WRITINGS OF WILLIAM R NEWELL

by William R. Newell

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

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

01.00.1. Revelation, Verse by Verse

REVELATION

Verse-By-Verse A Classic Evangelical Commentary By William R. Newell

01.00.4. Introduction

Introduction

Romans, Ephesians and Hebrews should be known before Revelation. Romans, justified forever by faith; Ephesians, our calling, one with the Risen Christ; Hebrews, our Great High Priest, Who makes continual intercession for us, and leads our worship in heaven.

Remembering that the Father hath committed all judgment, and also the authority to execute it, unto the Son, “because he is a son of man,” we shall expect Christ to be seen as the Judge, in each judgment scene in The Revelation; and also that He will have a special character towards each stage of judgment.

I. The part concerning judgment will include:

First, judgment of the assemblies (churches) as God’s house on earth; for judgment must “begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). This judgment Christ carries on as risen, glorified Son of God, in His priestly character, but as a priest dealing judicially. Church testimony on earth is finally rejected. Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22.

Second, the scene is removed to heaven, where is seen the Throne of God as holding the whole earth in responsibility. Christ, as the Lamb slain, takes the sealed book of the divine counsels of earthly judgment. The seals, trumpets and vials follow. Revelation 4:1-11, Revelation 5:1-14, Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21, Revelation 17:1-18, Revelation 18:1-24.

Third, Christ Himself comes as King of kings and Lord of lords in the Great Day of Wrath; sets up on earth His iron-rod judgment rule of 1000 years, at the end of which, Satan being released and man rushing again to his banner, the world’s affairs are closed up, and heaven and earth pass away. Revelation 19:1-21.

Fourth, all moral, responsible beings (except Christ’s own) are called to the judgment of the Great White Throne, which has nothing to do with earth or with dispensations, but with eternal destinies only. Revelation 20:11-15.

II. Then we have the New Creation: a new heaven, a new earth,-“all things new”; with the New Jerusalem the home of God and His saints; the Throne of God being established therein.

It is for this new heaven and new earth wherein righteousness is at home, that the Spirit, through Peter, declares the saints are looking. The Various Judgments 1. Of the Church’s earthly history- Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22.

2. Of the rebellious nations-especially the Beast-worshippers- Revelation 4:1-11, Revelation 5:1-14, Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20,

Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21.

3. Of the system of earth idolatry called “Babylon”- Revelation 17:1-18, Revelation 18:1-24.

4. Of the Beast, the False Prophet and the Kings and armies of earth at Armageddon- Revelation 19:19-21.

5. (This is the Great Day of Wrath.) 6. Of the devil’s permitted career on earth, for 1000 years- Revelation 20:1-3.

7. Of the spared nations, in enforced righteousness, justice and peace, during the Millennium- Revelation 20:4-6.

8. Of the rebellious earth, upon Satan’s release- Revelation 20:7-9.

9. Of Satan himself in the Lake of Fire forever- Revelation 20:10.

10. Of the unsaved, at the Great White Throne- Revelation 20:4-15.

We repeat over and over that our Lord is not seen in the book of The Revelation as the Head of the Body, the Church. This description belongs wholly to Paul, who unfolds in his epistles the character, calling and destiny of the Church of God. In The Revelation we are not studying the calling of the Church as the Body of Christ, as risen and heavenly. But The Revelation does deal with outcomes: (1) of the earthly church testimony, for as a witness for God the church is proved unfaithful and removed from the scene: the real Church taken to heaven (Revelation 4:1), and the false, destroyed by the Wild Beast (Revelation 17:1-18). (2) Then the nations, under responsibility to occupy and govern the earth, are judged and desolated. (3) Jerusalem, “the holy city,” is seen as “Sodom and Egypt” (except for a remnant). The nation is handed over to the delusions of Antichrist. (4) Finally, the rebellious of the race of Adam and the earth they chose and claimed, following Satan’s captaincy in their final testing, are destroyed, and new things are brought in.

Christ in the Revelation We find our blessed Lord directly named in seven chief characters:

1. He is the risen, glorified Son of God among the churches as the light bearers of this present age, judging their state by His Spirit (Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22).

2. He is the Lamb in heaven (after the rapture of the Church) publicly invested with authority to carry out the determined preliminary judgments upon men before His personal arrival on earth as Judge and King (Revelation 4:1-11, Revelation 5:1-14, Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21, Revelation 17:1-18, Revelation 18:1-24, Revelation 19:1-10).

3. He comes to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords in the Great Day of Wrath (Revelation 19:11-21).

4. He is Christ, reigning with His glorified saints on earth, during one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6). He is then “King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:9).

5. He is the Judge upon the Great White Throne, with the holiness, righteousness and truth of deity absolutely and finally unveiled in judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

6. He is the Lamb, upon “the throne of God and of the Lamb”: through whom, though subjected willingly to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28), the glory and love of the deity will be expressed forevermore (Revelation 21:22-23; Revelation 22:3-4).

7. He is “I Jesus … the root and offspring of David, the bright, the morning star,” to His own, His beloved servants (Revelation 22:16). He is the Coming One, expected and longed for by His real saints, the Bride, the true Church, who are under His grace continually. The Revelation’s last words are, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the saints. Amen.” We must study this book in the light of this verse, and of Revelation 1:5 : “Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood!”

Whatever judgments fall, they do not fall on the saints, the Body of Christ!

01.01. Chapter 1: Opening Message- Rev_1:1-20

Chapter 1: Opening Message- Revelation 1:1-20 The Revelation of Jesus Christ: which God gave Him. This expression is the true title to the book. It is a communication or unfolding of the details of future things by our Lord Jesus Christ. These opening statements are startling: (1) God gave Jesus Christ this apocalypse, or “revelation.” (2) It was that He might show it unto His servants (literally bondservants). (3) Jesus Christ communicated it “by his angel.” (4) It was “His servant John” to whom it was communicated (5) John faithfully “bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw.”

We have, first, God; then Jesus Christ; then, His angel; then, His servant John, and finally Christ’s servants,-to whom the Revelation comes. Furthermore, we note that John bears witness to two things:

(1) “the word of God,” and (2) “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” “The word of God” is evidently God’s word to Christ in which He communicated to Him this apocalypse, or revelation; and “the testimony of Jesus Christ” is our Lord’s faithful communication of what God gave Him to tell us.

First, there can be no doubt, that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity. The Father, in Hebrews 1:8, addresses Him as God, saying, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” Our Lord claimed worship, and plainly says that “all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father” (John 5:23). And in a comparison of Revelation 1:8 with Revelation 22:13, all doubt vanishes.

But, secondly, we must remember and believe Christ’s own words in Matthew 24:36 : “Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.” Compare Mark 13:32, and also His parting words after the resurrection, in Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.”[1]

[1]This word authority (often translated “power” in the old version) it the Greek word exousia, used first in Matthew 7:29, “He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes”; again, Matthew 21:23, “By what authority doest thou these things?” and again, Matthew 28:18, “All authority is given unto me,” etc. It is used 21 times in The Revelation, its last occurrence being in Revelation 22:14, “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right (exousia) to come to the tree of life,” etc. “Power (exousia) means authority to do a thing” (Liddell and Scott). That seems to me to be the primary meaning of this word in Scripture.

Again, in Hebrews 10:12-13, “He … sat down on the right hand of God, henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet.” The word here used means, “to await from the hand of another.” Taken in connection with the preceding verses, it indicates a state of constant expectancy: certain of the event, but leaving the time in the hands of the Father. When our Lord came to earth, we read (Php 2:7) He “emptied himself.” He left His glory, His wisdom, and His power, absolutely in the hands of the Father. This did not subtract an iota from His Deity, but placed Him where He could say to the Father (Psalms 22:9-10), “Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb.” So He spoke on earth, “The

Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing." Now, of course, our Lord has entered into His glory, and all authority has been committed unto Him in heaven and on earth.

Nevertheless, these plain words are before us as we enter upon The Revelation: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him." This revelation must have been communicated to Him after His ascension to heaven, by the Father who has "set within his own authority" times and seasons. We believe:

1. That the times and seasons are yet within the Father's authority-of course by the glad consent of the Song of Solomon 2:1-17. That the book of The Revelation contains the details of the carrying out of the divine decree that all Christ's enemies should be put under His feet-all things, save the Father, subjected unto Him (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

3. That the Father has not revealed "the day and the hour," so that we are waiting and watching and expecting, along with our Lord, the Father's giving Him His Kingdom, which He "went into a far country, to receive … and to return" (Luke 19:12). Our Lord said in Gethsemane, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:53-54). He left it to the Father to grant Him, as He pleased, weakness, shame and suffering, or resurrection, power, and glory. And this was perfect obedience!

Christ will, of course, occupy the eternal throne, for He is God, yet it will be "the Throne of God and of the Lamb," an infinitely beautiful and gracious arrangement. For our Lord will not retire from us into the Godhead, although He is and will continue to be, "God blessed forever": but He will be a man, and as such will reign on "the Throne of God and of the Lamb" forever! To show unto his servants (literally bondservants). This revelation is written not exclusively to the Church, but to all willing subjects of Christ. This will include the spared remnant of Israel, also those among the nations that attach themselves to them in the awful time of trouble; in fact, all companies of God's saints. Although written "for the churches" (Revelation 22:16), the book of The Revelation is not addressed to the Church, the assembly of God, the Body of Christ, as such, as are Paul's Epistles. The Revelation is a prophecy, testified to the churches, for their information as to "the things that are to come," and for warning and correction. No wonder, then, that those not subject to Christ should find difficulty with the book of The Revelation! It is a remarkable fact, that although our Lord Jesus said in the upper room, "No longer do I call you servants; … but I have called you friends"; and although Paul tells the church saints, in Galatians 4:7, "Ye are no longer bondservants, but full-age sons:"-nevertheless all the apostles in their writings call themselves bondservants of Jesus Christ! If we are having difficulty with this blessed closing book of God's holy Word, let us surrender ourselves to Jesus Christ as His servants. The book was written to bondservants. The things which must shortly come to pass. "The things,"-this is definite. It describes events. Do not then look for vague "symbols." "Must come to pass"- here is certainty, necessity. Man dreams of "development," "progress," "achievement." God says, "The rulers of this world are coming to nought" (1 Corinthians 2:6). Believe God; doubt man. Satan is the prince of this world and the God of this age. He deceiveth the whole world. Let us not be deceived. The things we are about to study in The Revelation "must come to pass," and, "shortly."

"Shortly" surely indicates imminence. We have the same Greek expression in Romans 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Greek: en tachei). He is not yet bruised,

but we are expecting it! The same phrase is used in Revelation 22:6, “The things which must shortly come to pass.” This shuts out the “historical” interpretation of the book,-that is, making the seals, trumpets, vials, etc., apply to the events of the past church centuries. In fact, the strictly prophetic part of The Revelation does not begin till the churches are out of the scene,-that is, after chapter 4. I firmly believe that unless we reject utterly the idea that this part of The Revelation has been “gradually fulfilling itself” in the present age, we shall miss the meaning of the book. Remember Paul’s explanation of the doctrine of the Jewish remnant in Romans 9:27-28, “The Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short.” The present dispensation must not in any sense be confused with God’s future dealing with the Jewish remnant after the true Church has been taken to heaven. Strictly speaking, the true Church has nothing to do with the present age, any more than it has to do with this world. Judgment for her is past; her citizenship is in heaven; she is one with Christ; she is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and may be caught up at any moment. Although she is informed in Revelation about “the things which must shortly come to pass” on earth, she will not be in them; even as Enoch was taught of the Lord’s coming and judgment (Jude 1:14), but yet was not to pass through it; and as Abraham was taught concerning the destruction of Sodom, while he himself dwelt on the mountain away from the place of judgment.

It is absolutely necessary for us to distinguish, as members of the Body of Christ, between what is said about us (in the epistles), and what is told to us, as friends, by our Lord, in The Revelation.

“Shortly,” moreover, not only means imminency, but also rapidity of execution when action once begins. “Things which in their entirety must soon come to pass”-in God’s speedy time, although He seems to delay; for the same Greek expression is translated “speedily” in Luke 18:7-8.

He sent and signified (them) by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. The manner of the communication of The Revelation to John by Jesus Christ is remarkable. He “sent and signified by his angel.”[2] This angelic agency of course does not refer to the title and introduction (Revelation 1:1-8); nor to the great personal vision of Christ (Revelation 1:9-20); nor to the messages to the seven churches (Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22). Also the thrice repeated “I come quickly,” and the “I Jesus have sent mine angel,” are spoken directly by the Lord. Indeed Revelation 22:6-10, and again Revelation 22:10-20 may well have been spoken by the Lord Himself; while the closing verse, like the opening of the book, is the Spirit-inspired utterance of the apostle. Like Revelation 1:4-7 it is more apostolic than seer-like in form, and so, more intimate to our hearts.

[2] Many other angels are seen besides this revealing one whom our Lord calls “mine angel”: the whole “innumerable company” in Revelation 5:11 and Revelation 7:11; four in Revelation 7:1; “another,” Revelation 7:2; the seven trumpet angels in Revelation 8:2; “another” in Revelation 8:3; “another strong angel,” Revelation 10:1; six successive special angels in Revelation 14:1-20; seven angels with the seven last plagues, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21; another heralding Babylon’s final destruction in Revelation 18:1-3; the “strong angel” who illustrates that destruction, Revelation 18:21; the “angel standing in the sun,” who invites the birds to Armageddon, Revelation 19:17; the angel that binds Satan, Revelation 20:1-3; and the scene of Revelation 21:9. The manner of angelic communication to John, like other phases of inspiration, is beyond our faculties. Much, indeed, like John, Daniel “heard a man’s voice between the banks of

the Ulai, which called and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (Daniel 8:16). The Revelation concerning, as it does, governmental matters on earth, which are in angelic hands until the Millennium, is committed largely to direct angelic ministry.

John speaks of "all things that he saw." Speculation upon inspiration is vain. God tells us it was "in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1). John, in The Revelation writes much as Daniel wrote. Both deal with God's government of this world. We may know the whole is authoritative. We shall find here "what the Spirit saith to the churches," and also the awful tribulation time itself, the Holy Spirit reminding us by His especial witness, that all is taking place according to God (Revelation 14:13); and, at the end, Jesus Himself speaking, attesting all (Revelation 22:16), although it had been testified by His angel: "I Jesus have sent mine angel."

Blessed is he that readeth. This is directly contrary to the attitude toward The Revelation which very many Christians have. A special blessing is pronounced on the readers of this book, also on they that hear the words of the prophecy. Living oracles give and support life (John 6:63). Note that it is the words that are to be read and heard. God is especially particular concerning this one prophetic book of the New Testament, as we shall note at its close (Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:9, Revelation 22:10, Revelation 22:18, Revelation 22:19). Doubtless the public reading and hearing of this book of The Revelation to the assembled saints is especially in view. "Give heed to reading," is Paul's command to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:13); and this was public reading. It ought to be practiced everywhere. [3]

[3] Dean Alford, himself an English churchman, says: "If the words are to be understood as above, they form at least a solemn rebuke to the practice of the Church of England, which omits with one or two exceptions the whole of this book from her public reading. Not one word of the precious messages of the Spirit to the churches is ever heard in the public service of a church never weary of appealing to her scriptural liturgies. Surely it is high time that such an omission should be supplied." And keep the things that are written therein. Now the sense of the word "keep" is its primary one of "watching over," "guarding as a treasure," as well as its secondary one, "to give heed to." We cannot "keep" a prophecy as men might "observe" a law. The prophecy will be fulfilled, whether we pay attention to it or not. But there is divine blessing if we give heed to it and jealously guard its very words! For the time is at hand. No dates are set for this "time of patient grace," this "day of salvation," the "acceptable year of the Lord," in which the Church finds herself. And although from Revelation 4:1-11 onward, the Church is to be on high, we must remember that the whole book of The Revelation is included by our Lord in Revelation 22:16 : "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches." "The time is at hand" should be in the heart of every believer, every day! "Prophecy annihilates time, and all intervening and even opposing circumstances, and sets one down on the threshold of accomplishment," (W. Scott). The first use of the Greek word translated "at hand" should instruct us. Compare Matthew 24:32-33, "nigh," "near." The words are repeated in Revelation 22:10, which see. In John 11:54-55 you have "near," of place; and "at hand," of time; and note in this latter verse that the Jews were getting ready for the event! Despite all the arguments of those who have said, "My Lord delayeth his coming," the only attitude of obedience is, to "watch": for we know not the day nor the hour! They are no friends, but deadly foes, who put this and that "event" between the believer and his Lord's coming.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace. First, regarding the writer of this book: it was John, the beloved disciple. There is no real doubt that John the apostle was the writer.

Fausset well says, “John-the apostle: for none but he (supposing the writer an honest man), would thus sign himself nakedly without addition. As sole survivor and representative of the apostles, and eye witness of the Lord, he needed no designation but his name, to be recognized by his readers.”

John writes as a Seer more than as an Apostle in Revelation. There is no speaking with personal apostolic authority (except in this salutation of Revelation 1:4-7; and the benediction of Revelation 22:21) as Paul in his epistles, and Peter, and John himself elsewhere. Instead of speaking authoritatively in the Spirit, we find John falling at the feet of the glorified Son of God in this chapter. He is hearing His voice as Judge, and seeing visions of Him as such, for the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, whether it be in the present house of God on earth, the churches; or toward the elect nation, Israel; or toward the earth’s peoples and nations. John in The Revelation is merely the writer. Twelve times in this book he is told to write. Therefore we need to give the more earnest heed to The Revelation. There are those who seek to evade (to their own sorrow) the authority with which Paul was invested. But there is no way of evading the direct words and actions of the divinely-appointed Judge, Christ Himself, here at the end of God’s Book. The “seven churches” indicate representative assemblies, both as to history, and as to spiritual state. Other important assemblies (like the Colossians within a few miles of Philadelphia and Laodicea), are not mentioned, although doubtless John was familiar with all of them and had labored among them. Let us, therefore, at once take these seven churches as representing all the assemblies of the Church’s history; even as Paul writes to seven cities of the Church’s calling (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians). [4]

[4] The teaching of some that the seven churches of Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22 represent Jewish assemblies in tribulation times arises from Satanic delusion. It is always coupled with other fantastic and heretical dispensational doctrines (as Bullingerism with subtle denial of eternity of punishment). Govett well says, “These seven churches were prophetic of the things which ARE, not of the things that were to be.”

Note the blessed announcement to us, “Grace … and peace.” As our Lord so lovingly speaks at the close (Revelation 22:16), “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches.” Let us see that we keep the sweet taste of grace and peace as we read of the bitter things that are coming upon the earth. If at any point throughout the terrible things which you read in these Revelation chapters, you cannot stop and look up with perfect confidence saying, “I am under grace, and God has announced peace to me,” then you are falling into unbelief. Flee to Romans 8:1-39, and to Ephesians 2:1-22, where you belong! Your Lord will have His servant John write many things for you which are not about you. Paul is your apostle. Any of you who are believers are not appointed unto wrath-any kind or degree of wrath. Israel and the nations will experience wrath; but you, who are in Christ, are already glorified (Romans 8:29-30)! From him who is and who was and who is to come. This is the Eternal One, the self-existent Source of all being, and the One to whom all moral beings are responsible. How different this name of God from Paul’s greetings: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father,” for Paul’s task was to set forth our sonship and its blessed privileges. Or, as John himself writes (1 John 1:3-4): “That which we

have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be made full." The Revelation is not dealing with the unutterably glorious standing of the Church as the Body of Christ and of the saints as full-grown sons of God, and of our heavenly calling and walk. These things are not to be forgotten for a moment by the believer who reads The Revelation. The Revelation is "obviously distinct from the other parts of the New Testament, in that God is reverting a great deal to the principles on which He had acted in Old Testament times."

It is at once manifest that God is spoken of here as "the Administrator of the world,"-indeed, of all creation; and the third and second Persons of the Deity are likewise connected here with government, rather than salvation. It is of the highest importance to see this.

We read, consequently, of the Holy Spirit, not as "the one Spirit" dwelling in all the members of the one body, but, from the seven Spirits that are before his throne.

There is, of course, but one blessed Spirit: yet He is spoken of here as seven-fold; for He is the executive person of the Godhead, and acting in The Revelation in a purely governmental way. In this character His place is "before the throne of God" in heaven, as we read in Revelation 4:5 : "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Now if we turn to Isaiah 11:1-16, we find that upon our Lord's return as King, upon the throne of David, the Spirit rests upon Him in His governmental offices in exactly a seven-fold way: first, as to His Deity-"the Spirit of Jehovah"; second, of wisdom; third, of understanding; fourth, counsel; fifth, might; sixth, knowledge; seventh, "the fear of Jehovah" (begetting that fear). And also in Zechariah 3:9; Zechariah 4:6; Zechariah 4:10, we again read of the governmental operation of the Spirit of God: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts" … "these seven shall rejoice, … the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

We find our Lord Jesus Christ, although the second person of the Trinity, mentioned last, in Revelation 1:5, for God desires immediately to emphasize certain things concerning Him; and it is He who is to rule on earth. And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness. He was that, first, when He was on earth, as Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:13, "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession;" or, as our Lord says in John 7:7, "The world … me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." But He is evermore the witness to the truth, as we shall see in His searching messages to the seven churches, covering the present time, as well as when He afterwards carries out faithfully what is written in the seven-sealed book of judgment on the world. [5]

[5] "He was the faithful witness because all things that He heard of the Father He faithfully made known to the disciples. Also because He taught the way of God in truth and cared not for man, nor regarded the person of men. Also, the truth which He taught in words, He confirmed by miracles. Also because the testimony to Himself on the part of the Father, He denied not, even in death. Lastly, because He will give true testimony of the works, good and bad, at the Day of Judgment."-Richard of St. Vincent, 12th century.

Next He is called the firstborn of the dead. Others who were raised, like Lazarus, were brought back into this earthly life merely to die again; Christ, into "newness of life," in eternal victory over death. The Greek word for firstborn (prototokos) is a most important one to lay to heart, indicating,

as it does, the fact of His divine personal dignity and precedence. This is the explanation of the same word in Colossians 1:15, “the firstborn of all creation”; which does not for a moment mean that our Lord was a creature, but that He is the head, object and heir of all creation. The very next verse declares that “all things have been created through him, and unto him”! And inasmuch as the book of The Revelation is to reveal all things actually subjected to Him, we must connect Psalms 89:26-27; Psalms 89:37, with our Lord. God the Father speaks of Christ thus: “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father … I also will make him my firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth”;-just as the very words, “the faithful witness” are found in Psalms 89:37 of this great Psalm! This leads us to the third designation of Christ in Revelation 1:5 : the ruler of the kings of the earth. Ruler, not prince: our Lord is not one of the princes of the earth, but the ruler of them all, as will be brought forth in The Revelation. This characterizes the whole book of The Revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not seen in His work of redemption-that is Romans; nor in His office as High Priest and Advocate on high-that is Hebrews and 1 John; but the first great question in The Revelation is, Who shall rule,-Satan and man? or God by Christ? Keep this in mind through all our study. But ere we enter upon Christ’s stern offices of judgment, John is given to speak a most tender word to our very hearts: Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood. Remember,-do not forget!-the words of John 13:1 : “having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Jude, after a brief story of the apostasy of Christendom, stands at the portal to The Revelation and speaks, as we are about to enter this great book, “beloved … keep yourselves in the love of God.” Note in Revelation 1:5 that the loving is in the present tense, and the loosing in the past (aorist). The loosing was done once for all at Calvary; the loving goes on forever! And he made us to be a Kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father. Notice again that John does not here speak of us as the Body of Christ, and members one of another-which of course we are-but as a kingdom. It is unfortunate that the old version here calls us “kings.” The word in the Greek is in the singular number, “kingdom.” The reference to us as a kingdom is entirely consistent with the whole book of Revelation. We must connect this passage with Revelation 5:9-10, where the four living ones and the four and twenty elders sing a new song concerning Christ, who has just taken over the seven-sealed book: “Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them … unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth.” Both these passages, of course, look forward to the millennial reign of Revelation 20:1-15, after which the earth will pass away.

Notice that we have been made priests unto Christ’s God and Father, for Christ is the heir, and we inherit through and in Him. It is intensely interesting, and solemnly instructive also, that we are not only a kingdom, but priests. Of course, all believers have this priestly function now, as in Ephesians 2:18 : “through him (Christ) we have our access in one Spirit unto the Father”; and we are today those to whom God looks to pray “for all men; for kings and all that are in high place” (1 Timothy 2:1-2), as well as for one another, for all saints, and for the salvation of others. We are also to be offering up “a sacrifice of praise to God continually,” through our Great High Priest in heaven (Hebrews 13:15). But The Revelation looks forward to the exercise of royal priesthood! When our Lord Jesus shall return to earth to reign, the full Melchizedek priesthood will come in: “He shall be a priest upon his throne”-and we with Him! No wonder, then, that John utters the adoring words, to him be the glory and the dominion unto the ages of the ages. Amen. He speaks thus of Christ, who is God. Otherwise the words are blasphemy. It is deeply solemn to note that

the first of the many ascriptions of praise in this wonderful book of The Revelation is given to Christ, who “loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood.” Let us be forever rejoicing in it. Also the first use of God’s great particular designation of eternity, “unto the ages of the ages,” is in thus ascribing eternal glory and dominion to Christ. [6]

[6] This remarkable phrase, first used by Paul in Galatians 1:5 (Greek), occurs 21 times in Scripture, 14 of these being in The Revelation (including Revelation 14:11, where the definite article is omitted, because it is there introduced as connected with eternal judgment; whereas in Revelation 20:10 it is included, as denoting what has already been introduced). And now we come to what we may properly call the first great TEXT of the book of The Revelation: Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

We call it a text, or theme, because all preceding our Lord’s glorious advent to this earth in Revelation 19:1-21 leads up to that event. Next, He reigns on earth 1000 years. And, after the last judgment, the New Creation is seen, and we have in Revelation 21:5, the second great TEXT: “Behold, I make all things new.” But note that in Revelation 22:1-21, our Lord will three times emphasize His personal coming as the object of all thought and hope: “Behold, I come quickly!” “Behold, I come quickly!” “Yea: I come quickly!” (Revelation 22:7; Revelation 22:12; Revelation 22:20).

Those who understand the place our Lord’s personal return to this earth holds in Scripture, find The Revelation unfolding itself to them. To others it is merely a “book of symbols”-vague, objectless.

Now it is not the rapture of the Church, when we shall be “caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air,” that is seen in Revelation 1:7, although doubtless that rapture is involved and included. It is rather the public revelation, or epiphany to the whole world that is referred to, because that event brings in the kingdom toward which The Revelation looks. The Greek word, “parousia,” beginning with Matthew 24:3, is used sixteen times in the New Testament as a general term for Christ’s presence as against His absence now in heaven. “Parousia” is the opposite of “apousia,” (absence). Both Greek words appear in Php 2:12,-“not in my presence (parousia) only, but now much more in my absence (apousia).” Compare the same word in 2 Corinthians 7:6-7; 2 Corinthians 10:10.

However, the term “parousia,” applied to our Lord’s coming, covers His arrival in the upper air, His taking the Church up thither, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; our each appearing before His bema, or awarding-seat there (1 Corinthians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10), and the marriage of the Lamb of Revelation 19:6-10. During this period we are spoken of as “tabernacling in the heavens” (Revelation 13:6).

During this time we shall find Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21 under fulfilment, including The Great Tribulation, which will cover the last three and a half years before our Lord’s public coming spoken of in Revelation 1:7. This public manifestation is called in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 “the manifestation of his coming”: literally, the epiphany (epiphaneia) of His parousia,-so vividly translated by

Rotherham: “the forth shining of His arrival.” Our Lord arrives in the upper air first, taking up His saints; then, after the terrible events on earth culminating in The Great Tribulation, we read in Matthew 24:29, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven (the revelation of Himself to the spared remnant of Israel according to Zechariah 12:10); and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” This is the great, manifested coming of Revelation 19:11-16. This public manifestation is that phase of our Lord’s coming with which The Revelation deals. The rapture of the Church is secret, instantaneous, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”

Furthermore, the Lord must have come for His saints in order to come with them. For we read in Colossians 3:4, “When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested (this is public), then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.”

