It is the Spirit who gives the will and the power to understand and to be fruitful. We can in our own souls, conscious of the irreclaimable nature of the soil of our own hearts, bear witness to the sovereign power which produced fruit to God. Yet, alas, it is just here where we can detect so much failure. Our poverty of understanding, our fleshliness, worldliness, are always working against, and hindering the word,

and just so far as it is unjudged we fail in 'fruit-bearing. This parable shows us that every one who hears the word, whether converted or not, is responsible for bearing fruit. What a solemn thought for those who think they have done their duty, if they attend once or twice a week to hear the gospel, but do not concern themselves about the obedience it requires. When the husbandman sows good seed, he has a right to expect a harvest. When God causes his word to be preached, He, too, has a right to expect and to demand that it be received and obeyed. Therefore we read (Acts 17:1-34) God now commandeth all men every where to repent, and on this account (or for this reason) He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world, and to all them who have heard of Christ, THE question will be how they received Him, how they obeyed Him. All who profess and call themselves Christians are outwardly as branches in the vine. (John 15:1-27) If there be no fruit they are cast forth to be burned. Solemn thoughts for all who bear the name of Christ. Are we bearing fruit? If we are not only by profession branches in the vine, but also members of the body of Christ, through faith in Him, then we have the gracious words of our Lord, so full of comfort to our souls-" I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." If we sincerely desire to be fruitful, we know that the husbandman-the Father-will purge us that we may bring forth more fruit. More fruit. How full of meaning are these two words. God's desire, His complacency in the result of His own work. He prizes the fruit, it is sweet to His taste, and He wants more fruit. In my garden is a tree, where fruit is always scanty and never seems to ripen, I do not care about more fruit from such a tree as this; but there is another, which in its season bears more sweet and pleasant fruit, now about this one I do care, and therefore use all means to make it bring forth more fruit. So it is with the Father, He prizes the fruit we bear, and He purges us that we may be more fruitful. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be - my disciples."

It is worthy of remark that while there are three cases in which there is no fruit, there is also in the fourth case a threefold division of them who bear fruit. Is this diversity attributable to the three kinds of hindrance? Can it be said that he who brings forth only thirty-fold, is naturally of that dull stupid class portrayed in the first case, that he who brings forth sixty-fold is characterized by that which operated fatally in the second or third case? This I doubt; although it is certain that he who brings forth a hundred-fold is one who stands before the others, yet each one has the seeds of all evil within, and it is by the prevalence of one of the evils in the three first cases that he takes his place, for these unfruitful cases take in all men. Therefore the varied result is due to the want of diligence and watchfulness on the believer's part, against the peculiar tendency of his own bad nature. The Christian's failure in fruit-bearing will doubtless be characterized by this or that prevailing evil. But the true cause of the lack of fruit is owing to the want of a self-judging spirit, and prayerful dependence upon God. Where these are lacking, the door is open for the entrance of every kind of evil, whether of the flesh, or of the world.

Yet there is a divine order in the giving of the hindering powers, and the beauty of it would be marred if the order were changed. It seems to give in most souls the successive characters of the warfare we wage. For in the first case it is Satan opposing the life-giving word of the Son, in the second it is the flesh which is always opposed to the spirit, and in the third it is the love of the world which is incompatible with the love of the Father. When a soul is quickened there is life from the Son, but the flesh remains in him, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh: If we daily mortify the flesh, and strive to keep it under, still though there be no craving for ease, or for more than God

has given in this world, there May be undue anxiety and fear concerning self; or one's family; cares engrossing too much of one's attention. Now this does really proceed from a love of the world which has unperceivedly hindered us from trusting to, and resting implicitly upon, the love of the Father, and consequently of loving Him fully. The love of the world is a thorn deeply rooted in our hearts. In many an unsuspected corner we find it ready to spring up. It is only the light of God's word that can make it manifest.

Among those who received the word of the Lord, no doubt this varied result was manifested. For we must remember that the Lord was describing His own work, as well as foreshowing the result of the preached word during the time of His absence; and accordingly we find those who followed and chive close to Him all through His ministry, sharing His shame and reproach; themselves also cast out and despised. Still they were with Him up to the hour when Jesus delivered Himself over to the power of the world and of darkness. Then indeed all forsook Him and fled. In that path where lay wrath, judgment, and death, He alone was, He alone could be; the most loving, the most faithful, could riot follow Him then. But He came for the very purpose of treading that path alone, and He went through it alone, as ova able to bear all the judgment clue to sin, and so to deliver His beloved ones from that which would have been, must have been, to them everlasting destruction. But up to this hour, in which He must be alone if. He would have companions in glory by and bye, amid all their falterings and failings, they loved and remained with Him. We can see and adore the grace which so estimates their faithfulness. But there were others whose love to Him was only seen at the end when they went to beg of Pilate the dead body of Jesus, who were prevented through fear of the Jews from publicly owning Him before. It may be that many received His word whose fruit was only seen when He had ascended to His Father. In the little assembly met together in Jerusalem on the clay of Pentecost there might have been seen the healed leper whose faith scarcely reached to the will of the Lord to heal him; the palsied man whose sins were forgiven; the woman who followed the Lord into the house of Simon the Pharisee, whose faith saved her; the man born blind who confessed Jesus to be the Son of God; the woman of Samaria, and others of whom we read, others too not mentioned, who perhaps loved the Lord in secret, but whose faith was not sufficiently strong to break through difficulties till the ascended Lord brought them out in spite of all reproach and persecution, and formed them into one body-, one Church, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. But however weak and fearful, however little the faith, not one such but was known to and cared for by the Lord. If in many instances the return was only thirty-fold, it was good ground, and as such prized by Him. May it be our earnest endeavor to render a full return to. Him who has caused us to receive His word, so that by bearing much fruit we may glorify the Father.-R. B.