It is of the very first importance that we distinguish the rapture of the saints from their manifestation at Christ’s revelation. To be caught up in the clouds to meet our Lord and the joy of His presence is certainly different from “the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

“Behold, he cometh” is the one vivid point, the common expectation. It is motion from a place to a place. As Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven.” He is now the Man, glorified, at the right hand of the Father. “From thence he shall come.”

Now, this advent, or arrival, of Revelation 1:7, is an exact fulfilment of the promise given the disciples in Acts 1:11 : “This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.” There, in Acts 1:9, “as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” He went up with a visible, tangible body. He went up in their sight; a cloud covered Him from vision. Exactly thus will He be manifested. But note quickly that this coming with clouds of Revelation 1:7 is not describing the rapture of the Church essentially. We are, indeed, to be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord, but He is the Lord from heaven, and we, “accepted in the Beloved,” being one with Him and seated with Him in the heavenlies, are not connected with clouds or earth; therefore the rapture will take us as heavenly ones into the presence of our heavenly Lord, into the midst of the clouds with which He will afterwards come, and we with Him.

Every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him-that is, the whole earth and especially the Jewish nation. Zechariah’s prophecy (Zechariah 12:10), and John’s words (John 19:37), prove this. See also Matthew 24:30.

“Every eye” shall see His public manifestation as Son of man, beheld from the earth’s surface. It is not the rapture of the Church, when “we shall see him even as he is,” and “be like him” (1 John 3:2). There is no mourning there! It is, however, the exact fulfilment of Matthew 24:27; Matthew 24:29-30 : there is the darkening of the sun, moon and stars, just before; then the sudden bursting on the scene “as lightning” of the arrival, the presence (parousia) of Christ, His holy angels, and all His saints! “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with

power and great glory."

First, black night-the withdrawal of all creature light; next, the sudden appearance of the Son of man, but, as "the sign," for He must be seen by the remnant of Israel and the "sign" is this vision of Himself, when "they look on him whom they pierced." Then comes the most utter "mourning of sorrow" ever known on earth, for this nation who crucified Him.

We must remember that it is back to the Mount of Olives, whence He went away, that He will come. Just before His feet "stand upon" that mountain (Zechariah 14:4-5), He will make Himself seen in His glory, yea, in His love, to Israel, beleaguered by the hostile nations of earth. Read Zechariah 14:1-2. Jerusalem will be taken-half made captives, the residue spared. Then comes Christ: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." "And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee." There must be, however, a little space for this mourning (Zechariah 12:10-14; Zechariah 13:1). It is at that time that "a nation shall be born in a day." Israel, like Thomas, must see before they believe, but they shall see! So the weeping of the spared of Israel will be penitential grief over this Messiah whom in their blindness they pierced. But the fountain "for sin and for uncleanness" will at that time be opened to them (Zechariah 13:1), and they will cry, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him" (Isaiah 25:9). But what about the tribes of the earth? [7] Their mourning will be because of utter loss, despair and terror. "And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty" (Isaiah 2:19); for "the day of the Lord" shall come upon them "as a thief," "suddenly as a snare" (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Luke 21:34-35). That day is "the death knell of the world's gayeties and pleasures, the turning of their confidence to consternation, the conversion of their songs to shrieks of horror and despair."

[7] We must read "earth," instead of confining the term to the land of Israel. See all the occurrences of the Greek word ge„, beginning with the first verse of the Bible (Septuagint). Of some 260 occurrences of this word in the New Testament, none, perhaps, but Luke 21:23 indicates Palestine in anything like an absolute way, and this not really so in view of "Jerusalem" in Luke 21:20, and "Judea" in Luke 21:21; while in the same chapter, verses Luke 21:25,Luke 21:33, and Luke 21:35, the meaning of age, is evidently the whole earth. Always when indicating Palestine, the word ge„ is modified,-as, "land of Judah," "land of Israel," Matthew 2:6; Matthew 2:20; "land of Canaan," Acts 13:19. So also we see "land of Sodom," "land of Egypt" (Acts 13:17).

Even so, Amen. Here we have the Greek word "nai," which means "entire assent," "yea!" and the Hebrew "Amen," which means, "be it done." Both words are found in 2 Corinthians 1:20, and also in the next to the last verse of The Revelation. In Revelation 1:7 they are in the apostle's mouth, and should be in the mouth of every believer, Jew or Gentile, as a response to the prophecy of our Lord's coming. In Revelation 22:20 the "nai" meaning "yes," "yes indeed," "truly," is in the mouth of Christ; the response, "Amen," meaning, "let it be so," "I consent from my heart," is in the mouth of His apostle, representing us all! And now we come to Revelation 1:8, where God sets His own seal upon this book of The Revelation; and we beg deep consideration of this great verse. God as the great I AM is attesting this last book in a most unusual and solemn way.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. It is evident that God speaks here as God. Our Lord Jesus Christ takes the same titles in Revelation 22:13 : for He is the second person of the deity. Yet it is fitting that here in chapter one,

after the announcement of our Lord's coming, and of the general contents of The Revelation (in view of the character each Person of the Trinity takes), there should be a solemn seal upon all by God as GOD. It is fitting also that this seal should cover the revelation made of Himself to men in connection with earth in all the former Scriptures. [8]

[8] We do not find the name Father in this great verse, for that name was revealed to and is held by the Church, which is not connected with earthly government, but is altogether heavenly in calling, character, and destiny.

Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, call attention instantly away from every creature-claim-God is all! The expression "From aleph to tau" (first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet), was used by the Hebrew rabbis to signify completely, entirely. Men dream of "evolution"-that is, a beginning without God. It is Satan's lie in toto. They also dream of "development," that is, "progress" without God;-even prating of "eternal advancement," though they "die like gnats." God, the I Am, declares Himself to be the Alpha and the Omega: not a beginning and an end, but the only One: "the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth … I, Jehovah, the first and with the last" … "I am the first and I am the last, and besides me there is no God" … "from the time that it was, there am I." Take a tonic for spiritual anaemia from the forties of Isaiah!

"The Lord God." Here we have two names of God from the Old Testament. Adonai is the title of absolute authority, as "Lord of lords, the great God," in Deuteronomy 10:17; or Micah 4:13, "the Lord of the whole earth"; or, Lord also of heaven's hosts, Isaiah 10:33. God's children know and acknowledge His lordship.

Then "God." This is "El" or "Elohim": the mighty One, beginning with Genesis 1:1.

Then we have the Jehovah name of self-existence: "who is and who was and who is to come." See Exodus 3:13-15. [9] But it is not mere self-existence that is seen here: it is God in absolute present existence,-"who is"; but looking back to His former revelations of Himself and His purposes,-"who was"; and also able, and ready, and about to, make good all in the future that He has been and spoken in the past,-"who is to come."

[9] Scofield has an excellent note on the name Jehovah. See his comment on Genesis 2:4, in his "Bible."

It is striking that when the dispensation changes and God, after the trumpet of the seventh angel, takes His "great power," manifestly to reign, the twenty-four elders worship God as the One "who art and who wast" (Revelation 11:17): for at that moment they have entered into eternity, so to speak; they are with God, and God at last begins to rule in public righteousness, which, of course, will be forever. So the words "who is to come" are no longer needed.

"The Almighty." There is nothing more profitable than to meditate upon the names and titles of Deity. Although the name Jehovah seems to have been known and called upon even before the flood (Genesis 4:26), even the patriarchs did not understand its meaning as Jehovah revealed it for Israel. It was by the name Almighty He asked Abram and the patriarchs to walk (Genesis 17:1): "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Exactly the same counsel is given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1. All power is in God, not in the creature. [10]

[10] Scofield's note (Genesis 17:1) on the "Almighty God" is as weak and dangerous as his note on "Jehovah" is excellent. To be the "all-sufficient" One involves, indeed, almighty power. But such verses as Job 21:20; Job 37:23; Psalms 63:14; Isaiah 13:6 and Joel 1:15 do not easily reconcile with so limited a definition as "all-sufficient, the nourisher and satisfier of his people." It is significant that Paul, in 2 Corinthians 6:18, calls "the living God" of Hosea 1:10 "the Lord Almighty" (Greek, panto„krator): and it is also in connection with His tender attitude to them as "a Father, toward His "sons and daughters." It is this word panto„krator that is used eight times in The Revelation. It is too bad that so excellent a commentator as Dr. Scofield should say, "The primary name El or Elohim sufficiently signifies all-mightiness." It plainly does not; or God would not have used the more specific and most awe-inspiring Hebrew name, El Shaddai, Almighty, or its Greek equivalent, panto„krator. The other occurrences of "Almighty" in The Revelation are Revelation 4:8; Revelation 11:17; Revelation 15:3; Revelation 16:7, Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:15; Revelation 21:22. Present limitless power, the majesty of it, and the worship it deserves, accompany this name throughout Scripture, and especially in The Revelation.

After writing this note, I found to my horror, but I confess not to my surprise, the following: "In order to corroborate the doctrine (of sex in deity) just mentioned, certain Theosophists have invented a new derivation for the Hebrew Shaddai, which in our versions is correctly rendered 'Almighty.' They suppose it to be connected with a word shad, which signifies a woman's breast. But such a derivation is impossible, and, so far as we are aware, has never been proposed by an unbiased scholar. More than one Christian scholar has taken up this Theosophical derivation of Shaddai, and explained the word as meaning first 'full-breasted,' and then 'bountiful.' The irreverent use of one of the grandest titles of the Most High should have checked them." (Pember: THE CHURCH AND THE MYSTERIES. Page 413.) The Babylonian doctrine of "the motherhood of God," source of all abominations, is what is subtly brought in here. The true derivation of Shaddai is Hebrew, yDv from root ddv to be strong, mighty: in adjective form used only of God (Gesenius). To miss this meaning of The Almighty is to endanger the consent of our hearts to His righteous judgments.

It is necessary for us to become thoroughly acquainted with God's introduction of Himself in this book of The Revelation, for it characterizes Him throughout the book. The little son of a presiding judge might sit in a court room, and when the judge enters, delightedly exclaim, "That's my father!" but he would have no desire to interrupt the proceedings! Indeed, he would glory in the pronouncements of his father as judge; and in the judge just because he was his father. So with the saints: they are willing, yea, they rejoice, that judgment should begin even at the house of God, as it indeed does do in the seven churches. And now we come to the first of the three great visions of Christ in the book of The Revelation: the first is as the risen, glorified Son of God judging during the present age the spiritual state of the assemblies-"churches" -on earth, as His light-bearers. The second is as the Lamb in heaven "as it had been slain" taking the book of government and judgment from the hand of God on the throne. The third is as the King of kings and Lord of lords returning to earth in the Great Day of Wrath to establish the millennial kingdom. May God especially help us, for we are on holy ground here:

I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna,

and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

I John. These words are used in Revelation 22:8. Compare “I, Daniel,” Daniel 8:15; Daniel 9:2; Daniel 10:2. As Daniel was known throughout the Babylonian and Persian empires, among both Jews and Gentiles, and took this for granted, so John, the last of the apostles and well-known of all Christians, takes for granted the intimate knowledge of himself and affection for himself that history and tradition assert, especially in the very region to which the Church epistles were addressed. [11]

[11] “The time of John’s death lies within the region of conjecture rather than of history; and the dates that have been assigned for it range from A.D. 89 to A.D. 120.” McClintock and Strong, quoting Lampe. Your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus. Again we remark that John writes The Revelation not as an apostle exercising authority, but as a Seer, unfolding that unveiling of the future which Christ gave him. How humble and loving is his attitude. There is absolutely no “ecclesiastical dignity” here! Note the order: trouble and trial-tribulation-first; then the kingdom assured to us, and then the patient waiting for that kingdom’s manifestation. Compare Acts 14:22 : “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God;” 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 : “your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure … to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.” (Note here it is not The Great Tribulation, but the ordinary trials of Christians.) We are in Christ as to our risen life, standing and fellowship; but that life becomes the life “of Jesus” when manifested in our body; and is hated of the world; so that we are “delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). [12]

[12] If we “learn Christ” and hear Him, as those that are taught in Him, it will be “as truth is in Jesus,” separating us utterly from the “manner of life” of this world, and therefore incurring their hatred. See Ephesians 4:20-23. The common loose quotation, “the truth as it is in Jesus,” wholly misses the truth! Was in the isle that is called Patmos. Where The Revelation was written, we cannot say. Irenaeus says in Ephesus, but the visions were received on a small, rocky, barren island in the Aegean Sea, fifty or more miles from Ephesus, probably in the reign of the Emperor Domitian, A.D. 81-96, who had banished John thither. For the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The “word of God” is the larger term setting forth that insisting upon God’s claims on men

and warnings to them to which all the prophets bear witness. The testimony of Jesus is the gospel, John's peculiar message being that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God"-dying, rising, interceding and about to return as Lord over all. "Art thou a king, then?" asked Pilate of Christ. For saying "yes" our Lord was crucified. For witnessing the same, His apostles and martyrs suffered. It is striking that John mentions the kingdom ("tribulation, kingdom and patience") in verse nine. The early Church for 300 years looked for the imminent return of our Lord to reign, and they were right!

I became in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. Now, first, as to the "Lord's day." It was the first day of the week, in which, although banished, John had spiritual fellowship with the believers who gathered on that day to remember the Lord (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, John 20:19-26). The words do not mean "the day of the Lord," in the sense of His advent and 1000 years' reign, as some teach. First, the adjective form is the same as in the words "the Lord's supper" in 1 Corinthians 11:20; and, second, it is too early in the book to refer to "the great and terrible day of the Lord"; and third, the church age is directly addressed in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1:19 : "the things which are."[13]

[13] Alford's trenchant note (Gr. Test., in loc.) should dispose of all objections. Whatever originates in Germany (Wetstein) with "modern interpretation" and is spread in other lands needs to be thrice inspected!

"I became in the Spirit." The reading "was in the Spirit," as if denoting simply a devotional state or even a conscious "communion of the Holy Ghost," is impossible here, as also in Revelation 4:2. [14]

[14] "Not merely 'I was,' but I became in the Spirit, that is, in a state of spiritual ecstasy or trance, becoming thereby receptive of the vision or revelation to follow." (Alford)

"'I was,' Greek, I came to be, I became, in the Spirit,-in a state of ecstasy; the outer world being shut out, and the inner and higher life and spirit being taken full possession of by God's Spirit, so that an immediate communication with the invisible world is established." (Fausset)

"'I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day': 'in the Spirit' is a state into which he entered." (Darby)

See also Winer. Dean Alford protests further: "They must be bold indeed who can render it, 'I was transported by the Spirit into the day of the Lord's coming,' in the face of the absence of a single precedent in the universal usage of the early Church!" And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. Compare Revelation 4:1, where the same voice speaks again after the same manner. "It is important to apprehend that the general object of this book is the revelation of the relations of God, as ruler, with the world, viewed as introducing into it Jesus as heir. It will be seen how much of difficulty this removes" (Darby). It is the same blessed person who said, "Come unto me," and who took young children in His arms; upon whose loving bosom John himself leaned his head at the supper; but the circumstances are absolutely different. The trumpet accompanied divine manifestations and commands- Exodus 19:13; Exodus 19:16; Exodus 19:19. It emphasized authority, whether for solemnity, alarm, or gladness- Numbers 10:1-10; Leviticus 25:9; Zechariah 9:14; Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16. We must recognize the lordship of Christ. Note that it is Christ's voice in Revelation 1:10, "as of a trumpet."

Saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. Note that the book is to be sent to each church individually. There was then no "synod," "convention," "conference," or "diocese" of Asia! What follows, then, belongs to this church age, represented by these assemblies. The churches addressed were then existent. We have not therefore come to the part of the book which deals either with Israel or the earth or the Day of the Lord. Our Lord indeed will be speaking to these churches with trumpet authority; yet it will be "what the Spirit saith to the churches," and it will be "as many as I love, I reprove and chasten." And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. The Lord spake behind His servant. John was evidently wrapped in thoughts of communion, of that "fellowship … with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" which he constantly had, and desired all saints to share (1 John 1:3-4). But the Lord has other plans for His servant on this Lord's Day! Note that it is the voice he turns to see. Our Lord is ever the Word of God.

I saw seven golden candlesticks (literally, lamp-stands). John is about to learn how the Lord judged of that which bore His name on the earth. There are seven-not seven in one, as with Israel (Exodus 25:31-40). Each church is independently responsible to the Lord although all are governed by Him and addressed by the one Spirit. "The candlestick is not light, but the bearer of light. The light is the Lord's, not the Church's; from Him she receives it." Moreover, the candlesticks are of gold, which in scripture types stands for the glory of God, which the churches were set to maintain. [15]

[15] "The candlestick of the Jewish sanctuary was the one only-its six branches set into the central stem,-and it spoke of Christ, not of the Church. The seven candlesticks (of The Revelation) are for lights, not in the sanctuary (where Christ alone is that), but in the world. And while there is a certain unity, as representing, doubtless, the whole Church, yet it is the Church seen, not in its dependent communion with Christ, but historically and externally, as 'churches.' Each lampstand is set upon its own base, stands in its own responsibility." (Grant) In this wondrous vision of the glorified Lord in the midst of the candlesticks, the churches, mark how all the description sets forth His Judgeship, which is His character until the New Creation comes, in Revelation 21:1-27. And in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man. How infinitely precious to the heart is His appearance as connected with us, although glorified with the glory which He had "with the Father before the world was!" Yet Paul never calls Christ "son of man": He takes that name only when He claims what is due Him on earth.

Clothed with a garment down to the foot. This is the robe of the priest and of the judge. Also, it is the aspect of the priest, not in priestly services, but in judging character. It was the high priest's business to see that the candlestick was "kept in order" in the old sanctuary through the night,-"from evening to morning" Leviticus 24:3-4.

These candlesticks (Revelation 1:12), all bear light, for they are the churches or assemblies of saints still recognized by the Lord, and consequently still having the right to the oil of the Holy Spirit, and to Christ as light. Nevertheless, our Lord's attitude is in the dignity of priestly judgment rather than as Intercessor, or even using the "snuffers," with which the high priest kept bright the lamps of the Jewish candlestick. Here in The Revelation He is judging each church's use of its light,-that is, dealing with the churches according to their responsibility to burn brightly, rather than

seeing to it from His side that they do thus burn.

Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. The correct rendering of Isaiah 11:5, is, “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.” Our Lord in The Revelation scene is girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. The girdle at the loins means service. When Christ returns to reign, as in Isaiah 11:1-16, it will be both in majesty and in service: therefore the double girdle. But in The Revelation He is not serving, but stands as a priestly judge: therefore the girdle at the waist only; and it is of gold, setting forth His divine glory. Contrast John 13:4-5. Jesus “girded … to wash the disciples’ feet.” This is the same Lord, for He keeps cleansing us yet, but in an entirely different office than portrayed in The Revelation. And his head and his hair were white as white wool … white as snow. Here is the Ancient of Days of Daniel 7:9-10; Daniel 7:13; Daniel 7:22. Notice Daniel says that the Ancient of Days sat on the throne, and also that the Ancient of Days came. As we find in Revelation 5:6-7, “in the midst of the throne … a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, … he came,” and took the book, etc. All must honor the Son even as they honor the Father.

White,-the color of deathlessness and of eternity as well as of holiness. John seems to have been given to see His head and hair and eyes at first with some withholding of the forth shining of His brightness, in order that he might distinguish them. His eyes were as a flame of fire. Not yet a flame of fire, as in Revelation 19:12, in the great and terrible day, for it is yet the dispensation of grace; but they are none the less searching. His feet like unto glowing brass,[16] as if they had been made fiery in a furnace (literal translation). The only metal I ever looked upon which absolutely dazzled my sight was a piece of fine brass. Brass is a composite metal, produced through fire.

[16] The Greek word here rendered “glowing brass” is the despair of scholars-chalcolibanus. Alford simply transliterates it, as some others also do. Gold would stand for the glory of God, silver for redemption. “His feet like unto glowing brass” indicates wrath-judgment upon sin by the holiness of God, by which route-Calvary-our Lord overcame. He stands here among the churches on earth. He is gracious, but He must judge according to the glory which He died to secure for God. His voice as the voice of many waters. Here is resistlessness, the effect of the multitude of the attributes of deity! It is not the trumpet sound, calling to attention, so much as the infinitude of the voice. Read Psalms 29:1-11.

He had in his right hand seven stars. In the midst of the overwhelming glory of Christ’s presence the seven stars are thrust upon John’s attention. “In his right hand”-the place of power and authority, as well as possession.

Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword. This is His word, the word of God at Christ’s mouth: living, active (Hebrews 4:12). It is peculiarly through this word, spoken by the Spirit that He will judge and administer among the churches. His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. Now the Seer is given to look fully upon the face of the glory of Christ, and we read, “when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead.” So also Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13); Moses and Aaron, often; Joshua (Joshua 5:1-15); Job (Job 42:1-17), and all to whom it was given to view God’s glory. Let all who deny the Deity of Christ behold His beloved disciple at His feet “as one dead,”- at one sight of Him glorified. It is also to be noted that having seen Christ thus, John is no more afraid, - not even of the throne in heaven! And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear

not;-the same grace yesterday, today and forever! He is the One who evermore speaks to His own, “It is I; be not afraid.”

Now follows a three-fold utterance that should banish all our fears forever:

1. I am the first and the last, and the Living one. These are the words of God! Or the Jews were right, “He blasphemeth” (John 10:33-38; John 8:58-59). Again in Revelation 22:13 :-He is the Eternal One, the Self-Existent One. He is God, though He is man.

2. And I became dead, and behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages (literal translation). Peter writes, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ … begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” For forty days after His resurrection He had been with the disciples, not yet glorified, even eating and drinking with them, again and again (Acts 10:40-41). To know by His own word from out that glory in which He now stood that the One whom John had seen dead and pierced was alive forevermore,-“this same Jesus,”-would be comfort unutterable to His apostle’s heart! He speaks first as the deity. Secondly of His death as a divinely ordained event,-“I became dead”; and thirdly of His humanity for all eternity! “Alive” is used in the New Testament only of those in the body. It is supremely important that we hear our Lord announcing His being alive in His risen body, “unto the ages of the ages,” whether as “the Lamb” in heaven, “the King” coming in the Day of Wrath, “Christ” reigning with His saints, Him who sits on the Great White Throne (John 5:22; John 5:27), or the Lamb “on the throne of God and of the Lamb” forevermore!

3. And I have the keys of death and of Hades. Death held the bodies and Hades the spirits of men in Old Testament times. Since Christ’s resurrection death briefly holds the bodies, though Hades [17] does not hold the spirits, of God’s saints.

[17] Hades is literally, “the unseen”: yet it is a place, with gates. It is in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40. It is the Hebrew sheol; as we see by comparing Psalms 16:10 with Acts 2:27. Men went down into it- Genesis 37:35, R. V. Spirits, not bodies, went there,-except in “the new thing” that God did in the judgment of Koran, Numbers 16:30-33, R. V. There was “a great gulf” there, fixed by God, separating His own from “the pit wherein was no water”: for Christ had covenanted to shed His blood for His “prisoners,”-which made them “prisoners of hope”; and God promised Christ He would “render double” unto them,-not only delivering them from the pit,-as was Lazarus, in Abraham’s bosom as a child of faith delivered,-but also bringing them up from the “stronghold,” in which they waited. See Zechariah 9:9; Zechariah 9:11-12. When Christ ascended, after the three days there in “the lower parts of the earth,” He led up His “captives,”-the Old Testament saints,-in His ascension (see Ephesians 4:8-10) so that they are now “spirits of just men made perfect,” in their proper place in heaven, awaiting the Lord’s second coming and the resurrection. It is blessed, and sad, to reflect upon the countless hosts waiting with eagerness our Lord’s coming: and the prattling ones who “do not believe in it,”-and the frightful terror awaiting them!

Note that our Lord’s words in Matthew 16:18 refer to the gates of a literal region,-in this earth’s center: into which gates the saints of the Church were never even to enter.

Christ’s words should banish fear. One who has the keys of all is speaking, commissioning “his servant John” with His tender hand still laid upon him, but in the character of the eternally Living One now alive unto all the ages, and having the keys! Our Lord has a character, an office, to

maintain, of which many Christians think lightly, or not at all. He is the One ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead; for God “will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). It will not do to forget this, or we will lose that fear of God which is “the beginning of wisdom.” We have been commanded to “have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28-29). We are indeed in a dispensation of grace, God “not reckoning trespasses,” and gladly accepting all who believe. But God has seen fit to give this revelation, this apocalypse, to Jesus Christ, that He might show it unto His servants, and if you or I neglect or slight this one great prophetic book of the New Testament, who can say where we will end? Unitarianism, Universalism, and no-hellism are rolling like tidal waves over the land. “Blessed is he that readeth” The Revelation, and keeps its every word inviolate!

Write therefore. You see it is in view of this vision of the glorified Christ, the Son of God, of Revelation 1:1-20, and of those declarations concerning Himself which we have just been considering, that John is to write: “Write therefore.” Judgment, like salvation, is connected solely with the person of Christ. I beseech you, study The Revelation with this before you: God is bringing again the firstborn into the earth, and that as the Heir (Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 1:6). It will be vain to become occupied with “sevens,” “hundred-forty-four-thousands,” “six-sixty-sixes,” the restoration of the Roman Empire, the person of the Antichrist, the two wild beasts, the “millennium,” or even the new Jerusalem; unless, along with God the Father, who has subjected all things unto Him, Christ is ever before our eyes! No doubt, having put down all enemies, “then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him” (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). That does not mean that the throne of God and of the Lamb will cease, for it will be forever and ever and ever!

We now have our Lord’s own outline of the book of The Revelation. Let no one misunderstand it (for it is very simple and plain); nor dare dispute it; nor think to substitute for it his own vain thoughts! The Lord’s outline: 1. The things which thou sawest-that is, the vision which we have just beheld of Christ Himself. 2. The things which are (are on). 3. The things which shall come to pass after these things (literal translation). This last has but one possible meaning,-those things which succeed in time the things that are now on, or the Church things.

We shall have occasion to recur from time to time to this divine division of the contents of this book. [18]

[18] We shall remark again and again that the word “hereafter” is no real translation at all of the Greek phrase met a taut a which closes verse 19 and opens and closes 4:1. The phrase means, “after these things.” The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. A mystery (Greek, musterion) denotes not what is beyond our understanding, but simply what must be revealed to be understood: it signifies a hitherto hidden truth, veiled perhaps, under a symbol, but now revealed. “The correlative of mystery is revelation.” The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches. We have seen that these seven churches were chosen by the Lord to represent assemblies of the whole church age. Seven is completeness: they represent all the assemblies and they are fully in Christ’s control. Not only is He “head over all things to the church, which is his

body," the real Church, but also all local assemblies, and whether faithful or not, they lie in His direct and exclusive ownership and dominion.

There has been much discussion of the meaning of the angels of the churches. "Angel" (Greek, aggelos) signifies "a messenger"; "apostle" (Greek, apostolos), "one sent forth." Paul (2 Corinthians 8:23) calls Titus and those travelling with him "the apostles of the churches, the glory of Christ," (literal translation). In the sense of our Lord's words, "their angels do always behold the face of my Father" (Matthew 18:11), the meaning is evident. Their representatives (in this instance, actual heavenly beings) are called "angels."

Stars in Scripture stand for those having authority and leadership; also for teachers, both faithful (Daniel 12:3), and false (Jude 1:13). Inasmuch as the name "angel" is our Lord's interpretation of the symbol star, the name "angel" cannot be itself another emblem. It must be the actual name applied by the Lord to certain persons definitely responsible for the state of the churches addressed. Now the Greek word aggelos, translated "angel," is used of men, in Luke 7:24 -"the messengers (aggeloi) of John." In Luke 7:19 we read of these same men, "John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to the Lord … and … they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying," etc. That is, they were the representatives of John, just as in the same chapter (Luke 7:27) the same word (aggelos) is used concerning John himself, in his relationship to Christ: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face."

Again, in James 2:25, the word aggelos is used to describe the spies who came to Rahab: "she received the messengers" (aggeloi) etc.; just as we read of "the angels of God" meeting Jacob in Genesis 32:1; and, in the third verse, of Jacob himself sending "messengers" (the same Hebrew word both times-malahchim). Indeed, this word is used by Moses in Numbers 20:14, "And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom," while in Numbers 20:16 of the same chapter we read, "He heard our voice, and sent an angel," the Hebrew word being the same. Again, in Judges 6:1-40 the angel of the Lord is mentioned seven times, and the angels, or messengers, Gideon sends, twice-the same word. Sennacherib's representatives are called "messengers" in Isaiah 37:9; Isaiah 37:14; and in the same chapter, Isaiah 37:36, we read of the "angel of the Lord"-the same word.

Now we know from Daniel 12:1-13 that Michael the archangel stands for the nation of Israel. There is no hint, however, that angelic beings bear any such relationship to or responsibility for, the assemblies of God in this dispensation. Indeed, the very contrary is implied in Colossians 2:19. Christ is the only Head of the Church, and the Holy Spirit the only Administrator of her affairs on earth. But men are held responsible. Paul (Acts 20:28) said to the Ephesian elders (and Christ begins with the Ephesus assembly in The Revelation): "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops"-(episkopoi, that is, over-watchers). Peter also: "The elders … I exhort … tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the overmatching willingly … neither as lording it over God's heritage, but making yourselves examples to the flock" (literal translation).

We read in 2 Corinthians 8:19; 2 Corinthians 8:23, of those sent forth with Titus, that they were the messengers (Greek, apostoloi, apostles) of the churches; they were "the glory of Christ," while in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, concerning Satan and his ministers, that they fashion themselves into apostles of Christ: "for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light."

Therefore the angels of these churches (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22), are those appointed by the Lord, and this appointment brought about by the Holy Spirit, to represent and be held responsible by Christ for the condition of each assembly. Such “angels” may or may not be recognized or appointed by men: they are often despised by men. But they deal with the Lord directly concerning the assembly which each represents. They are capable of receiving personal, spiritual communications from Christ concerning the assembly, and are responsible to Him alone to carry out His directions.

We shall see in these seven epistles that the invasion of overlording ecclesiasticism made no difference in the relationship of the “angel” of any church to Christ. He was still able to address the church through the angel, despite Balaamites and even the woman Jezebel, and all obstacles. As Hengstenberg says, “They were called ‘angels of the churches’ because they were sent of God to the churches to be guarding them.” He compares Matthew 18:10, concerning the “little ones”: “in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” Thus, so long as it has its lampstand at all, the “angel,” or spiritual representative of an assembly, is a “star” in the Lord’s hand. [19]

[19] Note that the lampstand (Greek: luchnia) which represents the churches, is an entirely different word from the “torches,” or “lamps,” of Revelation 4:5, which is in Greek, lampas. The former are to hold a light, but the Spirit is light. Furthermore the lampstands of the churches were to lighten the darkness of this world; but the throne of God needs no illumination. The seven “torches of fire” in Revelation 4:5 are for searching, judging power, “sent forth into all the earth.”

Now, in this dispensation, the Church is God’s house. [20] 1 Timothy 3:14.

[20] The Church here is the assembly of God, the people, not the building! The Most High in this dispensation “dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” (Acts 7:48.) No building or location in Christendom is in itself holy above any other.

Now there are in general three forms of iniquity judged in The Revelation.

First, there are the common sins of “mankind” which take the forms of idolatry, lust and violence. They are distinctly seen in Revelation 9:20-21 (compare the two great commandments of the law given to Israel, Mark 12:33).

Second, there is the awful atheistic blasphemy of the wild beast of Revelation 13:1-18, sustained by Satanic power.

But, third, there is that which makes possible the first, and provokes into being the second-that is, the corrupt ecclesiasticism or clerisy of an apostate church. This, of course, precedes the other two.

Man awaits the permission of religion to indulge himself in the sin he loves. There is too little consideration given this awful fact. Even in professedly Christian institutions of “learning,” a course in “comparative religions” is calmly prescribed! Now God declares that “the things the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God”; and also that Satan is “the god of this age,” and “the prince of this world”; and that we true believers “are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19). That the devil hates the Church of God with a deadly enmity goes without saying, for the saints confess and serve the Lord Jesus Christ under whose feet the God of

peace will shortly bruise Satan.

Real believers, moreover, have been raised up with Christ and made to sit in the heavenlies with Him, being united to the lowly One who now is “far above all power and dominion”; and whom Satan so fears that he will flee, if resisted in faith by saints subject to God. It is that bringing on the scene of the direct power of the Lord Jesus through the Holy Ghost (the Christian’s proper warfare, Ephesians 6:10-14), which the enemy so dreads and against which he is so desperately malignant. [21]

[21] Satan is named eight times in The Revelation, five times in connection with the churches-six times if we include the name devil in Revelation 2:10.

Therefore we will be foolish indeed not to look for the history of Satanic opposition in this account of the churches. And we may expect the professing church to be tempted along the same old lines,-first, of pride and self-assertion; secondly of fleshly indulgence, lust and license; thirdly of that hateful ruse called idolatry by which man seeks to hide from himself by “religious” rites his real spiritual state, while he indulges his evil propensities.

Let us study these seven messages in view of the several parts of each.

01.02. Chapter 2: The Seven Letters- Rev_2:1-29; Rev_3:1-22

Chapter 2: The Seven Letters- Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22

About one-eighth of the book of Revelation is taken up with these seven messages. The true student of God's word learns to give most attention to what God most emphasizes. Therefore we beg the reader not to pass lightly over these seven solemn messages from the Lord Himself concerning our own days, nor to be in undue haste to get over into the distinctly prophetic and more spectacular part of The Revelation, beginning at Revelation 4:1-11.

Some one truly says, "There is always a tendency in the human heart to become occupied with the dispensation in which we are not." The things that are, the messages to the churches, search us out in a most peculiar way. "Most interpreters pass over this portion of the book slightly." (Alford)

"In his latter days, Bengel strongly recommended to those about him careful meditation in these messages to the churches. He said, 'Scarcely anything is so fitted to affect and purify us.'" (Hengstenberg) I. Ephesus-First Love Left THE ADDRESS: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. This address is general, including all churches: for it was at Ephesus that believers were by Paul entirely separated from connection with Judaism (Acts 19:8; Acts 19:10). Moreover, Christ is seen judicially walking about (Greek, peripateo) among them.

Ephesus had a great beginning! (Read Acts 19:1-41.) Paul, and Timothy, and all truth (Acts 20:20; 1 Timothy 1:3). But now the Lord must declare to her, her present state in His eyes.

CONDITION KNOWN: I know thy works. This word, "I know" is repeated seven times, once to each church. It is inexpressibly solemn, and we cannot avoid the truth that the Lord is directly cognizant of every detail about every assembly of His on earth.

COMMENDATION: Now, there was much to commend in Ephesus. It would be a flawless church in the eyes of many! Thy toil and patience. They were a working church, and they went steadily on. Patience is mentioned twice: in connection, first, with service; and second, with suffering. Thou canst not bear evil men. There was holiness there-a precious character! To permit men known to be bad to be in fellowship or even in office, is common today, but is treachery to Christ-whom the Church represents. Further, it is deadly wrong instead of kindness, to the unsaved and evil, to have them in "fellowship." Some day they will curse you for such unfaithfulness!

Didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false. "Ministerial courtesy" had no place at Ephesus! Plain scripture tests are given. The saints have "an anointing from the Holy One." They may know, if they will, false teachers, those who are "abiding not in the teaching of Christ." We are not to receive them into our house, and we are to give them no greeting (2 John 1:10); much less are we to suffer them to preach and teach in our assemblies. Ephesus had both the discernment and the spiritual energy to reject those whom she "found false."

Thou hast patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary. To suffer steadily is harder than to serve sturdily. Not growing weary was certainly a mark of vigorous life.

CONDEMNATION: But I have against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Note, the word is "leave" not "lose." To love lies in the power of the will, otherwise it would not be commanded. Now the love of Christ and the Church is that of bridegroom and bride. You cannot judge by what you see in the lukewarm churches today of the intense devotion to Christ's Person into which such assemblies as Ephesus were brought by the Holy Ghost. You may see it in the martyr days, sometimes today on the mission field, and in supremely devoted souls like Samuel Rutherford, Fletcher of Madeley, Madame Guyon, Brainerd, Payson, McCheyne, and Cookman. We regard such cases of devotion as unusual; no, we should say they are normal. Christ has immeasurable love, and that continually, for every redeemed one; and love yearns for love.

Consider newly-married people. Their life is one continuous story of affection-delight in one another. Service is not service, but gladness, for such a bride. Two New England girls worked in a textile factory. Mary went away on a visit of several months. Returning, and meeting her friend on the street, she asked her,

"Maggie, are you working at the same old factory?" "I'm not working at all," burst out Maggie: "I'm married!"

Doubtless such a one was busier with her housework than ever she had been at the factory! But she toiled unconscious of the work as such-it was for him. She parted from him with an embrace as he went to work in the morning, and she prepared the evening meal ever looking out at door or window for his coming. As he neared home, she went to meet him. All her labor was a mere circumstance, swallowed up in her devotion to her husband. But days, weeks, months pass, and she becomes occupied with the details of her housekeeping, of her own life. She prepares just as good meals, keeps the house in as good, perhaps even better, order; but she has gradually changed her habit of watching for her husband at night, or going eagerly to meet him. She calls, "Goodbye" from somewhere upstairs in the morning, instead of holding him fast every moment she can.

Now this was Ephesus; and this was the departure from first love: while Christ, the Bridegroom, has love in all its freshness, and will evermore have, for the Church. It was Ephesus, leaving that devoted pouring out of response to His love that grieved His very heart! This is the beginning of that decline which ends in Laodicea, and Laodicea's awful state: "I have need of nothing," yet loathsome, in poverty, wretchedness, misery, blindness, nakedness! Men that question the very virgin birth, and the deity of Christ, and His physical resurrection, are suffered today! The "Christian religion" has taken the place of personal devotion to the Bridegroom.

LOVING COUNSEL: Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent.

"Fallen"! With all their earnestness and activity, the leaving of their first intense love made them a fallen assembly! "Remember-repent-do first works!" Recalling, even with severe effort and anguish, our moments of greatest devotion to our Lord, the hours when we felt most deeply His tender love, and our own response-to remember such times-this is our first task. Thus His love, His goodness, will lead us to repentance. Repentance is not mere sorrow (though godly sorrow works repentance- 2 Corinthians 7:10); but repentance is a changed state of soul. It is "the

judgment we have passed, in God's presence, under grace, upon ourselves and all we have done and have been." In this case especially it will be "the goodness of God that leadeth us to repentance." Christ's unvarying, undiminished affection for us, even through our coldness and neglect, will break us up. If not, nothing will! And do the first works. Instantly let us say, this is not a call to "Christian service" or "renewed activity." Ephesus had toil, patience, intolerance toward evil, patience in suffering,-everything. But the "first works" are the goings forth of affection to Christ, freely, devotedly, as in our first love. It is the story of the bride of the Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 5:2-16). Her slowness caused His withdrawal, and it caused her much trouble; but it brought her at last to cry, "My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand; he is altogether lovely!" "First works" with her, were, finding again Him whom her soul loved! Most Christians-yes, real Christians-let Christ go, when He "makes as if He would go further." This, those walking to Emmaus did not: "They constrained him, saying, Abide with us." And He went in with them. In Laodicea we shall find Him standing without. Astonishing! Outside of the Church when His place is in their midst!

PROPHESIED ACTION: I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. The words "I come to thee," correspond to the judicial, personal visit of the Lord to Sodom ere its destruction (Genesis 18:1-33). These words do not signify operations by the Spirit, but an act of Christ, who is head over all things to the Church, and who is judging over each assembly. The fatal visit would not be recognized by the church, but it would definitely occur. After the Judge's visit there would be no more assembly there in Christ's eyes. The Spirit would be withdrawn, and darkness and desolation follow. So it happened at Ephesus, and, alas, to how many thousands of other careless "Christian" assemblies in the centuries since! No longer a lampstand! This "coming" is not His coming again at the rapture, to receive His own; but His special, necessary, judicial action toward an assembly persisting, after much light, and blessing, in neglect of Himself. Alas, the lampstand removed! The priceless privilege of setting forth such a Christ before a dying world, gone forever. I have before me a picture of the Ephesus of today-a ruined archway, a Moslem dwelling, and a forbidding castle, 'midst desolate hills. No lampstand for Christ where once Paul labored three years, night and day with tears! But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. What Nicolaitanism was, let us consider under Pergamum, the third church. We only stop to note the tender consideration of Christ: He cannot refrain from noting Ephesus' common feeling with Him in the matter of a certain terrible evil. "This thou hast": if we have the least jealousy of love for our blessed Lord, He notes it. Let this comfort us.

CALL TO HEAR: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. This is most solemn. Evidently not all the Ephesus assembly is meant; but only those who had gotten life by hearing-hearing the voice of the Son of God (John 5:25); for "belief (faith) cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). [22]

[22] One of the most solemn studies in. the whole Bible is that concerning the hearing ear. At the end of the forty years in the wilderness Moses tells Israel that although they had seen all the mighty miracles, Jehovah had not given them, as a nation, eyes to see and ears to hear! (Deuteronomy 29:4.) Neither did they hearken in the land to God's messengers, the prophets; and Isaiah was commanded judicially to "make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see … hear … understand … turn … and be healed" (6:10).

Jeremiah cries, “O foolish people, and without understanding; that have eyes, and see not: that have ears, and hear not.” The Lord Jesus preached openly at first, (Matthew 4:17, with Matthew 13:3): then He turned to parables, “because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand … for this people’s heart is waxed gross (literally, ‘grown fat’, from prosperity), and their ears are dull of hearing (literally, ‘hearing heavily,’ that is, sluggishly and imperfectly),and their eyes they have closed” (Hebrew, “smeared over”). “This citation (from Isaiah) gives no countenance to the fatalist view of the passage, but rests the whole blame on the hard-heartedness and unreadiness of the hearers, which is of itself the cause why the very preaching of the word is a means of further darkening and condemning them” (Alford).

Jehovah said to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:2), “Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of the rebellious house, that have eyes to see, and see not, that have ears to hear, and hear not.” There is nothing more awful than to be hearkening to God’s words with an unopened or uncircumcised ear! Hearing without response brings the fatal delusion-the ability to forget, of James 1:22; James 1:24. “They would not give ear” is God’s continual complaint through the prophets. Our Lord even says to the disciples in the boat (Mark 8:17-18), “Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?” Divine truth enters by the ear: and that act of the will which receives it, is called hearkening, which sometimes involves inclining the ear (from all else).

Now, seven times in the gospels, and eight times in The Revelation-seven times to these churches!-comes this eternally vital, open, yet private call to any opened ear: “He that hath an ear let him hear.”

Know you not that the most of the readers and hearers of the book of the Revelation will not really HEAR, in the sense in which the Lord means-a personal, separating word to “sink down into their ears”?

Seiss remarks, “Fishermen and taxgatherers, by listening to Jesus, presently find themselves in apostolic thrones, and ministering as priests, and rulers of the dispensation, wide as the world and lasting as time.”

Moreover, those who can discern when the Spirit is speaking-being born of the Spirit and led by the Spirit (all God’s real saints being “not in the flesh but in the Spirit,” though they do not always walk by the Spirit, sad to say)-know the Spirit’s voice in the Scriptures. They are not Sadducees,-“Modernists.” To such, even Christ’s servants, are the messages of The Revelation really addressed. These only have “an ear.”[23] [23] I have again and again looked the New Testament through for it, but I can find no Sadducee saved! Can you? In emphasizing this, let us note how to Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum, “he that hath an ear” is addressed to the whole assembly; while after Jezebel is admitted as a prophetess (Thyatira), “he that hath an ear” comes still more privately, at the very end of the letter.

PROMISE TO OVERCOMER: To him that over-cometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God. There are those who overcome, and there are those who are overcome. These latter are lost (2 Peter 2:20). They give up Christ’s words (1 Corinthians 15:2, Colossians 1:23, Mark 8:38). We note two classes-and only two-in Revelation 21:7-8. The tree of life (not a symbol, but a reality) is seen in Revelation 22:2. When the first Adam sinned, we were

shut out from the Garden (Genesis 3:22-24) lest we should “live forever” in this sinful state. This tree, under divine wisdom, sustained humanity in physical immortality, i.e., invulnerability to bodily dissolution. Now, in the last Adam, we already have eternal life as to our spirits (John 3:6); but we look forward to bodily immortality and incorruptibility; for redemption of the body is part of our salvation in Christ: 1 Corinthians 1:30 [24]

[24] One of the great proofs of the pagan ignorance of the Word of God that obtains everywhere in so-called Christendom, is the readiness of tens of thousands to listen to Eddyism, talking of “mortal mind”! The Bible never applies the word “mortal” to either spirit or soul, but to the body only. See for yourself. The Greek thneetos, mortal (liable to death), is used six times,- Romans 6:12; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 5:4; and the word for immortality (not liable to death,-Greek, athanasia), three times,- 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, and 1 Timothy 6:16; and incorruptibility-Greek, aphtharsia (not possible of corruption), eight times,- Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:42; 1 Corinthians 15:50; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54; Ephesians 6:24; 2 Timothy 1:10; and Titus 2:7.

II. Smyrna-The Church in Suffering

ADDRESS: These things saith the first and the last, who became dead, and lived (literal translation). How fitting a title! The church at Smyrna was troubled, poor, and blasphemed by false Jews, and some were to be martyred. But Christ speaks as having endured the same thing and risen triumphant over all, even death itself!

CONDITION KNOWN: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty. How blessed that Christ keeps saying, “I know”; no matter what the troubles and the poverty. He had no place to lay His head. But thou art rich-spiritual riches: they had the “gold refined by fire” which wretched Laodicea so woefully lacked. Riches in grace come when patience has its “perfect work” in trial (James 1:2; James 1:4). And the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue [25] of Satan. Terrible words! Satan early entrenched himself against Christ and His gospel in Judaism,-”those who pretended to have the legitimate, hereditary claim to be God’s people.” They were the not Jews who were Jews “outwardly” (Romans 2:28, Matthew 3:9). In John 8:44, our Lord said to the Messiah-rejectors of His day, “Ye are of your father the devil.” Believers today need to be faithfully warned regarding their attitude to the Jews: (a) not to join at all in that Gentile envy and hate lying at the root of “anti-semitism”; and (b) not to give special place to Jews, even Jewish believers, as such; but (c) to glorify God for the “remnant according to the election of grace,” among them, now being saved; and (d) to remember that the most of the nation is to be cut off as apostate before the Millennium sets in; (e) to believe that God’s words in Romans 3:22-23; Romans 10:12 are true today: “There is no distinction … for all have sinned”; and, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all … that call upon him.” Jewish sinners, Irish sinners, American sinners, Hottentot sinners, Hindu sinners, English sinners, Scotch sinners: no difference at all! Just sinners, all!

[25] Contrast “synagogue,”-a gathering together, the Jewish thing-with “ecclesia,” the called-out-from, away-from, which is God’s word for the Church: “called out” from Judaism and all earthly religion, as well as from the world. But alas, the early Church speedily became Judaized. There is great appeal in a visible temple, gorgeous ritual, an accredited priesthood ready to assume responsibility for you in divine things. And when all this was yoked to such a mighty past

history as had the Jewish nation; and,-most potent of all, the possession of the Old Testament oracles, which all Christians accepted as inspired of God,-the influence of these lying Jews may easily be imagined! Especially so (and alas!), because of the wealth Judaism could, and did display, to make contemptible the “little flock” of Christ!

These false Jews are called liars twice by the Lord,-once as to their claims, and once as to their character (Romans 2:9; Romans 3:9). They were liars because they denied the truth of the absolute deity of Christ; because they perpetuated the lie that Christ did not rise, but that His disciples stole His body away; because, further, they said that His miracles had been wrought by Satanic agency; because also they rejected all the mighty works wrought after Pentecost in the Name, Jesus of Nazareth. The Lord stamps their very claim to be Jews as a lie. He only is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is inward, not outward in the flesh (Romans 2:28-29). There are not many Jews in God’s sight. You have seen very few! Most of the so-called Jews are “chaff and dross,” and the “liberal” Jew is worst of all. The fact that some preachers make up so easily with liberal Rabbis labels both!

Yes, Judaism is more acceptable to the flesh than faith in an unseen Lord; an earthly “religion” is more attractive to a carnal heart than a heavenly walk!

Christ, whom these Jews at Smyrna had rejected, calls their opposition to His Church, also their daring to substitute their synagogue for the assembly that owned His Name, one simple, awful word-blasphemy. And so it is today! [26]

[26] The ancient account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, in A.D. 168, eighty-six years after his conversion, is very definite, that the Jews “joined the heathen in clamoring for his being cast to the lions; and, when there was an obstacle to this, for his being burned alive; and with their own hands they carried logs to the pile: the Jews being most desperately forward, as is their custom, to render this service.”

Having lost earthly power under Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews felt nothing was left them but their religious preeminence, which meant their self-righteousness. Now, religious righteousness will do anything, as history fully reveals. For this, “the Jews … killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us (the apostles) … and are contrary to all men; … forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always” (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). The Jews are unchanged-except the “remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). If missionaries to the Jews would pursue Paul’s method of “provoking them to jealousy” by boasting of a Savior they had nationally rejected, instead of offering them the “Messiah” (which God is now not doing!) they would quickly find the same deadly enmity and persecution and violence which Paul suffered. When the opportunity offers, the majority of the Jews will go over openly to Antichrist, as we well know from Daniel 9:27, Isaiah 28:14-15, and many other plain prophecies. We do well to have “great sorrow” for them as did Paul in Romans 9:1-33; to remember that nationally they are “beloved for the fathers’ sake”; and to labor to reach them. But it is folly to close our eyes to their blinded, deadly state! The nation that crucified Christ, stoned Stephen, and most bitterly hated and opposed the gospel of grace preached by Paul, remains unchanged. The fountain for sin and for uncleanness is not yet open for them nationally, nor will it be until “that day” of Zechariah 12:10-14; Zechariah 13:1, when, beleaguered by all the hostile nations of earth, and in despair, they at last “look upon him whom they pierced,” and fall into such mourning as has never been known! They

will not believe until they see.

Today Laodicean lukewarmness admits Rabbis, Swamis, Unitarians, and “modern” Bible disbelievers-infidels-to its “religious platforms.” Nevertheless, “synagogue of Satan,” our Lord’s awful name for the Jews that opposed the gospel (that is, the deity, virgin birth, blood atonement and the physical resurrection of our Lord), still remains.

LOVING COUNSEL: Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer. Count up Christ’s “fear nots”: they include everything. The world is always in fear-of disease, of disaster, of death. God’s saints should not be so. The Captain suffered: so shall the soldiers; but (unlike Mohammed’s deluded followers) fullness of joy awaits them.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take! The clouds ye so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessing on your head.”

Therefore fear not! Remember Hebrews 2:14-15. The devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried. But, “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20). The binder shall be bound (Revelation 20:1-3). Do not stumble because the adversary is still permitted to oppose you. He opposed your Lord, but only brought out your Lord’s supreme choice of holiness and His Father’s will. “The trial of your faith worketh patience.”

Ye shall have a tribulation of ten days. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life. How good it is to know that “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” Every trial is measured by the heart of infinite love in a hand of infinite care! The early Church did indeed have just ten great persecutions under the Roman emperors, beginning with Nero and ending with Diocletian, whose last persecution, and probably the most terrible of all, was just ten years long! Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, Maximum, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian, were the ten principal Pagan persecutors. However, there was constant, though not always general, trouble until Constantine’s edict of toleration.

“Faithful unto death.” This means to the point of martyrdom: It does not mean “holding out to the end” of our lives, according to the old expression. In that sense, many who have failed have been saved- 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Corinthians 11:32. The crown of life is “the special prize promised to the faithful.” James 1:12 shows this crown of life to be a special mark of approval after a saint’s enduring the Lord’s prescribed trials through love to Him.

CALL TO HEAR: He that hath an ear. Not all would hear in the days of terrible trial, so they needed the words of their loving Lord. Like Israel, “they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.” It is our profound conviction that not only in Russia and Germany but in other countries there are terrible days of trial directly ahead for the Church of God. It is our proper portion-all the day (of grace) long are we to be killed, counted as sheep for slaughter. There- fore, remember the exhortation of Peter (who at the first, fled and denied, but later was crucified for his Lord): “Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind,” or “thought,” “intent,” “resolution” (1 Peter 4:1), that is, with the same “expectation,” when necessary.

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. There is a double negative in the Greek-“not at all be injured.” The saints may have to bow their heads to those who execute the

first death-who “kill the body”; but over these, we read, “the second death hath no authority” (Revelation 20:6). No real believer is coming into judgment. See John 5:24, R. V. Believers’ works will be examined, but not as sin: that is gone forever, borne on the cross! Hebrews 9:28 : “so Christ … shall appear … apart from sin.”

It is striking to notice that the name Smyrna is simply the Ionic Greek for myrrh, a fragrant gum in common use. So, “perfumed with myrrh.” Note Song of Solomon 3:6; Song of Solomon 1:13 with Matthew 2:11; Psalms 45:8; and, especially myrrh as used at our Lord’s burial- John 19:39. The Smyrnan church represents the martyrs, and the fragrance of their affection fills the whole house of God, even today! Have you read, “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs”? The Bible and Foxe’s book were all John Bunyan had! I beg you, read the story of the martyrs. You will need it.

III. Pergamum-Idolatry and Clerisy Arising

ADDRESS: He that hath the sharp two-edged sword. The sword is Christ’s word in its stern, judging character. Therefore in Pergamum let us expect evil to be dealt with. In Ephesus, first love was left; in Smyrna came chastening-the fires of Satan’s opposition: if perchance there might be recovery; but it proved unavailing. The Pergamum period may well be looked upon as beginning with Constantine’s “embracing Christianity” [27] in 313 A.D., when the Church settled down in the world. The enemy’s plan now was to favor the faith he had fought and defile what he could not destroy. The Christian “religion” became that of the Empire that had slain the Lord!

[27] That this Roman Emperor was ever truly a believer one doubts. Fisher (History of the Christian Church) says: “He was never fully weaned from the cultus of Apollo. There were occasions on which he ordered the Pagan soothsayers to be consulted. That he did not receive baptism until the day before his death, was not due, however, to a lack of faith (1) but to the current belief, in which he shared, that the holy laver washed out the guilt of all previous sins.” (Faith in a “holy” vessel, and “water” is not trust in Christ’s blood.)

CONDITION KNOWN: I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s throne is. The Devil is not yet “in hell,” nor even shut up in the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3); but he is the prince of this world, the god of this age. He walks up and down in the earth (Job 1:7), where he yet has his capital and also his throne [28] whence he directs the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. (Compare Ephesians 6:12.) When Israel was owned of God, when the Jerusalem temple stood, Satan’s great opposing city was Babylon, on the Euphrates. See notes on Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24. “Pergamos (properly called Pergamum), was a sort of a union of a pagan cathedral city, a university town, and a royal residence,” says Blakesley. The title, “chief temple-keepers of Asia” was held by its inhabitants, showing “the supreme importance of Pergamos to heathendom.” When the Babylonian cult of the Magians was driven out of Babylon, they found a haven at Pergamum, and Pergamum’s king, Attalus III (B.C. 133), willed his kingdom and title into the hands of the Romans (Justin p. 364, Strabo). The title of the Magian high priest was, “Chief Bridge Builder,” meaning the one who spans the gap between mortals and Satan and his hosts. In Latin, this title was written, Pontifex Maximus. [29] [28] Observe carefully that the true reading is thronos, “throne,” not “seat.”