S. Truth Absolute And Relative.

Truth Absolute And Relative.

There are truths absolute, so that it is impossible to lay too much stress on them in overstatement, or exaggeration. Such are the facts about our Lord's person and work, His perfect Manhood, His essential Godhead, His infinite Atonement, and consequently the salvation which grace gives. These, it is needless to say, admit of no qualification whatever, although the veiling of Godhead in flesh be equally true. Obviously these stupendous verities can never occupy a secondary place. Take again another series of facts, as different as possible from the Incarnation, but alas! equally true, and liable to no extenuation — human sin and misery and responsibility. Nor may we exclude from this category truths like that of election, to reconcile which with man's responsibility ingenuity has tormented itself in vain; but which, we may rest assured, will one day be made clear to all, as they create no difficulty now to the spiritual. But all such truths are absolute, a quality to be predicated of every fundamental principle of revelation. It has nothing to do with the blessedness of the truths, but with their being illimitable. As we know, truth concerning Christ is as comforting and sublime as the facts of our fallen condition are saddening and humiliating. The one is indeed the remedy of the other. This, however, is not the point that is now pressed, but rather the absoluteness characteristic of some truths, as compared with others which are but relative.

Now there are other statements in the Bible that are only true, when not unduly pressed, and which may become positively dangerous, if divorced from a just perspective. And such, it would seem, is the case with what is said in scripture about the mother of our Lord. At first sight the language of Christ in correcting the woman who pronounced His mother blessed, might seem to be at variance with the language of Mary's own inspired song. Did she not say that from henceforth all generations would call her blessed? Yet here we see the Lord reproving undue, or at least exclusive, occupation with her, whom the angel Gabriel had greeted as highly favoured [and blessed among women].* To superficial minds it might seem rather harsh to damp such generous homage. But the interpretation is perfectly simple. Mary was in the flesh most highly favoured, singled out by a supreme distinction. It is even possible that, in a laudable desire to steer clear of Roman error, Protestants may have somewhat overlooked the signal honour of the Virgin, though this were doubtless to err, if to err at all, on the right side.

[*"Hail, favoured one!" said Gabriel to Mary; who in her turn said to her cousin Elizabeth, "Blessed art thou among women." So the R.V. admits in accordance with the best authority. The Vulgate leaned to the heaping of honour on Mary; and many followed it. Ed.]. But our Lord evidently intended His hearers to understand that no mere emotional admiration of Himself or His words could take the place of faith and godliness and holy life. Rather blessed, said He, were those that heard the word of God and kept it. This is spiritual blessing, which is far beyond fleshly. Nor is it fanciful to suppose that the Saviour was guarding against undue exaltation of the creature, to which the human heart is so prone, and which may perhaps have sometimes claimed to justify itself by those very words of the angel, recorded earlier in this Gospel. In short it is right to account

Mary favoured; it is grievously wrong to pay her honours due only to God; it is a mistake to forget that even spiritual blessedness exceeds any honour in the flesh.

It would probably not be difficult to furnish other examples of merely relative force in Biblical statements, which, taken with the proper safeguards, convey important and undeniable truth. The Lord Jesus told His disciples on one occasion that, if a man did not hate his father and mother, he could not be His disciple. None of course but a very literal mind (such are generally the most inaccurate) would be stumbled by this. To be "without natural affection" (2 Timothy 3:3) is one of the signs that characterise the difficult times of the last days. We know that "hate" is simply used in a forcible, as some say oriental, way to press home the fact that Christ must and will have supreme place in the renewed heart. And so with several other statements, on which it is unnecessary now to dwell. There are many dangers to beware of in interpreting scripture, but perhaps a bald literalness of mind is not the least. R. B.

S. We know.

"We know."

1 John 5:20.

Nothing is more characteristic of the inspired writers than the calm assurance with which they speak. It is not theirs to surmise, or suppose, or infer, but simply to state. The former processes no doubt have their place in the affairs of this life, and not least in the domain of science, where thoughtful men increasingly recognise that it is risky to generalise too rapidly. For from time to time fresh facts come to light that conflict with some previous generalisation, and demand re-consideration from the ardent builders of the oft-repaired edifice. The discovery that geology and physics do not agree as to the antiquity of the earth is one illustration of this; another is the shock recently given to the dream of Darwinism by an eminent scientist, who affirms that acquired habits are not transmitted. Now the doctrine that such are transmitted, and not instincts only, is an assumed buttress, perhaps keystone, of the evolutionary hypothesis. But if the German professor be correct, what becomes of its vaults? How many advocates fondly hoped it had passed the probationary period, and was as secure as the law of gravitation itself; and many others, though reluctantly, have thought it necessary to make terms.