[29] In the bloody conflict for the bishopric of Rome, Damasus, one of the Babylonian priests or Magians, in 366 A.D., secured the office, and finally was conceded from the emperor, the title

Pontifex Maximus. According to Zosimus, Constantine had assumed the title in 325, as the heathen emperors before him had appropriated it, “because it contributed to exalt at once the imperial and the episcopal dignity, and served to justify the interference of the emperor in ecclesiastical counsels and in the nomination of bishops.” Gratian was the last emperor to whom the title was applied. The medals of Constantine and his successors, down to Gratian, and the inscriptions relating to them, gave them the title of Pontifex Maximus. Thus was Babylonianism, begun by Nimrod, perpetuated in that which had the name of the Church!

COMMENDATION: And thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. Five of these seven cities “contended for the privilege of worshipping the emperor,” and that Pergamum was the most prominent in this; yet the church there as a whole held fast Christ’s name as the deity, and His work alone as the object of faith, and that even amid most terrible persecution. Antipas’ name was dear to Christ, as is the name of each who suffers for His sake. Let us see in this scene anew the absolute present enmity of this world toward Christ!

CONDEMNATION: I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam … idols … fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. [30] Over against the faithfulness of the martyrs of Smyrna and Pergamum, stands the beginning of actual tolerated evil. “Thou canst not bear evil men” was written of Ephesus, but of no other church. You know the history of Balaam, the mysterious prophet of Numbers 22:1-41; Numbers 23:1-30; Numbers 24:1-25, who, prevented from cursing God’s nation Israel, counseled the king of Moab to entice Israel into Moab’s heathen idolatry, with its obscenities and abominations (Numbers 25:1-18), bringing death by plague on twenty-four thousand Israelites! Satan, failing to overthrow the church by persecution in Smyrna days, snares the Pergamum church into idolatry and fornication. To “eat things sacrificed to idols,” in the sense of Revelation 2:14, is to engage in idolatrous worship, feasting in the idol’s temple. Outside, “in the shambles,” saints could buy whatever they pleased, even though it had been previously offered to idols (1 Corinthians 10:25). In Pergamum, however, they sought to “drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons,” and thus “provoke the Lord to jealousy” (Revelation 2:21-22). “Idolatry” is here to be taken literally, as is “fornication.” It is astounding how early was the invasion of idolatry into the Church, and the defense of it, even by some so-called “church fathers”!

[30] A good deal turns on the position of the last word homoids in the original. It seems to me that the peculiar emphasis in the first part of the sentence on Pergamum’s having, that is, permitting, these Nicolaitans, might be strong enough to attach this last adverb to the fact that she suffered them, rather than to what they taught. Otherwise, we must conclude that the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans taught and practiced the same things: viz. idolatry and license. Whereas, it seems probable that the name Nicolaitans, as we say elsewhere, holds its own interpretation:-laity-bossing clerisy.

Idolatry was always accompanied with utter fleshly license and often nameless abominations, just as with Israel at Sinai and in Canaan,-just as is religious idolatry today, both Romish and that of heathen countries.

Those who would make the idolatry and fornication of this “teaching of Balaam” mere worldliness should be more careful in their study of church history, and more observant of what idolatry has

brought to every nation (see notes on Revelation 13:1-18).

2 Peter 2:10-15; 2 Peter 2:18-19, and Jude 1:4-11, show how literal is to be our interpretation of our Lord's words to Pergamum concerning the teaching of Balaam! All through the Church centuries, we find such as the Mormons of today, or the "House of David" associating with Christ's Name the very abominations He denounces.

Now, as to the Nicolaitans, their works Ephesus had, but hated; Pergamum had not their works only, but also their teaching. Moral energy is waning. "Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil." Literally, in Revelation 2:15, it reads, "Thus you are having-you!" The emphatic expression indicates the astonished, indignant, grief of the Lord.

Again, regarding the Nicolaitans: who were they?

1. The old writers tried to connect them with Nicolas of Antioch,-but unsuccessfully.

2. There is really no known record, except in The Revelation, of any sect by this name in the early Church.

3. It is not the manner of Scripture to compel its readers to obtain wisdom for its interpretation from outside history. Therefore, if we do not find a direct Bible allusion, as in the case of Balaam, we may look for the meaning in the structure of the word, as, for instance, in the name Melchizedek, "king of righteousness," from the meaning of his name; and "king of peace," from the city (Salem) he rules.

4. We would in this way find "Nicolaitan" derived from nikao, to conquer; and laos, people; and the meaning, rulers of the laity, indicating that dire clerisy which very early sprang up. A priestly caste was formed, corresponding to the priests and Levites in Judaism.

5. That no notice should be taken by the Lord of this particular evil, which, beginning in Ephesus, ripens so fully in Thyatira, the next church, would be almost inconceivable. It is not the Lord's manner to denounce evil fruits without having remarked upon the tree.

6. Inasmuch, also, as the Lord selected these seven churches to represent all the assemblies of the church dispensation, He would scarcely choose an assembly in which two "teachings" of practically the same moral corruption, existed.

LOVING COUNSEL: Repent therefore. This call is directed to the whole assembly, as if recovery were yet possible for the whole. The deeper the evil, however, the more difficult the self-judgment!

PREDICTED ACTION: Or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. This "coming," like that of Revelation 2:5, is not our Lord's second advent, but His entering personally and that quickly, upon their affairs judicially: affairs which otherwise would continue unchanged under the ever-present, although grieved and vexed, Spirit. "War … with the sword of my mouth," brings to mind at once the angel of the Lord standing with his sword drawn against the mad prophet, Balaam, in Israel's days! The targets of Christ's sword would be chiefly those practicing these evils,-"against them." The exact way, in which Christ would use the sword of His Word against these corrupters, He does not explain. However, we know Christ's words to the Jews, "if I had not come and spoken unto them … but now they have no excuse for their sin." And

we know that Paul and his company were “a sweet savor of Christ unto God … in them that perish … a savor from the death unto death” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16), as well as the opposite to those being saved. Doubtless faithful preachers minister death to as many as they save-perhaps many more.

CALL TO HEAR: The Spirit is still speaking, and “to the churches,” that is, to all of them throughout this church age: let him hear!

PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS: The hidden manna. “Hidden” is a reference, perhaps, to the wilderness manna preserved for a memorial in the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 16:32; Exodus 16:34; Hebrews 9:4). There was an especial reason for the Lord’s setting before the mind of these Pergamean believers that secret and blessed relationship into which the heavenly saints are brought by the Spirit while on earth, and, more wondrously, at Christ’s coming; because of the hidden things taught and gloried in by the Babylonian system of idolatry, and the “mysteries”[31] taught its initiates, there at Pergamum, “where Satan’s throne was.”

[31] See the subject of “mysteries” in Hislop’s “Two Babylons,” or Pember’s “Church Churches, and Mysteries.” (The latter securable second-hand only.) A white stone and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it, was promised. Christ is infinite in His excellences; and each member of His Body sets forth what no other member could. Also there is a personal character in all trials, through which the overcomer (that is, the true believer), will be brought to know the Lord in a peculiar way shared by no other. Dean Alford beautifully comments:

“These very terms (a new name written) seem to require that it should be the recipient’s own name,-a new name, however; a revelation of his everlasting title, as a son of God, to glory in Christ, but consisting of, and revealed in, those personal marks and signs of God’s peculiar adoption of himself, which he and none else is acquainted with. If the heart ‘knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy,’ (Proverbs 14:10), then the deep, secret dealings of God with each of us during those times by which our sonship is assured and our spiritual strife carried on to victory, can, when revealed to us in the other blessed state, be known thoroughly to ourselves only.”

IV. Thyatira-The Papacy in Power

ADDRESS: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire. Here we have Christ in the most searching and terrible aspect of any He assumes toward the churches. He is “the Son of God,” the Deity. He is also the Son of man, but His eyes as “a flame of fire” search this church-the holy jealousy of infinite love. We remember the words of the Song (Revelation 8:6):

“Love is strong as death; Jealousy is hard as Sheol; The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, A very flame of Jah.” And his feet are like unto burnished brass. They stand to judge in Thyatira according to His own glorious holiness. For there sin is tolerated. And not only so; but an authority permitted that supplants Christ!

CONDITION AND COMMENDATION: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. We have come with Thyatira to the papal period of church history, and before our Lord brings this hateful system before us, mark how He cherishes such devotion (and it was, here and there, very great), as marked this dark time. Notice

that “love” here comes before “faith,” as if it were only those in whom intense love for the Saviour burned, who had faith to outlast those days. Then “ministry,”-and we remember with tender hearts the amazing, self-denying lives of many who, having not much light, yet loved: i.e., Bernard of Clairveaux, Mechtilde of Helffde. How well the reader of church history remembers their patient endurance and increasing works!

CONDEMNATION: I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel (literally, “thy wife,” as Jezebel to Ahab). This reference in the local assembly, was undoubtedly to a literal woman whom the Lord calls by the hated name of the seducing queen of Israel of long ago. [32]

[32] This name “Jezebel,” applied to this Thyatiran, is proof again that God expects us to read from Scripture the deep meanings of the names He uses.

“Jehu answered, “What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?” (2 Kings 9:22). So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name … saying, “Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people … and stone him to death.” (1 Kings 21:5-10; 1 Kings 18:4; 1 Kings 18:13).

Whoredom, witchcraft, religious fasts,-and murdering God’s prophets,-this was Jezebel. Is not this also Rome! Jezebel also supported a horde of idolatrous priests of her own-Babylonians all. See Baal in “The Two Babylons,” Hislop, and “Great Prophecies,” Pember, pp. 138-139. Who calleth herself a prophetess. Now to do this was to take the place of the Spirit, who indeed spake “not from Himself,” but “what He heard” from the Lord in glory. This is exactly Romanism. The Word of God teaches that “pastors and teachers” are given to the Church: that is, she must herself BE taught! Rome’s doctrine is that the Church is the teacher. “The Church is your mother,” “You must hearken to her,” “She alone knows the voice of God,” etc., etc. THIS IS NOT TRUE. It is the denial of all divine truth. Rome holds no doctrine unleavened with error. The same rebuke Christ gives Thyatira applies to all who turn to human authority, rather than opening the ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. You may be thinking of “Christian Scientists,” and their “Mother Church”; of the Mormons, with Joseph Smith and Brig-ham Young. But the Lord may be thinking of you, devoted as you are to “Doctor So-and-So,” or to “my church.” An old Puritan preacher used to say, “I want to hear but two things: First, does God speak? Second, what does God say?” Unless we have this attitude, we place ourselves in Thyatira.

“Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel”: here was the cause of blame. Whether from sympathy with the evil, or lack of moral fibre to resist it, it is all the same: they suffered it. Today the so-called Protestant is as weak as, weaker often, than the Romanist, because he suffers some “great” denomination to hold him in its clutches, though he knows sects are directly contrary to the Word of God (1 Corinthians 1:11-13). “Be loyal to your denomination” is mere whip-cracking over you. Their shallow pretentious “educational” systems; vast anti-Scriptural debt-incurring “church” building plans; their huge, bossed organizations, and ecclesiastical wire-pulling, keep their votaries in spiritual babyhood. “Our standards” are more to them than direct Bible study. The “Federation of Churches” (??) conceived and controlled by “modernism,” (which is Tom Paine infidelity in a pulpit coat [33]), is “suffered,” despite the methods by which it procures godly but simple-hearted speakers to place on its platforms beside its trusted “modernist” deceivers. (Thank God, some have revolted from this self-appointed “Federation.” If you would know the real “Federation,” read Col. Sanctuary’s “Tainted Contacts.”)

[33] See “The Deadly Parallel,” G. W. Dowkontt, where Fosdick’s and Paine’s beliefs and teachings are compared, column by column, with Paine preferable!

Now you may say that in speaking thus we are departing from exposing the direct evils the woman Jezebel brought into Thyatira-idolatry and fornication. True: and we shall note those evils; but we have spoken as we have lest any one might think that in escaping these particular sins he had not suffered any “Jezebel” system. And she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication! This, of course, in Thyatira’s case, was literal, and in Rome’s case is literal. The confessional teaches children to discover and speak of the lowest abominations of the human heart; the result of which is to familiarize them with such things, stifle conscience, and finally open the flood gates to indulgence of the flesh, especially with Rome’s Babylonian priests, with whom to sin, is, by their teaching, no sin. [34]

[34] I defy any sincere one to read McGavin’s “Protestant,” or “Fifty Years in the Church of Rome,” by Father Chiniquy (F. H. Revell & Co., New York), or the writings of Liguori, the Roman Catholic “theologian,” and deny that Rome teaches, as well as seduces, to fornication and immorality, in the confessional.

Hear the testimony of an earnest lad:

“When I had confessed all the sins I could remember, the priest began to ask me the strangest questions on matters about which my pen must be silent. I replied, ‘Father, I do not understand what you ask me.’

‘I question you on the sixth commandment’ (in the Bible, the seventh).

Thereupon he dragged my thoughts to regions which, thank God, had hitherto been unknown to me.

I answered him, ‘I do not understand you,’ or, ‘I have never done these things.’

Then skillfully shifting to some secondary matter, he would soon slyly and cunningly come back to his favorite subject, namely, sins of licentiousness. His questions were so unclean that I blushed and felt sick with disgust and shame. I was so filled with indignation that, speaking loud enough to be heard by many, I told him: ‘Sir I am very wicked; I have seen, heard, and done many things which I regret; but I never was guilty of what you mention to me. My ears have never heard anything so wicked as what they have heard from your lips. Please do not ask me any more of these questions; do not teach me any evil that I do not already know.’”-“Fifty Years in the Church of Rome,” pp. 26-27. In the face of the revealed corruptness of the history of the confessional, and its results in Catholic lands, the Vatican’s plea against the terrible evil of divorce, is seen to be a “play to the galleries.” The papal decree “Ne Temere” (warning against adultery!) of Pope Pius Tenth, in which honest marriages, blessed by God and by years of marital uprightness, happiness, and fruitful-ness, are declared to be nothing more than adultery because between a Catholic and a Protestant, shows up real Jezebel deceitfulness.

Next, as to idolatry: note the order is changed from Balaam’s teaching, Revelation 2:14, where entering upon the idol worship was first, and the licentiousness followed. In Thyatira, fornication is first, then idolatry. I quote from McClintock and Strong’s Encyclopedia:

“Images were unknown in the worship of primitive Christians, who abstained from worship of images because they thought it unlawful in itself to make any images of deity. By the steady pressure of the heathen ideas and habits upon Christianity, emblems such as the dove, the fish, the anchor, vine, lamb, etc., formed the first step; then, paintings representing great Biblical events, saints, martyrs, which were placed in the vestibule of the church. Yet this practice was unfavorably regarded by the synods of the fourth century. When, however, in the same century, Christianity was proclaimed (by Constantine) the religion of the state, the use of painting, sculpture and jewelry became general for the decoration of the churches, resulting in the adoption of a regular system of symbolic religious images. The teachers of the church became gradually more accommodating in their relations with the heathen, allowing them to retain their old usages, while conforming to the outward forms of Christianity. Thus the worship of images became so general that it had to be repeatedly checked by laws. In the sixth century, it had grown into a great abuse, especially in the East, where images were made the object of a special adoration: they were kissed, lamps were burned before them, incense was offered to them,-in short, they were treated in every respect as the heathen were wont to treat the images of their gods. The same arguments now used by the Romanists to defend image worship were rejected by Christians of the first three centuries when used in defense of image worship. The heathen said. We do not worship the images themselves, but those whom they represent. To this Lactantius (third century A.D.) answers, ‘You worship them; for, if you believe them to be in heaven; why do you not raise your eyes up to heaven? Why do you look at the images, and not up where you believe them to be?’ Thomas Aquinas, a Roman Catholic (13th century), declared, ‘A picture, considered in itself, is worthy of no veneration, but if we consider it as an image of Christ, it may be allowable to make an internal distinction between the image and its subject, and adoration and service are as well due to it as to Christ.’ Bonaventura the Franciscan, said, ‘Since all veneration shown to the image of Christ is shown to Christ himself, then the image of Christ is also entitled to be prayed to.’ Bellarmine: Rome’s principal authority in dogmatic theology (1542-1621), writes, ‘The images of Christ and the saints are to be adored, not only in a figurative manner, but quite positively, so that the prayers are directly addressed to them, and not merely as representatives of the original.’” De Imaginibus.

Idolatry, the worship of images, is a primary teaching of Romanism. “Jezebel” then, which truth-enlightened men acknowledge to stand for Romanism, introduces un-cleanness through the confessional first; then the adoration of images, and thus a proceeding ever deeper into idolatrous superstition; for idol-worship ever degrades its devotees (see Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18).

I gave her time that she should repent; and she will-eth not to repent of (literally, out of) her fornication. The chief hold, after all, of false religion, is the liberty it gives to the lusts which the heart loves. Repentance, which is God’s way out, the human heart hates. [35]

[35] Mr. H. A. Ironside well says, “Romanism is Christianity, Judaism, and Heathenism joined together; and the Lord abhors the vile combination. God gave her (Rome) space to repent, and she repented not. Go back to the days of Savanarola in Italy, Wickliffe and Cranmer in England, John Knox in Scotland, Martin Luther in Germany, Zwingle in Switzerland, Calvin in France-all those mighty reformers whom God raised up throughout the world to call Rome to repent of her iniquity, but she repented not. If she had had any desire to get right with Him, she would have

repented in the 16th century." Lectures on The Revelation.

Behold, I cast her into a bed. "Will change her bed of whoredom into a bed of anguish: so most commentators." (Alford) The Lord often deals thus with wicked leaders; He was even more abrupt and condign with Ahab's wife (2 Kings 9:30-37). (He will yet deal effectually with the female leaders "suffered" in our own day, who center attention upon themselves, and pose more and more as prophetesses, using all sorts of meretricious showmanship to hold the poor people spellbound.) And them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. Here is a most terrible threat! We know of The Great Tribulation; and I cannot avoid the conclusion that this warning points to it. For we read in Revelation 17:1-18 that the Babylonian harlot is to be hated and made desolate by the Beast and his ten kings (Revelation 17:16).

Please note at once that these last four churches look toward the end-that is, to the closing of church testimony to give way to the kingdom. Thyatira, impenitent, is threatened with the tribulation; Sardis, with Christ's coming as a thief-that is, (after the true Church has been raptured) they will be "caught" like the world- 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Philadelphia, faithful though weak, has the promise of the Rapture, to escape all the trouble of the awful "hour" that is coming; while Laodicea is spued out as lukewarm, irrecoverable-ending the history of the Church as Christ's earthly witness. [36]

[36] Seiss well calls the attention of those who question whether the seven churches of The Revelation stand for the entire Church in its whole history, to the words of Victorinus, bishop of Petavium, martyred in 303 A. D., and the first church commentator on The Revelation known to us: "Paul first taught as that there are seven churches in the whole world, and that the seven churches are the one entire Church. Paul wrote 'Ad Romanos, ad Corinthios, ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Thessalonicenses, ad Phillipenses, ad Colossenses'; and John, obeying the same method, has not exceeded the number seven." And I will kill her children with death. Jezebel's punishment is distinct from that of her proper adherents (not those who suffer her, but those who are begotten of her). "There is a transition from literal to spiritual fornication, as appears in these verses" (Fausset). Some commentators believe that the whole passage refers to "spiritual fornication," that is, union with the world. Others, and I can but agree with them, insist that a prominent, gifted, strong-willed, evil woman was permitted in Thyatira (as such are often today "suffered"). Her "children" are evidently those whom she seduced subtly into the wickedness described, and who clung to her. These the Lord threatens to kill with death, which seems to me spiritual, eternal-"except they repent of her works." The "death" was to be so evident that all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts. [37]

[37] Grotius well says, "Through the reins (Latin, renes) the desires become known; through the heart, the thoughts."

Note, "all the churches," not these seven representative ones merely. How dull our spiritual perception, not to understand why candlesticks have been removed, and personal judgment executed, before our very eyes! David's child by Uriah's wife was publicly smitten and slain by Jehovah (2 Samuel 12:1-31). The "angel" of the Thyatiran church was good, personally; but he "suffered" his wife to teach and practice fornication,-even to bearing adulterous seed. These would be slain by the Lord: and the woman herself be fittingly dealt with. And she would become a warning, as did both Lot's wife and Jezebel. But the evil would go on into a system, to be judged

finally (Revelation 17:1-18) as a great whore that corrupted the earth! And I will give unto each one of you according to your works. Here is judgment, certainly-whether to Jezebel herself, to her children, or to those real servants of the Lord who suffered her either in Thyatira, or now, as a system: to each, a just dealing. None of Christ's own will be lost; but responsibility in church life on earth is solemn: for the Church represents Christ. To you I say (the godly ones who will really hear) to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say. The Magians from Babylon continually spoke of their "deep things," their "inner knowledge," just as the Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, and "Unity" devotees do today (simply ancient Gnosticism revived!). The Lord sees through all the enemy's delusions and "mysteries"; they are not "deep" to Him. His real saints are simple-hearted (blessed simpleness!). It is no sign of spirituality to be familiar with Satanic psychic or demonic "depths."

I cast upon you none other burden,-quoted from the decision of the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:28-29). "This act of simple obedience (keeping from idolatry and fornication) and no deep matters beyond their reach, was what the Lord required of them."

LOVING COUNSEL: Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast[38] till I come. How easy to let truth and devotion slip in Jezebel surroundings! Christ's sure and imminent personal coming again is the tonic for faith! "Hold the fort, for I am coming!" We shall see that from Thyatira on, our Lord's return, and not the recovery of the Church to her first estate, much less the conversion of the world, is the only object of hope.

[38] "'Hold fast'-aorist: more vivid and imperative than would be the present, setting forth the renewed, determined grasp of every intervening moment of the space prescribed until the time when 'I shall come': the aorist gives an uncertainty as to when the time shall be, which we cannot convey in our language." (Alford)

PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS: And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end. "It is not enough to deny Jezebel in doctrine and works, but 'he that keepeth unto the end my works' is crowned at the end: 'my works,' evidently in contrast to the works of Jezebel, verse 23. Her works were unholy; His works, holy."-Scott. To him will I give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father. Here is the first definite view in The Revelation of the coming millennial kingdom to be established by the Lord at His return to the earth (Revelation 19:15; Revelation 20:4-6). The papacy has ever grasped at "temporal power." She wants to rule the world now, before Christ comes-thus proving herself false; not a church, but Babylon. God's saints, with their Lord, await expectantly the Father's time (Hebrews 10:13, Psalms 2:7-8). Those who learn Christ's patience become trained and fit to rule. Recall, "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32); although man despises this path (Luke 22:25; Luke 22:30). And I will give him the morning star. When the Millennium comes, it will be broad day-the Sun will have risen, with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2-3)-but now it is night. And, although we know "neither the day nor the hour" of our Lord's coming, yet into the heart of the faithful believer comes that wondrous expectancy of His coming, which John elsewhere describes as having our "hope set on him" (1 John 3:3). This is the experience of the believer who awakes out of sleep (Romans 13:11), who by the grace of God hears His voice when He says, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and

arise from among the dead (ones), and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Ephesians 5:13). To such, Christ becomes indeed the Morning Star, the harbinger of the glorious coming day, though the night be yet all around us. Just as the multitude lie physically asleep, while here and there one, watching all night, or risen very early, sees the blazing beauty of the morning star, so these spiritually awakened or aroused find Christ's coming arising as the day-star in their hearts (2 Peter 1:19).

Nowhere in church history appears so intense a devotion to the person of Christ in a time of great deprivation of a free Bible and preaching, and the so-called "means of grace," as in the dark ages Thyatira stands for. All around was night, in the world and in the Church; the threat of death was over all, but Christ was known, loved, served and sung. He was the only light; but He was enough![39] [39] Concerning this De Wette says, "Arriving at full conviction of the certainty of the coming of Christ."

Luther: "Two degrees of the Christian life: in the first, faith rests upon outward evidences; in the second, on inward revelations of the Spirit."

Jonathan Edwards: "When Christ was going to heaven, He comforted His disciples with the thought that after awhile He would come again and take them to Himself, that they might be with Him." And again: "I have sometimes a sense of the excellent fullness of Christ whereby He has appeared to me far above all, the chief of ten thousands. Once, as I rode out into the woods I had a view that for me was extraordinary of the glory of the Son of God. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought or conception-which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud." And his seraphic wife thus testifies: "Mr. Sheldon came into the house about ten o'clock and said to me as he came in, 'The Sun of Righteousness arose on my soul this morning before day'; upon which I said to him in reply, 'That Sun has not set upon my soul all this night: I have dwelt with Him in heavenly mansions; the light of divine love has surrounded me; my soul has been lost in God and has almost left the body.'" (See Memoirs of Edwards, in his Complete Works.)

See Samuel Rutherford's Letters, Finney's Autobiography, especially his last meetings in Boston. See also the hymns that came out of the darkest papal times. These all had The Morning Star! (Appendix I.)

CALL TO HEAR: He that hath an ear, let him hear. Note the change in place now! Jezebel and her "children" will go on as they are (Rome's motto is Semper Idem-"Always the Same"), but "the rest," the remnant, will hear.

V. Sardis Dead-"Protestantism"

ADDRESS: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars. This is the designation of the Spirit as before the throne in heaven (Revelation 1:4-5). We have noticed that it is not as the indwelling Comforter (although He is such to all believers), that He appears in Revelation. The Spirit is subordinate to the Son, as the Son to the Father, in the divine creative and redemptive arrangements, although all are equal in the fact of Deity. Christ now begins anew, as it were: He has the seven stars, as in Ephesus, but He has also the seven Spirits of God. There will be utter searching, which is here emphasized (Zechariah 4:6-10).

We have, in Sardis, what has often been called a new beginning. God leaves the Jezebel corruption and the ecclesiastical hierarchy behind, with Thyatira; and takes up what is known as “Christianity” since the Reformation.

CONDITION KNOWN: Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Nothing could describe “Protestantism” more accurately! As over against Romish night and ignorance, she has enlightenment and outward activity: the great “state churches,” or “denominations,” with creeds and histories, costly churches and cathedrals, universities and seminaries, “boards,” bureaus of publication and propaganda, executors of organized activities, including home and foreign missions, even “lobby” men to “influence legislation” at court! You and I dare compare the Church with no other model than the Holy Spirit gave at Pentecost and in Paul’s day! And compared to that-it has a name, but is dead-not to speak of being “filled with the Holy Spirit,” “admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Pass through the churches of Christendom and ask one question: Are you born again? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Like the Philistine-yoked Jews of Nehemiah’s day: “I saw the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, of Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews’ language, but according to the language of each people” (Nehemiah 13:23-24). So with church-membership of our day, yoked with the world by marriage, by lodge-fellowship, by narrow sectarian bigotry and crass ignorance of the Word of God and even of the gospel of salvation. “Thou art dead.” Awful state! Given to recover the truth at the Reformation in the most mighty operation of the Spirit of God since the days of the Apostles, Christendom has sunk into spiritual death!

LOVING COUNSEL: Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. Notice here first, “no works … perfected” Neither in doctrine nor in walk did the Reformation go back to the early days of the Church. In doctrine they did teach (thank God!) justification by faith apart from works. Luther’s “Commentary on Galatians” is in many respects the most vigorous utterance of faith since Paul. Yet the Reformers did not teach Paul’s doctrine of identification,-that the believer’s history, as connected with Adam, ended at Calvary: that he died to sin, federally, with Christ; and died to the law, which gave sin its power. All the Reformation creeds kept the believer under the law as a rule of life; and “the law made nothing perfect.” Whereas, Scripture speaks of a perfect conscience, through a perfect sacrifice; of faith being perfected; of being made perfect in love; of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Of course, there is no perfection in the flesh, but Paul distinctly says concerning believers, “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you”; and, “if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

Furthermore, the Reformed creeds did not get free from Rome [40] as regards what they still called “sacraments,”-a Babylonish term. For sacramentum was the Latin word for a mystery of the pagan religion. “The grand distinguishing feature of the ancient Babylonian system was the Chaldean mysteries, that formed so essential a part of that system” (Hislop, p. 4). “Even in the prayer-book of the Church of England, the Lord’s Supper is called ‘these holy mysteries’! But such a term for it is unknown in the New Testament, and was subsequently introduced merely because the initiates (of Babylonish idolatry) fixed upon the Memorial Supper as the one thing in Christianity which they could most easily metamorphose into a Mystery, or Sacrament. Then, associating

Baptism with the bath which preceded (pagan) initiation, they called it, also, a Mystery, or Sacrament,-though they often dropped all disguise, and spoke of it plainly as initiation." (Pember)

[40] J. A. Froude, the historian, says, "Protestantism has made no converts to speak of in Europe since the sixteenth century. It shot up in two generations to its full stature, and became an established creed with defined boundaries, and it has come about that the old enemies have become friends in the presence of a common foe (anti-churchism and atheism). Catholics speak tenderly of Protestants as keeping alive the belief in creeds, and look forward to their return to the sheepfold, while the scarlet woman on the seven hills, 'drunk with the blood of the saints,' is now treated by Protestantism as an older sister, and a valued ally in the great warfare with infidelity. The points of difference are forgotten; the points of union are passively dwelt upon; the remnant of idolatry, which the more ardent European Protestants once abhorred and denounced, are now regarded as having been providentially preserved, as a means of making up the quarrel and bringing back the churches into communion."

Consequently neither is the walk perfected. Not knowing that they died with Christ and are risen ones, their walk is pitifully short of Paul's: some, worldly and wholly shallow; some, even sincere souls, using man-made prayers by rote, and even man-made festival days, which belong to Paganism or Judaism; regarding really devoted souls as fanatics,-especially those who live in view of, and speak of, the imminent return of the Lord, as did constantly the early Christians!

Note watchfulness, that hardest of spiritual tasks to a drowsy soul, is enjoined by the Lord that "the things that remain"-those few "fundamental" doctrines still known and preached, may not be wholly lost, but established. "Remember": like Ephesus, they must go back to the beginning. Protestantism did receive, and did hear. In the Reformation days, all Europe was stirred concerning divine truth. People crowded halls for four or five hours at a time to listen to discourses and debates upon Scripture. Alas, the deadness, the ignorance, the coldness and the carelessness today! "Keep it and repent": to recover truth once lost and especially the love of it, so as to hold the truth fast, is a deadly difficult task! Protestantism- Christendom-is giving it up.

PREDICTED ACTION: If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Notice three things: watchlessness, visitation, and ignorance. To the Sardis church, unheeding, the words, "I will come as a thief" meant, not our Lord's second coming, but visitation in judgment like that to Ephesus in Revelation 2:5, and Pergamum in Revelation 2:16. The processes of divine judgment we cannot by any faculties given us discover; the only thing for us to do is to receive divine warning. Now a thief takes away secretly our property-what belongs to us: so would Christ come suddenly, secretly, and remove everything of value from the Sardis assembly. So He did, for that assembly is gone-the very place of it! But there is a wider application: to Protestantism, with its "name to live, but dead," Christ threatens that aspect of His coming which really belongs not to His saints but to the world. "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief … ye are all sons … of the day" (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5). To be overtaken, then, and judged as the world, is the doom of dead Protestantism, just as the tribulation was the destiny of Romanism in Thyatira.

PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS: But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. Here we have the faithful remnant-"a few,"-like "the rest" in Thyatira. Faithful preachers know them in every assembly. They

hearken. They are separate from the world. They pray, go to prayer meetings, work for their Lord, and love the Word.

Note that this remnant were not “defiled.” “They are not in contact with the spiritual death around them which is here counted defilement, as in the Old Testament was considered the touch of a dead body.” (Ottman.)

“With me in white.” Here it represents manifested victorious righteousness. Compare the white robes of Revelation 6:11; and that public association with Christ of Revelation 19:14. Note rejection of defilement constitutes “worthiness,” (Christ Himself of course being our only righteousness).

PROMISE TO OVERCOMER: He that over-cometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. These promises, of course, are all to be taken literally. “Thus” as befits Christ’s presence,-“with me in white,” they shall be arrayed and walk! Also, “in no wise blot out” releases from anxiety. “The Lord will deliver from every evil work, and will save … unto his heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18). As to “book of life,” see Revelation 20:12. “Will confess … before my Father and before his angels” (Revelation 3:5). What a day! As one very near to me said, after a meeting in which some had been urged not to be ashamed to confess Christ: “I am not ashamed to confess Christ, but my wonder is, how He can ever confess me!”

CALL TO HEAR: Again note that it is after the remnant has been addressed: for real saints only will truly give ear to the Lord by His Spirit,-in any age, but with peculiar difficulty when deadness holds most professors. He that hath an ear, LET HIM HEAR!

VI. Philadelphia-Awakened Saints of the Last Days This name Philadelphia at once arouses our interest! It is the seventh (and last) occurrence of this Greek word in the New Testament. (The other passages are Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7, twice.) Hebrews 13:1 reads: “Let brotherly love (Greek, Philadelphia) continue.” Surely God speaks to us in this name, as we read the character of the saints at Philadelphia, their devotion to Christ,-His name and His word, and their consequent love for one another,-in circumstances such as theirs so precious and so necessary!

ADDRESS: He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth. Christ remains holy, even if the church has left her first love, hearkened to Balaam, suffered Jezebel and her whoredoms, and has only a name to live, but is one with the world in the defilements of death. Christ still is true: though the church has listened to the enemy’s lies through the centuries! Ah, if it were not for CHRIST! The church has a history that is worse than Israel’s, which was worse than the heathen! (2 Chronicles 33:9). But the Lord is unchanged; He is true. The more you read church history the more you realize that absolutely everything depends on CHRIST HIMSELF! And here we find Him opening this out to us. He said to John in 1:18, “I have the keys of death and of Hades.” Now He has the “key of David.” While those spoke of His salvation-power as Victor over Death and the unseen world-this announces His royal claims as Lord and Head of David’s House and looks toward the kingdom to be established on earth. Even now, when men, in their arrogance, and especially in ecclesiastical position, would “shut out” Christ’s servants (and do they not seek to do it?) it is a blessed thing to

“remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David” as Paul commanded us (2 Timothy 2:8). Although He has not yet come to take the throne of His father David, He yet has all royal authority in heaven and on earth, and He will open before His faithful servants, doors which none shall shut! All is in His hands, which exceedingly comforts saints in this world’s “Vanity Fair”!

Also, mark, our Lord can shut: and then none opens. How He opened and shut for the apostles, in the early days! (Acts 16:6-10; Acts 18:9-10; Acts 19:8-20; 1 Corinthians 16:8-9). So, also, Christ may shut doors in lands where His gospel has been known and despised, and His saints slain,-as in Spain and France, and in those lands He gave over to the false prophet Mohammed. So their Lord, whom they loved, had opened a door for these Philadelphians, which none could shut: no power of earth or hell! So they could go right on in the truth and in service, despite the devil, the world, and false professors!

CONDITION KNOWN: I know thy works (behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. Here we have another spirit than that of Sardis,-yea, better even than Ephesus! Philadelphia lacked the energy of Ephesus of the early church days, but it had three precious things: first, a little power; second, obedience to Christ’s word; third, not denying His name. As to “little,” see the same Greek word about Zaccheus (Luke 19:3)-he was “little” of stature; and about the Lord’s company in general-a “little” flock (Luke 12:32). The Philadelphian assembly was unimportant in the world’s eyes, probably few in number, poor in property, and low in the social scale. Moreover, the spiritual power they had was feeble compared to Pentecost. But the Lord has nothing but commendation for them. They loved Christ. Jesus answered and said, “If a man love me, he will keep my word” (John 14:23). Mark again the contrast with the indifference of Sardis toward the word they had received (as Protestantism in general); and also, contrast with Thyatira (Romanism), where Christ’s word had been supplanted by Jezebel’s. Here, in Philadelphia, instead of ecclesiasticism or indifferentism, we find a living response to the known word of the blessed Lord.

Also in a world that says of Christ, “He was a good man” “a great teacher,” etc.; and surrounded, as we are today, by other assemblies with merely “a name to live,” willing to have Christ’s Deity doubted or denied, His virgin birth assailed, His atoning death rejected, His bodily resurrection mocked at, His all-prevailing High priestly work in heaven disdained, His headship over all things to the Church despised, His second coming as Bridegroom of the Church and King of kings over all the earth ignored or decried,-amid all this, Christ was at home in Philadelphia, as in the household at Bethany! His person worshipped, delighted in; and His coming expectantly awaited!

Precious assembly! Our Lord’s words of greeting to them are personal, as their devotion to Him was personal! No wonder that they have special promises-Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Again those truly awful words, “synagogue of Satan”! “Salvation,” said Christ to the woman of Samaria, is “from the Jews” (John 4:22). But their sun had set. Again, (to Israel,) “I have loved you, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?” (Malachi 1:2). And again, “When he drew nigh, he saw the city (Jerusalem) and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known the things which belong unto peace!” (Luke 19:41-42). But now they had seen and hated both Christ and His Father, and their house

was left to them desolate! Nay, they were “the synagogue of Satan.” If they had been like Nathanael, “Israelites indeed,” they would have believed on the Lord Jesus, and have proved themselves of “the election of grace” of Romans 11:5, and have been part of that assembly which, as Jews by falsehood only, they reviled. Doubtless their predicted coming and worshipping before the feet of the Philadelphian church had a local, historical meaning. We also know that the day will come when the saints will judge not the world only, but also angels (1 Corinthians 6:2), and this only because of Christ’s special love for the Church! (So also the persecuting Gentiles will be compelled to treat the godly remnant of Israel in the coming day! [Isaiah 66:14.])

SPECIAL PROMISES: Now, most wonderful, cheering song to the hearts of the faithful today is the Lord’s promise to deliver His true saints from The Great Tribulation! Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. As we saw in 1:9, “tribulation, kingdom, and patience” are connected in Jesus. Compare Acts 14:22. We who believe are in the kingdom,-by birth, by new creation, already. But both for our Lord, and for us, there is patient waiting for the kingdom’s setting up. And as for Him when on earth, so now for us, there is tribulation from Satan and the world. Patience (connected with saints seven times in The Revelation), is a prime virtue. Listen: the good ground hearers “bring forth fruit with patience”, “with patience we wait for that which we see not”; “strengthened with all power unto all patience and longsuffering”; “who through faith and patience inherit the promises”; “let us run with patience the race,” “let patience have its perfect work.” This Philadelphia assembly steadily, unfalteringly, lovingly endured, and waited for(Christ; as Christ waited and is yet waiting His Father’s time to give Him the throne long promised to Him, of His father David. This is a beautiful, reciprocal promise of their Lord to them: Ye kept my patience, I will keep you out of the coming hour of trial. This “hour,” coming as it will, upon the whole earth, is seen in Revelation 13:7-8, in the permitted frightful career of the Beast. Two things identify this hour: first, its extent; second, its object. It is to come upon all “the inhabited earth” (Greek, oikoumenee). [41] It is to try the “earth-dwellers,” whether they will follow Satan’s Christ or not-since they have chosen earth where Satan is the prince and the god, as their “good things” (Luke 16:25). Fearful trial! Read Revelation 14:9-12, where the issue is finally pressed home-an issue involving eternity!

[41] This word, oikoumenee, used fifteen times in the New Testament, seems to be set over against “the wilderness” … “where no man dwelleth. It is in the latter that God will miraculously preserve the remnant of Israel (see Revelation 12:1-17).

Now, our Lord promises to keep Philadelphian believers out of[42] this coming hour.

[42] The Greek preposition eh,” says Winer, “denotes procession out of the interior, the compass, the limits, of anything; and is the antithesis of eis (which means into, or into the midst of).”

Inasmuch as this verse (Revelation 3:10) holds forth the great promise of being kept from The Great Tribulation, it behooves us to inquire most diligently about it.

1. What is the hour of trial, or temptation, of which our Lord speaks? There is no reasonable doubt that it must refer to The Great Tribulation of which Daniel wrote (Daniel 12:1), and to which our Lord referred in Matthew 24:15-21. This “hour” extends to the whole inhabited earth,-so does that. See Revelation 13:7-8. And this is an hour of trial-the earth-dwellers, having rejected, or

neglected, the Lord of heaven, and heavenly things, are now to be given Satan's Christ. A "strong delusion" will be sent by God; and all not God's elect will believe "the lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-11).

2. What is meant by being kept from that terrible "hour"?

A. It cannot mean merely, preserved in and through it: for the remnant of Israel, God's earthly people, will have that preservation (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1), whereas this is a promise given by a heavenly Christ to His heavenly saints.

B. It is from a peculiar hour, or season, not merely from trial, but from the hour and scene of the trial, Christ's faithful are to be kept.

C. It is as direct a reward to His saints for their "keeping the word of his patience," as was Christ's own exaltation because of His patiently doing His Father's will (Php 2:6-11). The word "keep" used in this promise is the same word our Lord applies to "keeping the word of his patience," which His faithful saints had done. It is, as we have said, beautifully reciprocal; but notice that Christ's "keeping" in His action toward them, was to protect them from something.

D. He says, "I will keep thee out of" or "away from" that dread hour. [43]

[43] We would add still further that it cannot have the sense of dia-through. Note the Septuagint of Jeremiah 30:7 has apo-"out of it," in describing Jacob's preservation in his time of trouble. This seems to be in the sense of removed from it, as the remnant will have a "place in the wilderness" to flee unto! The preposition ek used in Revelation 3:10, describes those who are not in the trouble, but kept away from it.

It is well to note that Noah s family was preserved through (dia) water; whereas Enoch was translated that he should not see death! This hour, we read, is "about to come." "While those ignorant of it are painting vain pictures of the happiness of earth, close at hand, to appear under the ordinary operation of the causes and agencies now at work, the student of prophecy knows that this expectation will never be realized; nay, that evil is about to expand itself to prodigious and overwhelming magnitude. The Lord, in vengeance for His truth rejected, is about to send on the earth an energy of delusion which seals all who receive it to utter damnation." (Govett)

LOVING COUNSEL: I come quickly. From Thyatira on, the eyes of the saints are directed to the Lord's return as the only hope, as it has really always been! To the faithful assembly at Philadelphia, the words were a thrill of cheer. One well says: "These words, 'I come quickly,' which in different senses and with varying references form the burden of this whole book (of Revelation) are here manifestly to be taken as an encouragement and comfort to the Philadelphian church, arising from the nearness of the Lord's coming to reward her."

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take[44] thy crown. "What thou hast" refers to spiritual possessions only,-to truth known, to progress in grace, to service to Christ already rendered. Intensely important this warning, that a crown may be won and lost through later watchlessness! "Take away from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds." I cannot agree with Alford that "it is not for himself that the robber would snatch away the crown, but merely to deprive the possessor." Service to the Lord will be rewarded, but the Lord may have to go further back to confer the reward,-perhaps to the person who brought to Him this worker who lost his reward. Doubtless also 2 John 1:8 teaches us that in order to "receive a full reward and lose not the things

which we have wrought," we must be on our guard against wrong influences-we must "look to ourselves."

[44] The Greek word for take generally indicates receiving, not seizing, as in 1 Corinthians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 4:7, three times; and 1 Corinthians 9:24. Of the twenty-three times it is used in The Revelation, twenty-one describe receiving.

"Thy crown." All instructed believers know that the several crowns spoken of in the New Testament represent rewards for service, and not eternal life, which is a gift. Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Peter 5:4.

PROMISE TO OVERCOMER: I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more. "A little strength" on earth, (but true love to Christ) and now made a pillar! This is, to be established in honor forever in the very presence of God, whose presence is the essence of bliss to a holy creature. All saints are being built therein as living stones, Peter tells us. Pillars (like Boaz and Jachin) in Solomon's temple, exhibited permanency, strength and beauty. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem. [45] We see this fulfilled in Revelation 22:4.

[45] Bengel says, "John in the gospel applies to the old city the Greek name Hierosolyma, but in the Apocalypse always to the holy city the Hebrew name, Hierousalem. The Hebrew name is the original and holier one; the Greek, the recent and more secular and political one." And mine own new name. The meaning here, it seems to me, is opened out by the excellent note by Darby: "He who was hardly accounted to belong to the holy city (others had had the pretension to be the people of God, the city of God, by divine religious title on earth), has its heavenly name written on him, too, and Christ's new name-the name not known to prophets and Jews according to the flesh, but which He has taken as dead to this world. Associated in Christ's own patience, Christ confers upon him what fully associates him in His own blessing with God"!

Now who are the Philadelphians? We believe they are all Christ's faithful through the dispensation. If these promises were made to such saints then, they cover all saints since. Philadelphia was a local assembly at the same time with Ephesus and Smyrna. Let us not forget in viewing these seven messages, in their prophetic succession, that all existed together. Remember also that all have existed through the dispensation, so that not only is the hope of the imminent coming of the Lord preserved to all, but the promises to the overcomers are for all the saints. For example, no saint shall be "hurt of the second death,"-not Smyrna saints only! Those in Christ are already new creations, their history in Adam having ended at Calvary (Romans 6:1-23); and they, made alive together with Christ, raised up with Him, made to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: but it is "not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is." We have, now, "newness of life" in Christ. But what His New Name is, or will be, remains yet to be revealed!

CALL TO HEAR: He that hath an ear, let him hear. The Spirit keeps speaking to all opened ears and willing hearts in all these wondrous, solemn messages. Are we really listening?

VII. Laodicea-The Last State-"Lukewarm" The name comes from loos, people, and dikao, to rule: the rule of the people: "democracy," in other words. (It is the exact opposite of Nicolaitan!) We come now to the sad and awful end of church testimony. That leaving of first love in Ephesus,

comes now to being left by the Lord! THE ADDRESS: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Nothing of His appearance among the churches in the vision of chapter 1 remains here. The Church has failed; Christ remains. “The Amen.” It is the language of the faithful God who brings things to pass as He has promised. See Isaiah 65:16; and 2 Corinthians 1:20. There we read “How many soever be the promises of God, in him (Christ), is the yea; (that is the possibility of their being fulfilled) wherefore also through him is the Amen, (the certainty and actuality, of their being fulfilled) unto the glory of God through us.” This is a great announcement, for in ourselves we are worse than failures, but in Christ all God’s plans are made good! As the Faithful and True Witness, Christ is giving now this seventh one of the searching messages to His assemblies on earth: He will see all; He will withhold nothing profitable; He will warn with perfect fidelity; He will commend with absolute kindness. This is why we can delight in The Revelation. It is not only the word of God, but it is the testimony of Jesus. He speaks all with unswerving faithfulness. He is also the Head, because the Beginner, of all God’s creation. Here is a title far above all dispensational responsibilities of creatures, whether of Israel or of the Church-Christ speaks as Creator. This puts us all in the dust. It likewise gives our hearts hope. He who created all things can make good the high calling of the Church as His Body and Bride, despite the corporate failure of the Church’s testimony on this earth.

CONDITION KNOWN: Thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew thee out of my mouth. To Philadelphia our Lord had spoken in personal fellowship, “I am he that is true.” To Laodicea, lukewarm, having no real heart for Him, He says, “I am the true witness”: solemn difference!

Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Here we have, first, their spiritual state; second, their supreme self-confidence; third, their awful ignorance of their true condition; fourth, their imminent danger. The meaning of “hot” is seen in Romans 12:11, where the same Greek word is used-fervent (burning) in spirit. The word translated cold is used in Matthew 10:42, “a cup of cold water”; (“as cold waters to a thirsty soul,” Proverbs 25:25). Either a hot drink on a cold day, or a cool one on a hot day, is acceptable and refreshing; lukewarm is neither, and disgusts. These Laodiceans were lukewarm: chliaros-a Greek word used only this one time in the Bible. It is the last stage of the Church’s existence recognized by the Lord.

Note their proud, blind pretensions (although Christ is on the outside!): “I am rich”-become wealthy. Is not this a description of the professing church today? How they count up their numbers, the wealth and worldly importance of their “membership”; their great churches, cathedrals and universities; their worldly influence-even to the extent of having a lobby at the seat of government to “control legislation”! The Laodicean church would fain “reform” the world that crucified the Lord. It denounces as “pessimists” those who would show from Scripture that “evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse,” “the love of the many waxing cold,” “the rulers of the age coming to nought,” and Christ’s personal return the only hope either for the Church or for the nations.

“Need of nothing”: the loss of a sense of need, as the drowsiness that besets a freezing man, is fatal. People blindly go to hell in droves, in the Laodicean churches of these last days. With liars, blasphemers of the Lord, and teachers of pagan evolution in the pulpits, and the people “loving to have it so,” we would cry, as of old, “What will ye do in the end thereof?”

“The wretched one”-of all the seven! That is, of all possible church states represented by these seven, Laodicea is the worst off! Worse than Thyatira, than Romanism, this last lukewarmness.

“And poor,” alas! the poverty, in view of their possible riches in Christ and His Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit! The poverty of the Laodicean churches of this hour! Whole years, and no one born again! Whole denominations shrinking in numbers! “And miserable,” literally, proper objects of pity. “Blind,” looking at stones and towers and organs, and pews.

PREDICTED ACTION: I am about to spew thee out of my mouth. Darby says that “this threat is peremptory, not conditional: it brought irreconcilable rejection.” The book of Revelation indeed plainly shows that the Church, having failed, will give way to the kingdom, to the Lord’s personal appearing. But Christ does not say, “I will”; but, (mello) “I am about to.” He says, “I am ready to: I have it in my mind, implying graciously the possibility of the threat not being executed if only they repent at once. His dealings towards them will depend on theirs toward Him.” These words from Fausset more nearly express what the text sets forth.

LOVING COUNSEL: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich. Grace is ever free. We buy it “without money and without price,” although it cost Christ the fire of God’s judgment to get it for us. And white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest. White garments in the Bible, and especially in The Revelation, stand for manifested righteousness. If they would repent, and rely wholly upon Christ as the only righteousness of sinners, the world would see that instead of the shame of their nakedness. The world today sees the nakedness of the Laodicean church and has contempt for it, but the full shame of that nakedness will not be made manifest till the false church is rejected as Christ’s witness on earth, and hated as a harlot by the Beast and his ten kings (Revelation 17:16). And eye salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. “The Holy Spirit’s unction, like the ancient’s eye-salve, first smarts with the conviction of sin, then heals.” As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent. Astonishing love of the Savior! Loving even the lukewarm! Loving an assembly that has really no heart for Him! “I reprove”-Christ’s wounding is the faithful wounding of a friend. “The ear that hearkeneth to the reproof of life shall abide among the wise” (Proverbs 15:31).

How many preachers love the saints enough to risk their resentment by obeying 2 Timothy 4:2 : “reprove, rebuke”? I fear that we who preach are rarely as faithful in our love as our Lord!

“And chasten.” As long as one’s conscience feels the reproof of faithful preachers; as long as the Lord does not say, “He is joined to his idols, let him alone,” there is hope. “Be zealous, therefore, and repent.” I believe that “no word from God shall be void of power,” and that some Laodiceans, through the church centuries, have, by divine grace, become zealous and repented. Only a godly sorrow, working the seven-fold result of 2 Corinthians 7:11, avails in such a case.

LAST YEARNING PLEA: Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him,[46] and he with me. Here we have Christ in all His tenderness, His unfathomable devotion! In these last words to the Church, the love of the Bridegroom makes Him forget wholly the work of the Judge. It is The Beloved, of the Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 5:2).

[46] “The supper is the evening meal, it is the last taken before the morning breaks and the day dawns. It is long since the apostle said ‘the night is far spent, the day is at hand’: to sup with Christ before morning breaks is a foretaste of the coming glory-the antepast of heaven.”-Ottman. This final plea of the Lord Jesus to the individual heart, where He has been shut out of the love and fellowship of the general company, should win every heart that UNDERSTANDS!

1. It is the plea of One who is meek and lowly of heart,-of a humility that is boundless and absolute. If we find ourselves shut out, where we have a right to be, we either rise to assert our rights, or leave in wrath. Not so Christ! After all the centuries, He still stands meekly knocking!

2. It is the plea of an active, yearning love. If the Lord Jesus did not love those who profess His name, even His lowliness would not keep Him at the door which is shut!

3. It is the plea of deepest concern. He knows what losing Him will mean,-what a Christless future will be. He was troubled over even Judas, who had already bargained to sell Him for the price of a common slave!

It is deeply instructive and touching to note the verb tenses here: it is literally, “Behold I have taken my stand at the door and am knocking”: the first denoting an attitude deliberately taken, and the second, an action continually going on.

While the whole assembly in the person of its angel is addressed, we all instinctively feel and know that the words are personal to us,-yes, to the innermost heart of each of us, of you, of me. For the pleading voice goes on, “If any man hear my voice and open the door.” Here we are face to face with three great facts: First, the awful fact that people can “belong” to an assembly of Christ’s, and yet not hear, never hear, Christ’s life-giving Voice; Second, the blessed fact that anyone may hearken who will; and, Third, the eternally solemn fact that the opening of the door is from our side, not from Christ’s.

It is the action of unbelief to abuse the glorious truth of electing grace by making fatalism of it, thus seeking to lay the burden of an evil heart’s unwillingness upon God. “How often would I-but ye would not!”

“I will sup with him”: and what have we to give Him? What have we that He could wish, what that would give Him, delight,-the Lord of glory? He loves thee! It is as the Bridegroom of the Church that He speaks,-“who loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Of course His joy will be the first, and infinitely the greater! So He puts it first. Then, “he with Me.” Those who open the door to Christ are the happy ones of the earth!

“I sat down under his shadow with great delight, And his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting-house, And his banner over me was love.”

Song of Solomon 2:3-4

Here, at the end of these seven church epistles, in this twentieth verse, we have the second of the two great truths of Paul’s gospel: (1) ye in Christ, and (2) Christ in you. Paul begins to develop this second truth in Galatians: “It was the good pleasure of God … to reveal his Son in me” (Galatians 1:16); “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20); “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19); then in Ephesians

3:14-19, “that Christ may make his home down in your hearts”-a definite thing, as yet unaccomplished in the Ephesian believers to whom he wrote; and in Php 1:21, “for me to live is Christ”; and in Colossians 1:27, “Christ in you, the hope of glory”! In a real definite sense Christ is in every true believer. See Romans 8:9-10; where we read that all of Christ’s own, because they have the indwelling Spirit, have Christ in them as their life (Colossians 3:3-4). “Know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate” (2 Corinthians 13:5). But in Revelation 3:20 there is a personal call, like that of Ephesians 5:14 : “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.”

How our poor selfish hearts turn to the next verse-about the coming kingdom, and our reigning with Christ; and forget His present, tender pleading for real, inward fellowship with Him now!

PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS: He that over-cometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. Christ’s throne is the throne of His father David at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:12-13; 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Chronicles 29:3; Jeremiah 3:17; Luke 1:32; Acts 15:14-18). But our Lord’s royal inheritance by the Davidic covenant extends to His heavenly Bride, the Church, as Eve shared the dominion that God gave the first Adam. In his first epistle (first in divine order), Paul writes, “Concerning God’s Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3); and in his last epistle, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David according to my gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8). We shall consider the millennial order in Revelation 20:1-15. Here, in Revelation 3:21, at the close of the unfaithful corporate testimony of the Church, we are again overwhelmed at this infinite grace of Christ. “The assembly whom Christ just before threatened to spew out of His mouth, is now offered a seat with Him on His throne.”-Fausset. Trench truly says, “The highest place is within the reach of the lowest; the faintest spark of grace may be fanned into the mightiest flame of love.” Let not the most wretched, defeated believer despair,-if only there be the least yearning for Christ. The most tender plea of all the seven is made to a lukewarm assembly. And the most distinct promise of actually sitting down with Christ upon His throne is given at the very close of the Church’s testimony. Note that our Lord speaks as one who Himself overcame, and is therefore now sit- ting upon His Father’s throne. [47] As a Victor He calls to you and to me. It is only in sharing by faith His victory that any saint ever overcame! As Christ warned in the upper room, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). He also triumphed over Satan and all his hosts at Calvary, and gives us the benefit (Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14-15). “And this is the victory that over-cometh-even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

[47] Our Lord is not now on His own throne, the throne of David. He is at the Father’s right hand, on the Father’s throne, and is now the Great High Priest, leading the worship of His saints; and also our Advocate against the enemy. But He is there in an expectant attitude, as we read in, Hebrews 10:12-13 : “He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God; henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet.” THE FINAL CALL TO HEAR: Saints of God beloved, let the world go by and give ear: “The time is short!” Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed: “He that hath an ear, let him hear.” The world is full of voices today, calling you to hearken to what man is, and has done, and will do, but be thou one of whom some day your Lord will gladly say: “He had an ear, and heard My Voice!” THE LAST KNOCK Art thou weary, sad, and lonely, All thy summer past? One remaineth, and One only- Hear His Voice at last. Voice that called thee all unheeded, Love that knocked in vain; Now, forsaken,

dost thou need it? Hear that Voice again. “Open to Me, my beloved, I have waited long, Till the night fell on the glory, Silence on the song; “Till the brightness and the sweetness, And the smiles were fled, Till thy heart was worn and broken- Till thy love was dead. “Thou wouldst none of Me, beloved, Yet beloved wert thou; Thou didst scorn Me in the sunshine, Wilt thou have Me now? “Soul, for thee I left My glory, Bore the curse of God- Wept for thee with bitterest weeping, Agony and blood. “Soul, for thee I died dishonoured, As a felon dies; For thou wert the pearl all priceless In thy Saviour’s eyes. “Soul, for thee I rose victorious, Glad that thou wert free; Entered Heaven in triumph glorious- Heaven I won for thee. “Soul, from Heaven I speak to woo thee- Thee, the lost, the lone; Earth may fail thee, sin undo thee, All the more Mine own. “Sorrow, sin, and desolation, These thy claim to Me; Love that won thee full salvation, This My claim to thee. “Soul, I knock, I stand beseeching, Turn me not away; Heart that craves thee, love that needs thee- Wilt thou say Me nay?” By V. M. From Hymns of Ter Steegen, Suso and Others published by Loizeaux Brothers, New York. Used by permission.

01.03. Chapter 3: The Things after Church Things

Chapter 3: The Things after Church Things The professing Church having failed, and been judged and rejected as God's house, must now be superseded by the Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Himself. So we enter upon what our Lord calls "the things that shall come to pass after the present (or Church) things." (See Revelation 1:19.)

We must, however, be transferred to heaven to view the great scene of our Lord's receiving the Kingdom at the hands of His Father and by the energy of the Spirit.

Daniel, the prophet, saw the same glorious sight (Daniel 7:1-28): the Ancient of Days enthroned, and "One like unto a son of man brought near before him" and given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, and languages should serve him." Daniel was not invited to heaven, but saw all in "night-visions." There was no "Come up hither." Daniel was not of the Church, but of God's earthly people, Israel; and while he saw heavenly visions, was not taken to heaven to see them. John, when church things ended with Laodicea, hears (as will all the true Church), the Lord's words, "Come up hither, and I will show thee"-the next things, those that come after these (Church) things. Thus we come now to Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14, the Second Section of the book, and the first directly prophetic part.

Revelation 4:1-11 -Te Throne Set in Heaven Read this chapter over and over, and also cRevelation 5:1-14 for they introduce the whole prophetic part of The Revelation.

Chapter 3: The Throne of Adjudication in Heaven- Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14

After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass after these things. Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Al- mighty, who was and who is and who is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne,

saying,

Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created. To adjudicate is denned as “determining judicially conflicting claims”; and so we use the word here. Whether some creature, or whether Christ alone, shall take over the bringing back of judgment to righteousness is the question. When Christ stood before Pilate, righteousness was on His side, but judgment was in the hands of the Roman governor. Here the time has come to return judgment unto righteousness.

Consider that the Throne of God, which was not in sight in the first three chapters of The Revelation, now comes into view; and so prominently, and in such character, from chapter 4 onward, as to make The Revelation become, “the Book of The Throne.” The Throne was not seen when God walked with His first man Adam, in the garden. But later we read, “Jehovah sat as king at the Flood” (Psalms 29:10). Here it was for judgment, not worship. The Throne is not seen in the history of Abraham or the patriarchs, for they were walking by simple faith, and were the depositaries of promises. They were not connected with a manifested Throne, but built altars for worship. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He had a nation for His name, and dwelt among them in glory (although Himself in thick darkness), sitting above the cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant, which was a type of the Throne on high.

Isaiah saw Him thus in the temple,-the seraphim above Him, crying, “Holy, holy, holy,” and Ezekiel saw “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah” enthroned upon the cherubim.

It is quite astonishing in view of such holiness and glory to find written in 1 Chronicles 29:23, “Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king, instead of David his father.” It will not be until our Lord returns to take that throne of David (as He will- Luke 1:32-33) that it will again become “the throne of Jehovah.” Christ will inherit it, as Son of David, but it was to David that it was promised (2 Samuel 7:11-16). Our Lord will then reign as “a Priest upon his throne”-the full Melchizedek figure. This is “the tabernacle of David,” a phrase quoted in Acts 15:16-17, from Amos 9:11-12. It is the millennial time. That men like David and Solomon and their successors, should sit upon “the throne of Jehovah” is not as wonderful as that “unto us a child is born” and His Name shall be called, “The Mighty God”! Also, as in all other revelations of God’s plan, men were to have the opportunity along all lines to undertake and to fail; and thus make room for Christ, in whom alone are all the real purposes and plans of God.

“Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; And his kingdom ruleth over all.”

Psalms 103:19 This is true from the beginning and through all dispensations. Generally speaking, His government has been hidden, in what is called “providence.” If you desire to trace how fully God rules behind the scenes, study, for example, the book of Proverbs, noting that God declares how each course of life will turn out: the wicked, the righteous, the slothful, the diligent, etc. Who makes things thus “turn out”?

“Jehovah sitteth as king forever: He hath prepared his throne for judgment; And he will judge the world in righteousness, He will minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness.”

Psalms 9:7-8

It is this prepared Throne that comes into view in Daniel 7:9 : “I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit”; as also in Revelation 4:2, “Behold, there was a throne set in heaven.” It will be a special arranging of the divine Throne of majesty, for dealing in manifested judgment, although God is not now so dealing.

Today God is on the throne of GRACE: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses.” The world’s sin having been dealt with by God at Calvary, and thus all God’s holy, righteous claims having been met, yea, and the world “reconciled” with His holy being, from God’s side, the One sinned against, God sends forth His messengers to beseech men from their side to be reconciled to God! Furthermore, the believer is invited to come with boldness (literally, freeness, freespokenness) to this “Throne of Grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

“The throne of God and of the Lamb,” the eternal manifestation of the divine Throne, as we shall note at the end of Revelation, is of unmeasured comfort: a Throne, certainly, necessarily, but-“they see his face, his name is on their foreheads”; and the Lamb, although Himself God, is forever Man,-“a Lamb as it had been slain,” and He sits thus on the Throne! “The throne of God and of the Lamb”-forever! In RRevelation 4:1-11, Revelation 5:1-14 we find God’s Throne set in peculiar character before us. In fact, the scene of Revelation 4:1-11 precisely corresponds to that of Daniel 7:9 : “I beheld till thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days did sit,” John’s words being, “And behold, there was a throne SET in heaven” (Revelation 4:2).

Let us note the particulars of this Throne, and the character of the worship:

1. The Throne of the Triune Eternal God “set” in heaven (as in Daniel 7:1-28) surrounded by a rainbow (Genesis 9:1-29).

2. The twenty-four elders[48] crowned and on thrones about the Throne of God.

[48] See Appendix II on the twenty-four elders.

3. The “lightnings”-“voices”-“thunders”: these powers of nature made intelligent to man in judgment.

4. The “seven lamps of fire”-“the seven Spirits of God”; that is, complete active discernment of all matters and affairs in judgment,-the Holy Spirit: but in governmental administration, not as the “Comforter” of saints, and as Revealer of Christ to sinners, as now.

5. The glassy sea before the Throne: manifested eternal holiness and purity; (not, as now, the approach to the Throne of Grace!).

6. The “four living creatures”[49] (or, living beings). The cherubim who support the divine Throne (as in Ezekiel) intelligent fully of His ways in majesty.

[49] The old rendering “beasts” is not a happy translation of this wonderful Greek expression zoa. Such a translation doubtless arose from a cumbersome attention to the described forms or appearances of these four living beings. God’s designation of them gives only the number four and the fact that they are (as their four generic forms reveal) the very embodiment of created life. Their name zoa cannot be duplicated by any single word in our language. It indicates that they are real, literal beings, and that they are vibrant with life in every direction and degree. The fact that they

are “full of eyes before and behind round about and within” and that they have “no rest day and night” (and need none) proves this. They celebrate constantly the being of the Lord God the Almighty, the Eternal, Thrice Holy One; seeming in this celebration and worship to join with the twenty-four elders constantly in adoration. This is their eternal occupation (Revelation 4:9-11).

7. God’s creatorship declared by the living beings and the elders to be the basis of their worship (Revelation 4:11).

We have seen in Revelation 1:19 the Lord’s commission to John to write “the things which thou sawest”-the vision of the glorious Christ among the churches; “and the things which are” (now existing-that is the seven churches covering prophetically the whole church age) “and the things which shall come to pass after these.”

It is very necessary that we grasp firmly this divine division of this great book of The Revelation, so we repeat it: Christ is speaking in Revelation 1:19, of the subjects of which John is to write. Literally, that verse reads, “Write therefore what you saw, and what are being, and what is about to become after these.” So, in The Revelation, first Christ is seen in His personal risen glory; then, we see the professing Church, which as His witness upon earth finally proves as false as Israel, and is “spewed out of his mouth”; and, third, we have the earth’s governmental history after the Church’s rejection by Christ, until His return to establish His kingdom. During this third period, the true Church is, of course, in heaven, though not in any sense manifested there until the marriage supper of the Lamb in cRevelation 19:1-21

There are several reasons why cRevelation 4:1-11succeeds in time cRevelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22 Let us examine the opening verses:

1. After these things (Greek, meta tauta). This expression is most important, as we shall find throughout the book. It may mean merely a new vision, or a new phase of a vision, as in Revelation 7:9. But in view of Revelation 1:19, the use of the phrase in Revelation 4:1 is quite indicative of a change from the church matters of Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22 to an entirely different scene and subject.

2. A door was opened in heaven as if for entrance or egress (see Revelation 19:11). It is indeed for John’s entrance, and evidently, the whole Church is represented here! For “churches” are mentioned not once after Revelation 3:1-22, till the apocalypse is over! Revelation 22:16.

3. The first voice which I heard. We know this is the voice that John heard in Revelation 1:1-20, the Lord’s own voice. He now speaks again to John, not as Himself upon Patmos, but as from heaven.

4. As of a trumpet. Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “The Lord himself … with an assembling shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”; and also 1 Corinthians 15:52 -“The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.”

5. Come up hither. John had heretofore spoken of those church things about which The Revelation concerned itself-namely, the state of the churches as witness-bearers on earth. He is now called up to heaven, as if the course of things of which he had been speaking was altogether over, and he was henceforth to look at future things from the heavenly side.

6. The Lord's further words, I will show thee the things which must come to pass. After these things, surely indicate that the matters about to be revealed to the apostle succeed in time of occurrence those matters already considered in Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22.

7. Furthermore, upon examining the scenes following Revelation 4:1, we find as we say above, no mention of the "churches," until The Revelation itself is over, and the Lord Jesus is setting His personal seal to it in Revelation 22:16 ff. There, of course, The Revelation having been sent to the assemblies, our Lord speaks to them. But it is of primary importance that the student of The Revelation leave the earth with John (in spirit) in Revelation 4:2 and not return until the Lord returns, with His saints, in Revelation 19:11.

There is evidently in these Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14 a returning to the Throne of God, and a new beginning. Church things are fully over (Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22). The Throne, then, of Revelation 4:1-11, will have peculiar features displayed befitting the event. It is not merely a description of divine majesty, but that revelation of it that belongs to the matter in hand. It will not, for example, be like the "Great White Throne" of Revelation 20:11-15 -the last judgment scene. There, of course, Deity is unveiled in absolute finality of judicial holiness and brightness. There, the heaven and earth have fled away. Final eternal issues, and these only are there involved. But here in Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14, the question is, Who shall execute the "judgments written" regarding this earth, and vindicate God's ways in its government? But the Triune Eternal God-worshipped thus in Revelation 4:8, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come," is first revealed. In Revelation 4:1-11 He is worshipped as the Creator, by the living creatures and the twenty-four elders. His appearance, indeed, according to Revelation 4:3 "like a jasper stone and sardius … clear as crystal" (Revelation 21:11) sets forth His holiness in essence rather than in action, (as on the Great White Throne). There are, indeed, "lightnings," "voices" and "thunders" proceeding out of the Throne, indicating power and intelligence, acting in judgment. [50]

[50] How significant is the occurrence of the word voices between the lightnings and thunders which we now know in nature! Compare Revelation 8:5; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 16:18. Compare these verses with Exodus 19:16 -God's appearance upon the top of Sinai. Also note that in Revelation 8:5 : "There followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings" as if God had said, "You who rely on your knowledge of scientific facts, hearken while the thunders precede the lightnings and between the two are solemn voices showing the intelligent power that really produces all these things." How blind is human science which leaves out God!

There was a rainbow round about the throne. This reminds us at once of God's covenant with Noah and every living creature of Genesis 9:1-29. The emerald is the fourth of the stones of the foundation of the City, as seen in Revelation 21:19. We might say that even this number 4 is indicative, as being the earth number; but, be that as it may, the fact of the rainbow round about the throne here described, must indicate God's calling the inhabitants of the earth to account for their "breaking of the everlasting covenant," as described in Isaiah 24:5. The "everlasting covenant" is the particular name by which God designates that agreement with Noah and all terrestrial creation recorded in Genesis 9:8-17. In this remarkable passage the word "covenant" is repeated seven times, and in Genesis 9:12 it is declared by God to be made "between me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations"; while in Genesis 9:16, "I will

look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and all flesh that is upon the earth." The human conditions were: to be fruitful and multiply (Revelation 9:1); to eat animal food as well as vegetable (Revelation 9:3); to abstain from eating blood (Revelation 9:4); and to shed the blood of murderers-that is, to continue capital punishment (Revelation 9:6)-because to strike at man was to strike at the image of God in which he was made!

Now the Isaiah passage (Isaiah 24:1-13) which describes in a few verses the terrific visitations of judgment to come upon the earth prior to the coming of the Lord (for it is not the final burning up of the earth that is there pictured) gives as the reason for these terrible things: "The earth is polluted under the inhabitants thereof because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant."

Now the "laws" may well refer to the laws of man's own being, which we know from our Lord's words concerning the Sodom-like days which will precede His return, will be universally transgressed. The days before the flood were days of lust and violence, as the days of Lot were times of unnatural departing from the very laws of human being. "The statutes" may include such fundamental and universally recognized relations as those of the family-as to husband and wife, brother, sister and parental authority, and also obedience to the powers that be. These things we find written into the constitution and conscience of all people, even those that have had no contact with God's written Word. The "everlasting covenant" has been noted with its conditions, which every one knows are all openly ignored in our own days. Birth control in defiance of "be fruitful and multiply"; vegetarianism, despising God's distinct command to eat flesh as well as herbs and fruit (for flesh-eating protects the human body from demoniacal control), and finally the awful rejection of that fundamental ordinance of human government, the death penalty to murderers:-these things indicate the trend toward that condition which will be brought about in the preliminary judgments of Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24.

"Few men (shall be) left," says Isaiah, "For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done."

People conceive of the "millennium" as the time of great peace and plenty on earth, whereas it will be introduced by the most awful day this world has ever known-the great Day of Wrath of God, the Almighty, and that Day of Wrath will be preceded by years of visitations so terrible as to decimate the population of the earth. The Millennium, or thousand years' reign, will indeed be a time of peace, but it will be peace by an iron-rod rule in the hands of the Lord Himself and it will be preceded by catastrophic judgments after which "there shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel. In that day shall men look unto their Maker, and their eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel."

We speak of these things merely to prepare our hearts to believe what we shall see in the coming chapters of Revelation. The voices of the prophets are one as to the "day which the Lord shall make." Hear one more prophet-Zephaniah. "The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of Jehovah; the mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of

darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness … And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Jehovah; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung." The Slain Lamb Takes the Book of Judgment

(Read Revelation, Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14, over and over. They are one passage. They contain the key to the rest of Revelation.) And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he hath taken it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying,

Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they (shall) reign upon the earth. And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying,

Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

Note these seven facts in Revelation 5:1-14 :

1. The seven-sealed book: fully written, ready to be opened, close-sealed, indicating finality and privacy.

2. All creation's utter inability even to look upon this book.

3. John's overwhelming sorrow at apparent delay of God's longed-for kingdom.

4. The Lion of Judah declared to have "overcome" and be ready to open the book.

5. The slain Lamb revealed in the midst of the throne, with seven horns of perfect power, and seven eyes, "the seven Spirits of God," sent forth into earth's affairs in utter discernment.

6. His formal coming and taking the book from the hand of God. This is that taking over of governmental power by the Mediator which is the burden of Old Testament prophecy, (and of all our hearts!) and all creation's celebration thereof! (Revelation 5:7-14)

7. Worship now founded not merely upon creation, but upon redemption. "Worthy art thou … for thou wast slain" (Revelation 5:9, Revelation 5:12). The second character in which our Lord is seen in the book of Revelation is that of the Slain Lamb, now invested and exalted, opening the seven-sealed book written with the divine order of events, by which Christ is put in actual possession and active exercise of the kingdom denied Him when He was on earth before.

These two chapters (Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14) naturally become the most majestic and overwhelming of any portion of Scripture up to this point. They reveal that tremendous event toward which God the Father has been bending all events of the history of creation-the investiture of Jesus (who obeyed Him even unto death, yea, the death of the cross), with that inheritance of glory, honor, dominion and power which brings "every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them" to acknowledge aloud His place and majesty (Revelation 5:13).

If we have followed the "spirit of prophecy" from the beginning of Scripture until this book of Revelation, and have found that Jesus is its constant testimony, we are prepared for the blessed scene of Revelation 5:1-14. Because all creation has utterly failed to take over the business of carrying out the due judgment of God written in the sealed book, we hail with great delight this public (and that an absolutely universally public!) handing over of this book of judgment, to our Lord as the Lamb that was slain.

"A Lamb … as though it had been slain." Do we wonder that the One who was so devoted to the will of God as to die in obedience to it,-so committed to holiness and righteousness as to be slain rather than submit to sin, should now be deemed worthy to take this book of judgment and open its seals? This thought of the wounds of Christ, blessed comfort to His own, (John 20:20) will strike stark terror to His enemies! For the slain Lamb cannot compromise with the iniquity they love!

Why are harps and bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8), connected with the Lamb's taking the book of the inheritance? Did the prayers of the saints bring about this scene? Would our Lord have commanded His disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," if (a) God had not meant to bring this to pass, and (b) if the prayers of the saints were not a vital factor in bringing about this glorious result? Follow through the book of Revelation whatever is said about the prayers of the saints. Some day it will be found that every soul that has been saved, every blessing any saint has received, every thwarting of Satan, every victory for God, as well as this final consummation of our Lord's taking over the book of the kingdom-all have been brought about through the saints' prayers, inspired of God, as essential elements in His great, all-comprehensive purpose.

How, in Revelation 5:9, is the worth of the Lamb brought out by His having been slain? We ask this again. Just why should our Lord's obeying the Father even unto death make Him the One to take over from the hand of His God and Father all judgment? Please study this. Do not pass it lightly.

John "wept much" when no one was found worthy even to look on this book. [51]

[51] Note that the preposition in the first verse is “upon” (epi) and not in, the right hand. The book was not grasped by God, but offered for any one to take who could.

It was as if sin and Satan were to go on forever in the usurped control of affairs in this world. It was as if it must still be written:

Right forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne. The apostle was broken-hearted about this. The Greek indicates that he burst into tears of sorrow. The same word is used of our Lord in His weeping over Jerusalem. It would be well if we had the intense longing of the apostle John that the kingdom of God should come, that His will should be done on earth as it is in heaven; it would be well if even the thought of the continuation of evil should give us deepest anguish!

It is to be feared that oft our knowledge that our Lord is to return to earth to “straighten things out” has been the occasion of the temptation to a kind of spiritual patience with iniquity, that is hardening and deadening. We need to “vex our righteous souls” as Lot did, as we see their “lawless deeds.” And we need to long and pray for the great denouement of Revelation 5:1-14!

It should be noted that the four living beings and the four and twenty elders have each a harp (Revelation 5:8) which indicates glad celebration of victory; and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. That is, it is the prayers of the saints of all ages that have brought about this taking over of the kingdom at last by God. “Thy kingdom come” has been the heart cry of every believer since Abel the righteous. Our Lord taught the disciples to pray this prayer with the express desire that His Father’s will should be done on this earth as it is in heaven. It is the prayers of the saints which in divine providence bring about this “returning of judgment to righteousness.”

Another fact, in Revelation 5:9 : they sing this new kingdom song to the Lamb: “For thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.” Notice that these beings are not in ecstasy over their own salvation (the word “us” in Revelation 5:9, in the old version, should not be there) but their rejoicing is that redeemed men have been made a kingdom and priests and are to reign upon the earth. It is not the escape to heaven by redemption that is being rejoiced over here, but the near-at-hand establishment upon earth of a reign of God by means of these redeemed ones, that gives joy before the throne of God. We should keep this in mind throughout The Revelation. God is at last setting His hand to interfere with the earthly sinful order of things to the extent of completely setting aside earthly authority, after overturning it by dire judgments: then causing certain saints to reign with Christ on earth with a divine absolutism for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-15), and then bringing in final judgment and the disappearance from the scene of the present heavens and earth. The objective of God is the new heavens and new earth wherein righteousness will be at home (Greek of 2 Peter 3:13). This should be our objective in thought, hope and prayer. At last the angels are admitted into the circle (where the Church has ever been) of worshippers and celebrators of the Lamb that had been slain! What were the angels hitherto? (Hebrews 1:14). In Revelation 5:11-12 we find Hebrews 1:6 fulfilled: “When he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, let all the angels of God worship him.” This glorious advancement should be rejoiced in by us, for the angels have evermore been giving glad service in our behalf; and they have ever “desired to look into” the blessed things of grace connected with the gospel (1 Peter 1:12). The number of the angels is

stated as one hundred millions, to begin with, and then millions and millions! When they see the Lamb that they saw slain, (knowing that He was the Eternal Son of God) now take over the book of the kingdom, do you wonder that they say with a great voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain”? Have you spoken thus about the Lamb of God? No other theme is really worth shouting over! When every created thing in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things that are in them say, “Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, unto the ages of the ages,” all infidels will be included, and all “modernist” preacher-infidels, all rejecters of Christ, all your family-saved or unsaved, all your loved ones-saved or lost alike! No creature will be left out. This great universal confession will not be for salvation, but it will be the fulfilling of Php 2:9-11 : “Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name, which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”[52]

[52] Contrast this passage carefully with that glorious prospect of the new creation recorded in Colossians 1:20, where “the things under the earth” are significantly omitted!

Why was the book sealed? Why was it written within and on the back? Remember, it requires lawful authority to break a seal. You seal a private communication to your friend when you have written it and are ready to deliver it.

Each seal as it is broken by the Lamb will have a revelation from God therein; a revelation of His divine purpose toward Christ and through Christ. It certainly will be a blessed day when one after another we see Him break the seals of the written book and bring to pass what is written under each seal.

01.04. Chapter 4: Six Seals Opened Rev_6:1-17

Chapter 4: Six Seals Opened Revelation 6:1-17

Let us now consider the seals of Revelation 6:1-17. They cover the whole book to the new creation; for the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet the seven bowls of wrath of Revelation 16:1-21 (which chapter really ends the revelation of the judgments preceding the Lord's second coming; Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 18:1-24 being a detailed description of the judgment of Babylon the Great of Revelation 16:19).

Let us remember, as we have already directed, that the Lamb opens all the seals while still inn heaven in the midst of the throne.

It should be noticed also that the four living beings have directly to do with the first four seals. They are connected with the execution of divine judgment, being full of intelligence concerning the divine will. The First Seal

I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come. (The words "and see," of A. V., should not be there.) And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer. This horse and rider are plainly connected with the holy hosts and armies that are in heaven. Heaven is no longer engaged in grace but in judgment. "White horse"-this is holiness in exhibition and in warfare, for thus do white horses appear in Scripture. The rider has a bow, the weapon of long distance conflict. The Lord and the heavenly host are not yet coming (for the rider symbolizes not only Christ but the whole heavenly host now exhibited as antagonistic to earth). "Thine arrows are sharp; … in the heart of the king's enemies" is written in Psalms 45:5 of our Lord's coming.

"And there was given unto him a crown" denotes the fact that the Lord and the powers of heaven are to take the kingdom away from men, and rule for God!

"He came forth conquering, and to conquer." Some have amazingly conceived this white horse to represent the Antichrist! Not only would this be absolutely out of time (for the career of the Antichrist constitutes a woe under the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal) but how impossible to conceive of the Antichrist as conquering and to conquer-that is, to get the final victory. This is what the phrase, "conquering and to conquer" means- to achieve final and decisive conquest. And only Christ will ever do that. This first seal then indicates the Lord and the hosts of heaven turned against the earth: a most solemn thought! It is a public change from the day of grace. The Second Seal And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

If coming events cast their shadows before them, as goes the proverb, surely we have today, in the frantic and ceaseless efforts of the statesmen and economists of earth to secure even the

stability that existed a few years ago, a suggestion of the awful time indicated by this “red horse.”

We are sure that the peace of the earth has not yet judicially been taken away, for there is still quietness and order for the most part-despite increasing sin. But when the Lord opens this second seal, universal distrust, plotting, and carnage will follow.

It should be remembered that any ordered, peaceful life on earth is purely the result of God’s gracious intervention. The “hinderer” of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 is holding back human passions. But there will come a day when all the murderous evil of the human heart will be unleashed, and “they will slay one another.”

Also, I am inclined to think that the “giving” to this second rider of “a great sword” may indicate such participation in human battles by angelic intervention as is frequently noted in the Old Testament. The Lord set “liers-in-wait” from His angelic hosts more than once: for example, 2 Chronicles 20:22; 2 Chronicles 14:13; 2 Samuel 5:24; 2 Kings 7:6. The Third Seal A black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance … a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, a quart of wheat for a day’s wage, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wage; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not. The choenix measure was about a quart, and a denarius is shown in Matthew 20:2 to be a common day’s wage. What its money value was as compared with our day, has nothing to do with the subject. The denarius was evidently, from the New Testament, a day’s wage. The laborers “agreed” to work for a denarius a day. Therefore we read, “a quart of wheat for a day’s wage” showing a desperate condition! That the oil and wine are to be spared indicates, it seems, that the rich have their luxuries despite the terrible scarcity among the poor. This would agree with the description in James 5:1-20 : of the self-indulgence of the rich in the last days, for we must read in the R. V. “Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days.” On the other hand, James warns the rich of “their miseries that are coming upon them,” in this world, as it seems to mean. Before the tribulation is over, yea, even now, the rich cry out. For the whole movement of “government” is to appropriate private property. See Russia, Italy, Germany, and the “New Deal” in America. But the very rich are seen here as still having their luxuries, under this third seal, and the great mass ground to poverty.