Now there is nothing strange in this, if, as is probable, it be true; nor does it in the least invalidate the discoveries of science, nor the advantages that result. It merely shows that all man has to discover for himself must be of a progressive nature, and that science itself, in certain branches, must be in a state of flux. It is foreign to the object of this paper to discuss evolution. The point pressed is simply the hypothetical character of much of human science; it may often seem a dazzling guess, but much is still a guess. On the other hand no intelligent person need ever seek to belittle its efforts. But can man by searching find out God? Surely the same answer must be returned now as when the question was first propounded. Yet without the knowledge of God there can be no true happiness. For, as Augustine said of old, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." But science has nothing to do with that which is highest in man, the spirit, and can give no peace or joy. For none probably would designate by such comfortable words the austere pleasure man's science is able to afford. It is indeed "dry light." And so, were there no revelation, the lament of the poet, "Behold, we know not anything," must be but too well-founded. What should we have beyond the progressive investigation of the extent of our ignorance? This, while benefiting man marvellously in a material way, has only enabled us to work our iron and not our souls (as one of our poetesses has expressed it). Hence it were pitiful indeed, had we nothing better. No wonder that when revelation is ignored, men are sad: a fact painfully disclosed in much of the literature of the day, in which is seen how no culture (that is the word) can avail to make hard negations seem like the "children's bread." Wherein lies a weighty difference between ancient and modern, or rather what is known as up-to-date literature. If the ancient poet was not true to the light he had, at least he knew no turning away from the "great light" (Matthew 4:16); for he had not seen it. How infinitely more serious for those who go back to Pagan reveries,

and to worse than the twilight of the Jewish world! It is a well-known fact also that those who make a point of cultivating the beautiful apart from the true fail in the former almost as much as in the latter. No, "'tis first the true, and then the beautiful," as a Christian poet sings. But what if God in His grace give a revelation? Does not He know what is good for His poor fallen creature, man? And, knowing, is He not able to impart such knowledge? No doubt mere curiosity is never gratified. But all that concerns man's spiritual welfare is abundantly revealed, and this with divine plainness and simplicity. Besides, how much there is momentous about man and the world before the deluge and since, where the classical oracles are dumb! But as to things eternal even now "we know," as St. John says again and again. Nor is the disciple, whom Jesus loved, alone if conspicuous in directness of statement with its concomitant profundity of truth. It characterises, as was said at the outset, all the N. T. writers, as well as the O.T. ones not less truly. When we ask what it is that we know, we hear the blessed words, "We know that the Son of God is come." Clearly such knowledge must dwarf all others into absolute insignificance. Other things may be true for and on this little stage. He indeed is the truth. For it is evident that if I know that a Divine Person has come, and truly man in this world, and that by faith in Him I have life eternal, with the blessed issue of being with Him for ever after this short life is over, then nothing down here can be of consequence — save to do God's will. What, when weighed in those balances, are science, art, or literature? Surely in themselves but of ephemeral interest, save where they possibly minister to divine purposes. We know that the Son of God is come, the True Light; and all else passes into the shadow out of which it came. Hence it is that the question propounded by our Lord ("What think ye of the Christ?") becomes the all-important thing. For, if I think rightly as to Him, if I am taught by the Holy Spirit to believe on Him, this will clearly set me right on every other important question, and enable me to see each thing in true perspective, when God's Son occupies the central place in the heart and mind. And this is the firm ground of the apostle, who had already at the start testified to Christ's atoning blood, which cleanses from all sin. He simply in language of the truest sublimity presents the Son of God come, and tells of the understanding given us that we may know Him. Oh, how much hangs, and what holiness of life should follow, on such priceless knowledge! This then is divinely given knowledge, in a world where all is out of course, and where there is no light but what streams from Him Who came by water and blood. No other key unlocks the enigma of this groaning creation, the "burden of this otherwise unintelligible world." What else claims to be light, when it is not spurious, or mere will-of-the-wisp, is but a reflection of the rays of Christianity. It is forgotten often by those who point to the sometimes upright lives of doubters, that they have been nurtured in the Christian tradition. Truly no high standard of morality in society at large could survive the dethronement of the Bible. The reflected radiance seen in philanthropy, crusade of peace, etc., etc., would soon vanish in the eclipse of doctrinal faith.

What the knowledge is, and in Whom known, has been briefly stated; it remains only to add how it may be obtained. This, all are assured, is by simple faith. And the simpler we are, the better, both for ourselves, and in order to help others. Does not our Lord commend above all things the simple faith of a little child? Hear the Gentile apostle, "Let no one deceive himself: if any one thinketh he is wise among you in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18). R. B.

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