We noticed not long ago in a Chicago newspaper a paragraph reading about as follows: “By modern methods of agriculture we have solved the question of famine. We can produce any amount of grain we decide to produce. Science has triumphed over the constant dread of less enlightened communities,” etc., etc.

How baleful statements so contrary to the predictions of Scripture become when dealt out to people that are ignorant enough to believe them! The most fearful days of famine this world has ever seen lie, we believe, net very far ahead. The Fourth Seal

Behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Now death takes the body, and Hades the spirit, of lost men. Death is so spoken of in Scripture as often almost to compel us to regard it as a personality. Mark, I do not say it is such, nor can I fully believe it to be. Nevertheless Scripture, the narration of others, and personal experience have taught me profoundly to believe that death is more than simple dissolution. When death seizes

upon the body of an unbeliever, something happens vastly beyond the departure of the spirit and the cessation of the breath of life. A terrible seizure (said by Paul to have been the result of Adam's sin- Romans 5:12) occurs to those dying. Of the death of our Lord, Peter said (Acts 2:24) "God … loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (for He was not personally a sinner).

Death in connection with Hades is mentioned in three places in The Revelation. In Revelation 1:18, our Lord "has the keys of death and of Hades." In Revelation 20:13 death and Hades give up the dead which were in them, death holding the body and Hades the spirit. (Those given up by the sea are not, in my judgment, human dead.)

Finally, death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire. Now, we know that the lake of fire is literal. (Isaiah 30:33 describes it and its antiquity, as well as its kindling to receive the Beast, the last "king" of the Gentiles, Revelation 19:20.) Whatever that power is that holds the bodies of men, it will be cast finally into the lake of fire, and will lose forever its power of dissolution. For the bodies of the damned will be indestructible. Hades also, now located in the center of this earth (Matthew 12:40 with Acts 2:31 and Ephesians 4:9) will be cast into the lake of fire. But under the fourth seal we see death and Hades given authority over the fourth part of the earth to kill; and that with God's four sore judgments of Ezekiel 14:21, "sword," "famine," "pestilence" and "wild beasts." People say, "Peace," but the sword is coming. People cry, "Prosperity and plenty," but famine is coming. People boast of conquering disease by medical science, but pestilence is coming. Hunters complain of the disappearance of beasts to hunt, of game to pursue; but wild beasts will (by and by) multiply again, even in America, to the slaying of thousands upon thousands! We must remember that a fourth of the population of the earth is given over to these four judgments alone. And let us also remember that the plagues hurled directly from heaven, as in chapter 16, have not yet begun, under the four seals, not even the locust plague of chapter 9, nor the career of the wild beast of chapter 13. These come later. But the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts, take a quarter of earth's population. The Fifth Seal And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course. To Moses was given a pattern of the things in the heavens (Hebrews 9:23). Therefore, there was an altar in heaven, or rather there is an altar. It was possibly thither that our Lord was going in John 20:17 to present Himself, according to Hebrews 9:12, as the Great High Priest. Underneath this altar in heaven are seen the souls (yet disembodied) of God's martyrs, evidently from Abel on. Their martyrdom has cried to heaven, as did Abel's blood, for vengeance. These souls give expression now to the change of dispensation from grace to judgment: "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The answer is, that God is delaying judgment- not for salvation purposes, but that the rest of the martyrs may join their fellows!

"There was given them to each one a white robe (manifested righteousness) and it was said unto them, that they should rest (note this-they are at rest, personally) yet for a little time, until (1) their fellow-servants also and (2) their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have

fulfilled their course”-(keep these two classes in mind). This fifth seal exhibits especially three things: First, the patience of God-“He proceeds slowly and reluctantly from mercy to judgment.” Second, the change of dispensation evidenced in the character of the prayers of these martyrs for vengeance. Third, the utter wickedness of the earth which is plainly expected to go on martyring the full complement of God’s saints. The Sixth Seal And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

1. The earthquake. These are on the increase today. This will be a great one, for God is arising to “shake terribly the earth,” for man’s sin. It shook thus when Christ bare our guilt; and at His resurrection (Matthew 27:51; Matthew 28:2).

2. The first darkening of the sun and moon, “before the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20 quoting Joel 2:31). The second will be “immediately after the tribulation” (Matthew 24:29). But men in terror believe the end has come! When it does not, they grow hardened like Pharaoh, and we see them in Revelation 19:19 boldly gather to war against the Lamb whom here they dread!

3. Such a “removing” of the stars and of material “heaven” as probably to render visible thereafter what cannot now be seen.

4. Unlimited terror upon all the earth, at the world-wide dreaded wrath of Him upon the throne and of the Lamb: for the Bible has gone everywhere; and the Throne seems at this moment to be seen by all the earth! But the particulars remain to be filled in (Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21) of those preliminary visitations from heaven which we find only result in men’s refusing repentance and becoming hardened (except in the one instance in Jerusalem when the two witnesses are killed- Revelation 11:1-19).

Meanwhile, we shall find God giving, in Revelation 7:1-17, a vision of His election and salvation; and in the following chapters particulars of judgment under the seventh seal.

01.05. Chapter 5: The Sealed Israelites- Rev_7:1-8

Chapter 5: The Sealed Israelites- Revelation 7:1-8

We have in the remarkable Revelation 7:1-17 two great companies of saved ones revealed to us before those direct visitations of judgment from heaven, which begin under the seventh seal in Revelation 8:1-13.

There are three sections to the chapter:

1. The staying of the four angels from “hurting the earth.”

2. The sealing of the remnant of Israel-the “bondservants of God”-evidently to go through the great time of trouble.

3. The great victorious multitude in heaven from every nation.

Let us notice the remarkable place angels have in the ordering of present things upon earth. It will not be so in the dispensation to come, according to Hebrews 2:5-9 where we find the eighth Psalm quoted as referring to Christ (and with Him of course, the saints) as directly controlling things in the millennial age-“The age to come.”

It will be well to trace through The Revelation the very remarkable and often wholly unexpected and hitherto unrevealed angelic activity.

We have already noticed, as we shall further note, the constant and prominent part angels have in the administration of affairs in heaven. Revelation 5:2-11; and further Revelation 8:3-5; then the seven angels with the trumpets, from Revelation 8:6-11, sending terrible direct judgment from heaven. How God places in angels, “the mighty in strength,” the execution of His plans is concretely suggested in Revelation 10:7. In Revelation 14:18 we find the angel “that hath power over fire.” In Revelation 16:5 “the angel of the waters”; in Revelation 16:8 an angel the agent that gives power to the sun “to scorch men with fire”; and in Revelation 19:17 we find “an angel standing in the sun,” speaking his message! These are instances of the altogether remarkable powers and offices possessed through divine gift by these beings called angels. [53]

[53] These are days of general skepticism concerning the direct intervention of God in the physical universe. Yet a very brief examination of Scripture reveals God’s control: “Stormy wind fulfilling his word” (Psalms 148:8). He sends the rain (Matthew 5:45). God says He “caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city”-a great passage! (Amos 4:7-8). Hear Amos further: “For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth-Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name. That maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth (Jehovah is his name)” (Amos 4:13; Amos 5:8). From such passages (and there are many) we find that God continually and

personally administers the affairs of this earth; and we learn from such verses as Revelation 7:1, that He does it through angelic ministers. He loves to delegate His power to His faithful servants! The case of Job is simply the exception that proves the rule. God had set a hedge about Job, complained Satan (Job 1:10). This, of course, involved God's management of the physical universe to Job's outward benefit. When Jehovah grants all that Job had, except his own person, to be attacked by Satan, among the other disasters, we read, "And there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men" (Job's children). Satan could not have sent this wind except by divine permission-it is God that rides "upon the wings of the wind," not Satan! Psalms 104:3.)

Therefore, we should not be surprised by the striking scene at the opening of Revelation 7:1-17 : I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth. And further, it was given unto them to "hurt" the earth.

Now, in Revelation 7:1-17, these four angels are to be regarded simply and plainly as such. It will be our wisdom to receive the simple statements of this unsealed book (see Revelation 22:10) of Revelation in child-like faith. This is the great principle of understanding the book.

We see then these four angels holding the winds, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree.

We now see another angel ascend from the sun rising, having the seal of the living God. This angel has a most striking commission. He cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. It is evident to our hearts that trouble is coming. Certain must be "sealed," to believe God through that trouble. Let us note this carefully. Six seals have already been opened. Under the seventh seal will come the terrible trumpet-angels, bringing desolation and thrice-told woe upon earth (Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21) but certain individuals are sealed by God to pass safely through the trouble. And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel. The elect Israelites are sealed at this time; that is, just before the opening of the seventh seal and the outgoing of divine judgments directly from heaven. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand (Revelation 7:5-8). The 12,000 of each tribe means, of course, simply 12,000. In Elijah's day God had left for himself seven thousand (1 Kings 19:1-21 and Romans 11:1-36). We believe that these were exactly seven thousand persons. Inasmuch as there is no hint of the 144,000 being "a symbolic number"-that is, a sign or indication of some other number, we shall and must receive God's words concerning the future as literally as we do concerning the past. They are 12,000 from each tribe. The enumeration of the tribes is striking.

Judah, the elect royal tribe, is named first. God's sovereignty placed him there, not Judah's goodness (Genesis 38:1-30. Compare Genesis 49:10 and Psalms 108:8). Christ is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

Reuben, the first born after the flesh, is next recognized, when divine sovereignty has been shown. Gad and Asher come next. Leah's sons by her handmaid, Zilpah! Surely the flesh is not being honored.

Next comes Naphtali, Rachel's son by her handmaid, Bilhah. Dan, Bilhah's first son, is left out altogether here. He was ever a cherisher of idolatry. Yet Dan is mentioned first, when the land is divided in Ezekiel 48:1-35, for the 1,000 year kingdom: which shows God's grace! And that Dan should be preserved through The Tribulation, though not publicly sealed, is greater grace still!

Manasseh, younger son of Joseph, is next, with Ephraim, the proud tribe of Judges 8:1-35; Judges 12:1-15, left out. Ephraim also was a synonym of idolatry, as seen in the prophet Hosea. Yet Ephraim is in the kingdom (Ezekiel 48:5).

Simeon and Levi are next. Jacob their father called them cruel men (Genesis 49:5-7). Grace remembers them, however.

Issachar and Zebulun, Leah's fifth and sixth sons, come next. Zebulun and Naphtali-from these despised regions "light sprang up" (Matthew 4:12-17).

Then Joseph is next to the last, though the most beautiful in character of all. And finally his brother Benjamin, youngest of all the brethren, and smallest of all the tribes, and as to sin, fallen lowest,-almost destroyed (Judges 19:1-30; Judges 20:1-48; Judges 21:1-25). Yet it gave Israel its first king; and us our apostle (Romans 11:1).

There are various lists of these sons of Jacob in Scripture, and lessons to be learned from all.

Now if it be objected that 144,000 out of the nation of Israel is too small a number, recall God's words "If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved." The most of the nation will perish under the awful blows of the last enemy of God (Psalms 83:1-18; Zechariah 14:1-21; Isaiah 28:14-21). The nation of Israel is being gathered back to Palestine just now for the coming time of trouble. All the wars of the nations have some bearing upon this elect nation.

It is refreshing to our hearts to remember that although the leaders of socialism, atheism and Godless commercialism are found among the Jews and are gathered back to their land in unbelief, trusting their money to purchase the favor of the Gentiles, yet God will have 144,000 whom He calls His bond-servants, who are sealed with the name of the Lamb and of His Father in their foreheads (Revelation 14:1 compared with Revelation 7:3). [54]

[54] It should be noted that this 144,000 of Revelation 7:3, being God's douloi, or "bond-servants," will understand the Book of The Revelation. For God gave it unto Jesus Christ "to show unto his bond-servants" douloi (Revelation 1:1). Thus they all, however dark it be, know where they are. The Revelation involves a knowledge of all Scripture. It speaks of Israel, Moses, the Prophets, the Martyrs, the Bride of the Lamb, the Kingdom, and the New Creation,-as well as the present creation: and finds all blessing in the person and sacrifice of Christ! The Saved Multitude-

Revelation 7:9-17 But not only the 144,000 elect remnant of Israelites are found in this Revelation 7:1-17 -given to cheer our hearts-but “a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues” will “wash their robes” and have a place “before the throne” in heaven. Here we have one of the most striking scenes in this great book.

After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

John does not know who these are, as his answer to the elder’s question “Who are they and whence came they?” plainly shows. We feel he would have known them if Old Testament saints, as he and Peter and James knew Elijah and Moses on the Transfiguration Mount. Also, he would have known them if Church saints. He is told that they “come out of the great tribulation.” Also that they “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” That means salvation and salvation by faith in God’s Word regarding the blood of Christ. These are not of the Church, which is Christ’s Body, yet they are in heaven.

It is necessary for us to have a largeness of heart concerning heaven and it’s hosts-even of its saved hosts. The Lord Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many abiding-places. I go to prepare a place for you.” But let us not forget that other companies from earth, besides saints of the Church, are to be there-according to Revelation 7:9. For it is the result of unbelief to seek to bring back to earth, to a lesser calling, this mighty company seen before the throne. The throne of God here in Revelation 7:1-17 is necessarily that revealed in Revelation 5:1-14. It is on that heavenly throne that the Lamb is seen “in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and … the elders” (Revelation 5:6). It is not that throne of “his father David” (Luke 1:32-33), not the “throne of his glory” upon which the King shall sit when He returns to earth (Matthew 25:1-46). There is no account of the living creatures at the throne of David! And it is directly stated that the angels will not have to do with the millennial order (Hebrews 2:5). The angels of Revelation 7:11 would have absolutely no place if the scene were earthly.

I would rather credit the general spirit of reverent commentators of all the Christian centuries (which regards this company as a heavenly one) than the opinions of some, whose awakened sense of the literalness and glory of the millennial kingdom led them, in commenting on both Revelation 7:1-17 and Revelation 21:9, to ascribe to earthly millennial times what the passages

themselves necessarily make heavenly and eternal. The Millennium is a reign on earth “with Christ” of 1,000 years. Its form of worship is fully set forth in Ezekiel, Zechariah and other Old Testament prophets. But the language used of this company in Revelation 7:9-14 is not one of reigning; nor of any scene on earth; but “they are before the throne of God” (the throne of Revelation 4:1-11) “and they serve him day and night in his temple.” “Day and night” is used of eternity in Revelation 20:10. It sets forth ceaselessness. Moreover, the complete resemblance of those divine comforts given to those of Revelation 7:15-17 and to those of Revelation 21:3-4; Revelation 21:6, is convincing. It is heavenly service-not that of a reign on earth that is described.

Moreover, (and please note this matter well) if you make Revelation 7:9-17 millennial, what disposition do you make of this great company after the brief 1,000 years? Answer this, beloved. Go to the Scriptures. Call no man on earth “Master.” You cannot regard these Brethren-especially beloved Darby, more than I do. But the strongest argument against accepting a system handed to him from men, whom he confessed he reverenced for their godliness, is made by Mr. Darby himself in his essays against Presbyterianism as “legality” and Anglicanism as “authority.”

Now it should be evident, we feel that this great company is not the Church, the Bride. For the Church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). Her relation to Christ in The Revelation is as the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. But this company is before the throne-not the place of the Church (which is hidden until Revelation 19:1-21).

There arises also the difficult question as to what means were used, what message, to save this great company?

We are told that they “came out of the great tribulation (literally, the tribulation, the great), and we know from Daniel 12:1-13; Matthew 24:1-51; Mark 13:1-37; Jeremiah 30:1-24; Jeremiah 31:1-40; Jeremiah 32:1-44; Jeremiah 33:1-26; and Revelation 3:10; that this must be the last half of the 70th week of Daniel 9:1-27. This tribulation (1) is future; (2) is overwhelmingly terrible; (3) will be a particular “time of trouble” for Jacob-that is, Israel, and (4) will come on “all them that dwell on the earth.” But in the last named passage (Revelation 3:10) we find that its object is “to try them that dwell on the earth.” The true saints of this age, the Church (even Laodicean overcomers), are to “sit with Christ in his throne” and will be “kept from” this hour of trial. But what of those left after the rapture of the Church? It is upon these that the hour of trial comes.

Now, we are not told it is the hour of universal damnation, but of trial. Doubtless those who “received not the love of the truth” will be given over to believe “the lie” (Revelation 13:1-18)-devil worship. But does not the use of the word “trial” indicate that some may endure it?

Even the enemies of God knew about God-the throne and the Lamb-under the sixth seal (Revelation 6:1-17). Bibles have been scattered all over this earth. In every nation men not yet saved know about the Lamb of God and His sacrifice for sin. When the awful world-wide “hour of trial” sets in, it seems that thousands will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, at all cost.

We must confess that this is a difficult question to determine, as to the exact relation of this great multitude to The Great Tribulation, in view of the fact that the same preposition (ek) is used here as in Revelation 3:10, where the saints are kept out of (ek) “the hour of trial.” From such passages (and there are many) we find that God continually and personally administers the affairs of this

earth; and we learn from such verses as Revelation 7:1, that He does it through angelic ministers. He loves to delegate His power to His faithful servants! The case of Job is simply the exception that proves the rule. God had set a hedge about Job, complained Satan (Job 1:10). This, of course, involved God's management of the physical universe to Job's outward benefit. When Jehovah grants all that Job had, except his own person, to be attacked by Satan, among the other disasters, we read, "And there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men" (Job's children). Satan could not have sent this wind except by divine permission-it is God that rides "upon the wings of the wind," not Satan! Psalms 104:3.)

01.06. Chapter 6: The Seven Trumpet Angels and the Other Angel- Rev_8:1-5

Chapter 6: The Seven Trumpet Angels and the Other Angel- Revelation 8:1-5 When the Lamb opens the seventh one of the seals of the book of judgment of Revelation 8:1, we read, There followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. On the one hand, all vocal worship and praise wholly cease; on the other, there is not seen any creature activity, even in the prosecution of those terrible visitations from heaven so soon to be sent on earth. All is silent. The meaning, it seems to me, is two-fold: “The steps of God from mercy to judgment are always slow, reluctant, and measured.” It is God’s “strange work,” this of actually proceeding to visit from a long forbearing heaven direct strokes upon men. In the seals of chapter 6 men slay one another. Even the fourth seal sets forth death by sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts-God’s four sore judgments, but not such as we shall see under the trumpets. So there is “silence in heaven.” All the heavenly hosts will soon be engaging in actual warfare against earth. But it is God’s “strange act” (Isaiah 28:21). He “hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” God is love.

Again, on the other hand, this is an ominous silence! It is the calm before the storm. God, the Lamb, the four living ones, the twenty-four elders, the seraphim of Isaiah 6:1-13, the hundred million and millions of angels, the Church, the martyrs beneath the altar-all silent. Meditate on this scene: it greatly grows upon your soul! And I saw the seven angels that stand before God (Revelation 8:2). These are mentioned as if we knew of them before. But, so far as I am aware, there is no previous instruction regarding them in Scripture. Over and over again in The Revelation such unexpected words are used-especially regarding the arrangements in heaven. For this book, as its name signifies, is a revelation. If John says

“I saw,” we, by the Spirit and by faith, also see. Perhaps Gabriel is one of these seven, though probably filling a yet special place. “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19, R. V.).

God is “the great king”; and He is surrounded as is described in Daniel 7:10, “Thousands of thousands ministered unto him.” We know little of that scene of ineffable majesty: let us treasure what is told us! And there were given unto them seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2). The trumpets were appointed in Israel by God for calling of the princes, and the congregation, and for the journeying of the camps, as an alarm, or public notification (Numbers 10:1-6). [55]

[55] Numbers 10:7 is interesting indeed to one who knows the real hope of the Church: “When the assembly is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm!” The trumpets were to be blown also in the days of Israel’s “gladness,” “set feasts,” and over their sacrifice in the beginnings of their months-“for a memorial before your God.” Jehovah also loved them (Numbers 10:10). But we find an especial use of the trumpet, in arousing to war the hosts of Jehovah against their enemies (Numbers 10:9). Compare Ezekiel 33:1-7, where the watchman’s trumpet blown faithfully could deliver all who would “take warning.” But it was too late in Jeremiah 4:19 (for the

Israel of that day). “Thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is laid waste … How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For my people are foolish … no understanding … wise to do evil … to do good-no knowledge!” What a state! And the prophet heard the trumpet of judgment. So with these seven angels. They blow the very trumpets of heaven against an earth become “as it was in the days of Noah … as the days of Sodom,” as Joshua and Israel blew the trumpets against Jericho.

Remembering the angelic governmental control that obtains over earth’s affairs, until Christ and the Church possess the kingdom (Hebrews 2:5-6), we are not interpreting but perverting Scripture, unless we believe these seven angels to be angels indeed, and their trumpets, trumpets indeed, and the results, results indeed, as described. God had priests blow ram’s-horn trumpets a week around Jericho’s walls: and they “fell down flat.” Of course it was God’s power that caused it. But God thus proclaimed Himself the God of Israel, working wonders, as Israel blew and shouted. So will He do, on an earth-wide scale, as these angels blow their trumpets in heaven. It is idle to call all these literally described scenes by the favorite word, “symbolic.” Symbolic of what, pray tell us! Do you have a plainer account of definite things anywhere in the Bible than we here have in The Revelation?

It is true that we must needs know the rest of Scripture to understand The Revelation fully; for it takes for granted such knowledge. But when God declares that definite things follow-“by reason of the … voices, of the angels” (Revelation 8:7, Revelation 8:13, R. V.), who dares say that some fact of history, or some imagination of the human mind, other than the plainly described event, is to be understood? Let us beware of finding ourselves finally aligned with the Sadducees who denied both angel and spirit (Acts 23:8). There are figures and “signs” (semeia) in The Revelation; but we learn from Scripture, not from history, or reason, what such things mean. And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand. And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake. This angel is not Christ, who is the Lamb opening the seals, and directing these processes of judgment. The fact that this angel is at the altar, and has incense, has led many, in their very jealousy for the Great High Priest, to forget the vision of the Lord in chapter 1 as Judge, clad in the robe of the Judge, not of the Priest. The vision of chapter 1 must control all the book-“Write the things which thou sawest (the glorious Lord); and the things which are (that are on-Church things); and the things which shall come to pass after these things.” (Revelation 1:19). It is not a book of salvation, nor of intercession, but of processed judgment. This angel of Revelation 8:3 is publicly to bring before all heaven three things:

1. That the prayers of all the saints are ever had in memory before God: a most blessed and solemn truth! No saint’s prayer is forgotten, but has its effect in due season, in bringing in the Kingdom, that is, our Lord’s return!

2. That the incense (ever in Scripture setting forth the power of Christ’s atonement acting upon God) the incense, I say, representing our Lord’s person and work at Calvary, added in due time to

the prayers of all the saints, makes them instantly effectual before God.

3. That the prayers of all the saints, in the power of Christ's atonement, is that which really brings about judgment. It is the answer at last to "Thy Kingdom come" which the saints of all ages have prayed. No other answer could be given, inasmuch as earth has rejected the rightful King!

It is of the utmost importance that we understand Revelation 8:3-5. This incense is "given" to this angel. (Christ would have needed none!) And it is God's hour to begin from heaven that direct heavenly intervention which will be the answer to the saints' prayers. Enoch prophesied of it (Jude 1:14-15). Jacob waited for it (Genesis 49:18). All the prophets spake of it. Now, in Revelation 8:3-5,-inasmuch as its hour has begun to be, what caused it must be openly brought in and shown upon "the golden altar which was before the throne" (of God).

Now this angel takes his censer, and, filling it with the fire of the altar, he "cast it into the earth." The altar of old was the place of substitutionary atonement, and the fire represented the judgment of a holy God upon sin visited upon a sacrifice rather than the sinner. Here it is reversed. When the censer is cast into the earth, there follow thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake" (Revelation 8:5, R.V.).

Notice first, that the "scientific" explanation of the "processes of nature" utterly fail-thunders precede lightnings!

Again, voices, intelligent, significant, warning, come between the thunders and the lightnings. And finally all these are physical disturbances. The earthquake is a real earthquake: one of God's constant ways of arousing men. When we proceed to what follows each trumpet, things will be simple, if we but believe what is written.

Four of the Seven Trumpets Revelation 8:6-13 And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

These seven presence-angels, having waited until the incense (the power of Christ's sacrificial work) and the prayers of all the saints should be formally presented before God (Revelation 8:3-5) as the means of direct judgment from heaven upon men (as before these were the means of salvation) are now ready to act. Until this time the judgments have been preliminary and indirect: now we shall see direct visitations from heaven upon men. [56]

[56] It is probable that these trumpet-blasts will be heard on earth; and that all the world will know whence these troubles come. In Revelation 16:9 we read "they blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues" (the bowls of wrath). Men will know what is going on. The heaven, under the sixth seal (Revelation 6:14) "was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up." We cannot avoid the conclusion that there will be at that time manifest knowledge that God is the direct Author of earth's calamities. He will make men feel it. And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast into the earth, and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Now this is a book of revelation we are reading. And it is not sealed (Revelation 22:10). Therefore we have just read an exact description of what will take place! If you should read to someone an account of the seventh plague in Egypt, from Exodus 9:18-26, he would hear such words as these:

“I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now … Jehovah sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down into the earth … so there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation … Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.”

Now if your hearer should say, “I believe that literally happened, just as related,” you would reply: “Certainly. God does not speak in a riddle; all this happened in Egypt.” But if you then read him what God says will happen when the first angel blows his trumpet in Revelation 8:7 : “hail and fire, mingled with blood … cast upon the earth,” and he declares, “That is not literal hail or fire or blood,” your only proper course would be to call him a doubter, a caviller at God’s plain statements. He might reply, “The book of Revelation is full of ‘symbols’-you cannot take it literally as you do Exodus.” Your true course then would be to show him, in all meekness, but with all firmness, that if God does not mean what He says here, no one on earth can tell what He means! When God uses emblems, or “signs,” as, for example, the two evil women, Jezebel in Thyatira, and the harlot on the Beast in chapter 17, God tells what He means. But when God says that such and such events will take place, they will take place! It is folly to pretend that the trumpet-judgments have already been “fulfilled in Church history.” God says John here was beholding the things that should come to pass after Church things (Revelation 4:1).

Tell me, when was exactly one third of this earth burnt, so that the grass and the trees were destroyed? History has no record of such an event! But it will occur, literally! And the very inventions that help geographers to chart this earth (and there are many), will enable the men living in the days of the Seventh Angel quickly to compute that one third of the earth has been affected by this great judgment.

One third! Three is the divine number (as all Bible students know) and four is the earth-number.

Now under the first four trumpets, we read the words “a third” twelve times! And twelve is God’s governmental number concerning this earth. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

Manifestly, to understand this, we have only to believe it. Unbelief is the greatest enemy of prophecy.

Also, it is idle to talk about this “third part” as “the Roman earth.” What but your imagination ever told you such a thing? These judgments are world-wide (as is plainly seen from Revelation 8:12, where the sun is smitten). Is there a “Roman” sun?

God says a third part of the sea will become blood. God will do this: and will let all the earth know three things: (1) That it is a heavenly judgment, by the loud blast of the angel’s trumpet; (2) that a great body like a burning mountain has been cast into the sea; (3) that just one third-God’s number-of the sea becomes, like the river Nile under Moses’ rod, blood. And the lines of it will be absolutely denned in the ocean that men may know it is God’s hand that is at work. For example, now the Gulf Stream flows, a great sea-river, many miles in width, with a color so marked that a ship’s bow enters it with the stern plainly back in the common ocean. Also, it keeps on its distinct

way clear across the Atlantic. And it will not be difficult for the nations to ascertain that one third of their ships have been “destroyed.” Louder and louder are the divine voices which should awake men. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9). But many perish under the judgments! And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

Wormwood is the bitterest shrub known. Several varieties are found in the East, and in Syria and Palestine. It would be easy for any one to understand what the Seer meant. “The star is called Wormwood.” Men are reaping the bitter fruits of sin; and they know that heaven is sending these troubles upon them.

It should be carefully noted, that the order of these first four trumpet-judgments is the same as that of the bowls of wrath in Revelation 16:1-21. (1) Earth; (2) Sea; (3) Rivers and fountains of waters; (4) The Sun.

Men get their water supply from the rivers of earth, and from the “fountains of waters”-which sometimes flow from the snows and glaciers of the mountains, and sometimes become the underground sources of springs and wells. To cut off their “water supply” is to render men desperate and helpless. The greater part of earth’s inhabitants (Matthew 7:13 -“wide is the gate”) is evermore hastening on to “the pit wherein is no water” (Zechariah 9:11). What wonder, then, that God now lets them have a hint of what is coming! The day was, that “all the Egyptians digged around about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.” Then God let them find water-though at great labor. And here in The Revelation He smites only a third of the sources of their drinking water. As we before quoted: “The steps of God from mercy to judgment are always slow, reluctant, and measured.” But now comes a stroke that even the lowest and least of men can, and must, recognize and interpret: The fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner. On the fourth day of creation God said, “Let there be light bearers (Hebrew-maorim) in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.” Men’s almanacs deal with seasons, days and years: but God said these heavenly bodies were primarily for Signs!

“And there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars,” Christ, the Creator of them, said (Luke 21:25) speaking in connection with His own second coming.

Revelation 8:12 will surely set the “star-gazers” on their heads! There is the loud blast of a heavenly trumpet, and lo! out goes the sun! And the daylight turns into night. And such night! No stars, no moon, just black, impenetrable darkness. Then lo! again the sun shines. And when men compute the duration of it, they find again that third-ominous indeed to those who know not, and who desire not to know God. Our Lord tells us plainly that “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken”-evidently referring to such physical powers as the so-called laws of gravitation, and celestial attraction: for the “distress of nations” referred to in Luke 21:25-26, is terror arising from “the roaring of the sea and the billows.” They will be “in perplexity” (R. V.), for no science will be able to explain these things.

All their confidence has been in “all things continuing as they were”-in the “fixity of nature’s laws,” etc., etc. Now all is overset. And, the Lord continued, “men will be fainting (or expiring) for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world.”[57]

[57] We see from Matthew 24:29, that the greatest physical convulsions are to take place “immediately after the tribulation.” But the Lord’s own are, in Luke 21:28, told to be encouraged “when these things begin to come to pass.” The Church escapes from earth at the end of Church-things, in Revelation 4:1. But God has others of His saints, who will behold, and “lift up their heads,” in the dark days before The Tribulation, as well as after it.

Then, indeed, to Israel’s sealed remnant, such Psalms as 46 will be a source of confidence that will be unknown except to God’s own: “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof.” But now in Revelation 8:13 comes the great eagle’s announcement of the three woes that trumpets five, six and seven, will usher in Revelation 9:1-21. And I saw, and I heard one eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound. The warning is that trumpets five, six and seven will bring a new quality and degree of divine displeasure and consequent disaster. We shall see the first woe in the locusts (Revelation 9:1-11); the second, in the Euphratean horsemen and hosts (Revelation 9:13-21) and the plagues wherewith the two witnesses (Revelation 11:5-6) smite the earth. The third we see in the handing over of the earth to the Beast-worship of Revelation 13:1-18 -worst by far, of all!

01.07. Chapter 7: Locusts and Hellish Horsemen- Rev_9:1-21

Chapter 7: Locusts and Hellish Horsemen- Revelation 9:1-21

We have now the sounding of trumpets of the fifth and sixth angels in Revelation 9:1-21, with their fearsome following effects upon men. The fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the shaft (Greek, phrear, as in John 4:11, “The well is deep”) of the abyss. That there is a passage from the earth to its heart not only is indicated by Scripture, but was believed by the ancient Greeks, and is today known to the followers of Satan. In Revelation 20:1-3 we find Satan himself cast down there, and the passage sealed for 1000 years. In this latter passage, “an angel coming down out of heaven” has the key of the abyss. In Revelation 9:1 it is a “fallen” one of those beings so often called stars (e.g., Daniel 8:10; Daniel 8:24; Isaiah 14:12) to whom is given the key of the shaft of the abyss. We know from our Lord’s words in Revelation 1:18 that He has Himself “the keys of death and of Hades.” Inasmuch as the word “abyss” describes the region, and Hades (literally “the unseen”) describes the state or class of beings-spirits who go there-we judge both words refer to “the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). For our Lord, we know, during those three days was in the Old Testament Sheol, which is the New Testament Hades. (Compare Psalms 16:10 with Acts 2:25-31 -both R. V., for the King James version is quite confusing in its varied translations of Sheol and Hades.) In Romans 10:7 also, Paul shows that to bring our Lord up from the dead, was to “descend into the abyss.” And he opened the shaft of the abyss; and there went up smoke out of the shaft, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the shaft.

Now if we should read of the eruption of a great volcano darkening the sky for thousands of miles, we would believe it to be physical smoke and literal darkness. Such phenomena have actually occurred, as may be found upon consulting any physical geography. So we shall proceed to believe that God’s Word is as true as are man’s records, and we shall have no trouble in considering this smoke and consequent darkening just as literal as the words express them to be. When we remember that The Revelation is not a sealed book, we shall have no difficulty in regarding the locusts that God says will proceed from this smoke, as actual locusts. In Exodus 10:1-29 we are told concerning the plague of locusts in Egypt that they were such “as neither thy fathers nor thy fathers’ fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day.” “Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.”

Now no one who believes the Bible has any trouble believing the record of that past plague. Nor has any one any right to have any difficulty about the terrible locust plague of Revelation 9:1-21. It is because of the fog of unbelief, and the super-fog of “historical interpretation,” that this passage has been considered “hard to understand.” If we do not believe that God means what He so plainly and explicitly says in Revelation 9:1-21, let us say we do not believe it, and be honest. But let us not dare to bring in vain imaginations and call them interpretations of Scripture. (As, for example, the grotesque and absurd notion that the “hair as the hair of women” (Revelation 9:8) was fulfilled

in the horse-tails tied by the Saracens to their spears!) Remember that we are reading from Revelation 4:1-11 onward “the things that must come to pass” after the present Church period. See Revelation 1:19, where the Lord Himself makes the division; and compare it with Revelation 4:1 where He carries it forward. It preens our pride to point as wise ones to this or that in Church history, and say, “There was the fulfilment of, for example, this locust army.” But the trouble is, that denies what Christ said about this part of the book, namely, that it was to be fulfilled after Church times and Church history are closed.

Out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Then follows the command of the Creator of these creatures, reversing utterly their habits as to manner of food! They are directed not to hurt the grass, nor green things, nor trees (the natural food of locusts until then) “but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads”!

Five months (the natural life-period of locusts) is assigned them to “torment men.” Down in Egypt (the plagues of which throw great light on the earth-plagues of Revelation), God “put a difference” (Hebrew-set redemption) between His people Israel, and the Egyptians (See Exodus 8:22; Exodus 9:4; Exodus 9:6; Exodus 9:26; Exodus 10:23). God will do likewise when these terrible visitations are again in the earth. Whatever persecutions the saints of those days may endure from men, they will have constant miraculous evidence that their God is not against them! Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man. The writer was once struck on the heel by a small scorpion, and the unbelievable, indescribable anguish extended clear to the head. Of course we are simply to believe Revelation 9:5. To seek to twist it from its natural sense is wickedness: for unbelief is wickedness! In those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it. We remember one who was dragged years ago from the Chicago River, after attempted suicide, crying, “Oh, let me drown! I cannot face another day!” Now God does not tell us by what means men shall in this terrible time be kept back from the longed-for oblivion of physical death: but He does reveal that they shall seek it and not find it. This giddy, pleasure-mad age little realizes to what extremities of trouble it is fast hastening. And if, dear reader, you should die without Christ, before these judgments from God set in, it would be only to enter the dark gates of Hades (in the center of this earth), to be kept there till the judgment of the Great White Throne of Revelation 20:11-15; for the Word of God must be fulfilled.

Now, further regarding these locusts, a detailed description is given in Revelation 9:7-10. Their aspect will be truly terrible. I have seen an onslaught of white hornets, whose nest has been disturbed, drive men frantic before them. How much more these fearsome creatures! “Shapes … like unto horses prepared for war.” Faces like humans-horrible! Crowns on their heads-as God’s avengers. Teeth like lions’, breastplates like iron, wings like a thousand rushing war-chariots. Stinging tails like those of scorpions-is not this a horrid host! God once promised to send the hornet to drive out His people’s foes (Exodus 23:28; Deuteronomy 7:20). Probably there were “wise ones” also in those days who said, “The Lord does not mean literal hornets; but some terrifying thoughts sent into the Canaanites.” But Jehovah tells us in Joshua 24:12 : “I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you.” It is utterly amazing to confront, even in commentaries by excellent men, complete disbelief that these will be literal locusts, though God takes such pains to say explicitly that they will be just that! So we will believe Him, and be thankful

that the Church will not be here at that time; and that the other sealed ones, God's own, will be secure from their terrifying attacks.

They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon. Of ordinary locusts, the Word of God says, "the locusts have no king" (Proverbs 30:27). But of this devastating judgment a grim leader is seen-revealed but this once in Scripture. This is evidently not Satan; as he is nowhere connected with "the abyss" till he is cast therein in Revelation 20:1-3. He walks up and down in the earth and accuses the saints before God, in heaven (Job 1:1-22, 1 Peter 5:1-14, Revelation 12:1-17).

Abaddon means destruction, in the Hebrew; but the Greek, Apollyon, is destroyer.

Perhaps, just as Satan has "the power of death" (Hebrews 2:1-18), so this angel of the abyss has the doleful power and authority to execute on creatures the effects of death that give him his name! So he heads this army of judgment-bearing, tormenting locusts, which, we read in Revelation 9:12, constitutes the first Woe. The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woes after these things. And the sixth angel sounded.

I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God. [58]

One saying to the sixth angel that had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them.

[58] This is not the brazen altar, as under the fifth seal, but the altar where prayer was offered up in Revelation 8:3. Its pattern is seen in Exodus 30:1-38. In the tabernacle the prayers of the Israelites who had been atoned for at the brazen altar were offered up before the golden altar, but now, just as we saw in Revelation 8:3; Revelation 8:5, the voice from the golden altar which was meant to speak for mercy, now calls for judgment; and it is from the "horns" that the voice comes in Revelation 9:13. The horns symbolize the power of that which was done at that altar. Therefore it is an answer to the prayers of God's saints based upon Christ's atonement that this terrible judgment now comes!

How little the nations that are seeking just now to restore Mesopotamia to its ancient fertility (foremost among these being England) realize that they are working in the immediate region of four of Satan's most powerful princes, which are bound there for a special purpose! (See 2 Peter 2:4, where we read of certain angels, probably those of Genesis 6:1-22, as cast down to Tartarus,-perhaps the lowest part of the abyss, and committed to pits or chains of darkness.) Most of Satan's angels are yet free-being the principalities against which we wrestle (Ephesians 6:1-24), but some terrible offenders of high rank have been bound. These four angels have this ominous destiny: they "had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men." Some think that this designation of time is intended to set forth thirteen months; a year plus a month, plus a day and an hour. But this seems to be straining the meaning of the passage, and not to be in accord with the spirit of it: for it is the object of the chaining of these angels, not the duration of their infliction upon men that is in view. They have been prepared for this particular moment-chained there until this command from the golden altar.

Attention has been abundantly called by commentators to the region of the Euphrates as that place where human sin began and also Satan's empire over man; where the first murder was committed; where the first war confederacy was made (Genesis 14:1-24); and back of this it is where Nimrod began to be "a mighty one in the earth," and where the vast system of Babylonian idolatry, with its trinity of evil-"father, mother and son" originated, to deceive the whole world by the Satanic fable of "the queen of heaven." Here, moreover, as we saw in Zechariah 5:1-11, iniquity is to have its last stage on earth (see "Revelation 18:1-24 also). The two hundred million horsemen whose number John heard are not human beings at all. It is so belittling to Scripture to treat it as if its words were not definite. It blinds the mind to the whole force of the coming chapters of Revelation, to accept such foolish notions as those of the historicists (that is, those who apply these chapters to what has already taken place during Church history) bring forth here. John plainly declares,

I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceedeth out of their mouths. Here God goes into descriptive detail. Believe, and you scarcely need any comment. Every one knows what fire and smoke and brimstone are. The only trouble is to believe that God would (of course He could) turn loose such horrific agents against men on earth. To doubt that this is fire and smoke and brimstone in chapter 9, is to proceed to doubt whether the lake of fire is literal fire burning with brimstone. Doubt as to this has already spread through Christendom. Yet it must be literal-there is no possible escape if we believe the Bible true at all! In Genesis 19:1-38, we read in Genesis 19:24, "Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jehovah: (do you believe Abraham was a literal man?) and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah (they were literal cities), and toward all the land of the Plain (it lies there yet, covered by the Dead Sea), and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace. Do you believe this record to be an inspired statement of what Abraham actually saw? Why then do you seek to reject in Revelation what you accept in Genesis? In Revelation 14:10; Revelation 11:1-19, we read that certain men will be "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: (If you do not believe in the actual existence of angels you are a Sadducee and an infidel. You might as well confess you do not believe in the risen Lamb of God.) "And the smoke of their torment goeth up unto ages of ages."

Again, you find in Revelation 20:10, that the first Beast and the false prophet have been in "the lake of fire and brimstone" for 1000 years, and are not annihilated, and then that the Devil is cast therein. Do you realize that to claim that you do not believe in literal fire and literal brimstone, but believe in something more awful than this, is just silly nonsense?

It becomes necessary to contemplate deeply and with absolute faith the visitations that destroy the third part of the earth's remaining population (a fourth having been slain under the fourth seal of 6:8). One-half of the population of the earth has been removed. Thus, at the low estimate of 1,600,000,000,400,000,000 were slain in chapter 6, and a third of the rest, or 400,000,000 more in

chapter 9. The prophecies concerning the decimation of earth's population prior to the bringing in of the kingdom (that is, the Millennium), we shall see thus gradually fulfilled in these preliminary judgments,-of the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls of wrath,-before "the great and terrible day of the Lord" of Revelation 19:11-16; when the Lord as King of kings will tread "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty": with the results seen in Revelation 19:17-18.

Now in Revelation 9:1-21 these hellish horsemen, which are literal and which are certainly coming, belch forth on this earth fire and smoke and brimstone; "which proceeded out of their mouths." It is idle to talk about this being "a figure of false doctrine"! When God desires to tell of certain "spirits of demons going forth to deceive the earth" for Armageddon, He is able to describe them perfectly in Revelation 16:13-14. And when God speaks of fire and smoke and brimstone, He means what He says. [59]

[59] The final, inescapable demonstration of this is in Matthew 13:1-58 in our Lord's interpretation of the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:36-43). In this interpretation He gives the meaning of the figures of the parable, The good seed- sons of the kingdom; tares-sons of the evil one; the enemy-the Devil; the harvest-the end of the age; the reapers-angels. Now read Matthew 13:41 : "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall, cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." You can't say the furnace of fire is a figure here, without falsifying our Lord's words, for He is telling what the figures of the parable mean. And you must also traduce your own intellectual processes, for you imagine an imagination (because you are terrified at the truth) but you have no basis for your imagination. You cannot reach it by logic, for logic leads you to the truth-of eternal literal fire in Matthew 13:1-58, Therefore when you claim you do not believe in literal fire but in something "more awful," you are giving heed to your deceitful heart, to those subtle lies fostered there by the Devil. Whoever really heard of or described anything more awful than God's visiting men with fire and brimstone?

Spiritistic mediums all talk about the "spirit world" as being lovely and pleasant, etc. Every false doctrine denies literal eternal fire. Keep out of that class!

We are compelled therefore to envisage untold future horrors to come upon this earth, even before that Great Day of Wrath when our Lord personally comes in Revelation 19:11-15. A third part of the humanity remaining (after one-fourth of the whole had been destroyed under the fourth seal) are now killed. This is physical death. They are removed in judgment from the earth. What awful days they will be when one third of earth's remaining population will be slain by this foretaste of the pit, the fire and smoke and the brimstone, proceeding from the mouths of these dread horsemen! Also those not killed, according to verse 19, may be smitten into torment with the tails of these horses, which are "like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they hurt." This is a taste of hell on earth that is coming. One of every three humans left on earth succumbs to its fury.

Yet, when we come to Revelation 13:1-18, to the strong delusion of the worship of the Beast, and through him of the Devil, the destruction will be greater yet!

Now read Revelation 9:20-21 -the end of our chapter. We must remember that the inhabitants of the earth are already in our day far gone in utter rebellion and impenitence: what wonder then that such terrible infliction as these horsemen of hell, which we shall now consider, come upon the

condition of hardened iniquity described in the closing verses of Revelation 9:1-21. And the rest of mankind who were not killed with these plagues repented not of the works of their hands that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

We see here the two tables of God's holy law set at naught by the impenitent. First, in demon-worship-and who knows how far this has progressed in our day! Take Chicago: Arriving in this city at the close of 1893, (the former World's Fair) I found nearly two pages of the Saturday issue of the newspaper were taken up with announcement of services at the various churches, and the sermons were generally on solemn subjects by godly men. In 1935, four or five announcements, at most a half a dozen, invited to places where one's soul would be safe to attend; while the announcements of Spiritualists, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Unity followers, etc.-those cults that have direct traffic with Satan-ran into the scores. (Six orthodox, against 75 Satanic, in the Chicago Daily News of November 14, 1931.)

Next idolatry-literal idols that are coming fast into Christendom again, and that not only in Romish (Jezebel) circles, but among "Protestants," both in England and in this country. Moreover, as toward God, that will be the characterizing condition at the time of the visitation of which we are about to read. (See especially the "image of the Beast" of Revelation 13:1-18 -worshipped by the world!) Next, their attitude toward one another (Revelation 9:21) - murders. The daily press already fairly screams of "killings," and that not only by gangsters, but by fathers and mothers of families, by college students, young people and even children! Violence is indeed filling the earth, "as it was in the days of Noah."

Then come sorceries. The Greek word pharmakeis is used three times in the New Testament: here, and in Revelation 18:23 and Galatians 5:20. The corresponding noun is used in Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15. It fundamentally indicates the charming of others by means of drugs or magic, which is, of course, commonly practiced in the pagan world; and more secretly in so-called "Christendom." Its connection seems to denote an evil intent upon others by means of enchantments. Its place next to "murders" here, and to "enmities" in Galatians 5:20 would show this. Generally speaking, it is calling the energies of the evil spirit-world, by whatever means, into human affairs. It forms a horrible and increasing maelstrom from which few escape who once enter it. The literal meaning of pharmakeia "enchanting by drugs," can also include the fearful and increasing prevalence of the "dope" habit in all lands. Gangsters rely on drugs to stupefy their fears when they assassinate. All this is in accord with the prophecy of Isaiah 28:1-29 regarding "the drunkards of Ephraim." It seems to portray clearly the future use of the vineyards now being planted by the returning Jews in Palestine. [60]

[60] "This prophecy is plainly one for the last days-yea, the last seven-year treaty of the "majority" (Daniel 9:27) of Israel with the last Roman emperor. Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 28:18, compared with Revelation 17:8 proves that. As to the prevalence of drunkenness in Palestine at that time, read Isaiah 28:7-8 : "These reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment…. All tables … full of vomit and filthiness … no place clean."

Let the dreamers of dreams who do not read God's Word reflect on this. I fully believe these last days will prove the most drunken and drugged age the world ever saw! Unregenerate man's refuge from intolerable conditions is suicide or drugged oblivion. [61]

[61] We have only to think of the use of alcoholic stimulants, of opium, of tobacco, of the rage of cosmetics and medicaments to increase love attractions, of resorts to the pharmacopoeia in connection with sensuality-of the magical agents and treatments alleged to come from the spirit-world for the benefit of people in this-of the thousand impositions in the way of medicines and remedial agents, encouraging mankind to recklessness in transgression with the hope of easily repairing the damages of nature's penalties-of the growing prevalence of crime induced by these things, setting loose and stimulating to activity the vilest passions, which are eating out the moral sense of society-for the beginnings of that moral degeneracy to which the seer here alludes as characteristic of the period when the sixth trumpet is sounded.-Seiss. The next prevailing sin (Revelation 9:21) is fornication. One has only to glance about at the pictures in newspapers, at magazine covers, at the advertisements of theatres and moving pictures, to see what a wave of lust has begun to sweep the earth. God's Spirit seems to be withdrawing and letting the sinful heart of man have its fill of uncleanness. Gradually we become accustomed to reading or hearing of these things until we scarcely realize how far in a few years we have drifted toward the morals of Sodom. Nor will man repent of his dear sin in this respect. We remember that although Jezebel was given space to repent in Revelation 2:20-21, it was of her fornication she willed not to repent. In a certain real sense, just as a Christian father lives watchfully to care for his wife and family, so the unregenerate world, uncontrolled as it is by the fear of God or the Holy Spirit, really lives for the essence of self-indulgence in the abuse of the sexual relation. One has only to recall the conversation he may have heard from worldlings off their guard to understand this!

Finally, the sin that brings about the terrific judgment of the horsemen of hell is theft. Get money, by whatever means, is the slogan of these last days. Dishonesty, trickery, irresponsibility in business circles, have become proverbial. A prominent man in a great commercial house some time ago said to me, "We never count as we used to on contracts being lived up to. Cancellation without notice is so common as to cause no surprise." And what enormous trickery has the covetousness that has brought about the wrecking of hundreds, probably thousands, of banks, often revealed. Nor will there be any permanent change except for the worse. "Lying and false swearing," according to Zechariah 5:1-11 (two remarkable visions!) are the special forms of iniquity in the last days, as revealed in Palestine but finally centered in "the land of Shinar" (Zechariah 5:11).

58 This is not the brazen altar, as under the fifth seal, but the altar where prayer was offered up in Revelation 8:3. Its pattern is seen in Exodus 30:1-38. In the tabernacle the prayers of the Israelites who had been atoned for at the brazen altar were offered up before the golden altar, but now, just as we saw in Revelation 8:3, Revelation 8:5, the voice from the golden altar which was meant to speak for mercy, now calls for judgment; and it is from the "horns" that the voice comes in Revelation 9:13. The horns symbolize the power of that which was done at that altar. Therefore it is an answer to the prayers of God's saints based upon Christ's atonement that this terrible judgment now comes!

59 The final, inescapable demonstration of this is in Matthew 13:1-58 in our Lord's interpretation of the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:36-43). In this interpretation He gives the meaning of the figures of the parable, The good seed- sons of the kingdom; tares-sons of the evil one; the enemy-the Devil; the harvest-the end of the age; the reapers-angels. Now read Matthew 13:41 : "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall, cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." You can't say the furnace of fire is a figure here, without falsifying our Lord's words, for He is telling what the figures of the parable mean. And you must also traduce your own intellectual processes, for you imagine an imagination (because you are terrified at the truth) but you have no basis for your imagination. You cannot reach it by logic, for logic leads you to the truth-of eternal literal fire in Matthew 13:1-58, Therefore when you claim you do not believe in literal fire but in something "more awful," you are giving heed to your deceitful heart, to those subtle lies fostered there by the Devil. Whoever really heard of or described anything more awful than God's visiting men with fire and brimstone?

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01.08. Chapter 8: No Longer Delay!- Rev_10:1-11

Chapter 8: No Longer Delay!- Revelation 10:1-11 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth.

We may call this angel the herald angel of the great things that belong under the seventh trumpet, as seen in Revelation 11:15-19. The great burden of this angel's message is that "there shall be delay[62] no longer" (Revelation 10:6, R.V.). The angel of Revelation 10:1-11 is not Christ, but His messenger sent to announce a most solemn crisis.

[62] The translation of chronos by the word "time" is impossible, as well as unreasonable, in view of the context. We know that after our Lord's coming back to earth in Revelation 19:1-21 there will be one thousand years of His reign with His saints on earth (Revelation 20:4-6) and after that "a little season," before the earth and the heaven flee away at the Great White Throne judgment. This angel in Revelation 10:1-11 really introduces Revelation 11:1-19, with God's two witnesses prophesying at Jerusalem; the great view of God's plans concerning Israel, and Satan's opposition, of Revelation 12:1-17 and Revelation 13:1-18 -in fact all these great events described in Revelation 11:18. (Read this verse most carefully, for its importance is great.)

Let us return now to the beginning of Revelation 10:1-11. "Another strong angel … a little book." This is in plain reference to the strong angel of Revelation 5:2 who also speaks of a book.

Note at once that John's position in Revelation 10:1-11 seems to be on earth (as it undoubtedly is in Revelation 11:1-19), for he sees the angel coming down out of heaven. That this angel is merely such, and not Christ Himself, as some maintain, seems to me fully evident. Over sixty times angels are mentioned in The Revelation apart from the "angels" of the churches; and they are always seen in service to Him who is opening the seals of the book of judgment. For the Master of the house to take the place of one of the servants at a time such as we are now considering is wholly incongruous. The more we study the book of The Revelation the more we become impressed and over-awed at the dignity and authority conferred on these beings called angels (Greek-messengers).

We need not, therefore, be surprised at the description of this angel in Revelation 10:1 -"arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire." He is not sitting upon the cloud as the "one sitting like unto a son of man" of Revelation 14:1-20. "Jehovah maketh the clouds his chariot." But this angel was "arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head." Here we are again taken back to Genesis 9:1-29 as in Revelation 4:3. God is about to call earth to account for breaking the everlasting covenant, of which the rainbow was the token (Isaiah 24:1-23). This angel's face "as the sun" and his feet "pillars of fire" declare the supreme, searching, fixed character of his message. Of the angel who announces the final doom of Babylon it is written in Revelation 18:1, "the earth was lightened with

his glory,"-yet no one supposes him to be the Lord! His right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth. The sea often seems in Scripture a distinct province, with a responsibility and judgment distinct from that of the earth. In the issue of the seventh angel's message introduced by this present angel, we find at the time the dead are judged, that the sea will give up the dead which are in it, before the human dead held by death and Hades are given up (Revelation 20:13). What the sea covers, no man knows, though it has been surmised, and that from certain Scriptures, that other than human remains are covered by its depths. We know that Satan was a murderer "from the beginning" (John 8:44), and that demons seem to be disembodied spirits ever seeking abodes, as Satan's angels do not. At all events, the sea is covered by judgment, as this angel's position shows. He cried "as a lion roareth." Compare Isaiah 21:8 where the watchman "cried as a lion." He represents Him who will shortly "roar from Zion" (Amos 1:2). And when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders uttered, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

We remember "the God of glory thundereth" (Psalms 29:1-11) and Job 26:14, "How small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?"; and Job 37:5, "God thundereth marvellously with his voice; Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend." Indeed, in Psalms 29:1-11 is a striking commentary on the seven thunders of The Revelation. Beginning with Psalms 29:3 "The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters: The God of glory thundereth," we have "the voice of Jehovah" repeated exactly seven times!

It is characteristic of that presumption which belongs to error that Seventh Day Adventism professes to tell us (and that through a woman!) the very things which the seven thunders uttered: although God commanded John to seal them up and write them not.

It is well to observe, that what the seven thunders uttered is the only part of the whole book of Revelation which is sealed (see Revelation 22:10). There "is a perfect, mighty, secret operation of God's power in judgment, as well as in salvation (read Deuteronomy 29:29). Probably some day we will understand this sealed message. John did: he was about to write! And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein. [63]

[63] This phrase is repeated three times, once in connection with each sphere of creation, as emphasizing the Creator's rights as Creator, to proceed in judgment as He pleases. With the little book open (Revelation 10:2) in one hand he lifts up his right hand to heaven, and announces a solemn oath by Jehovah the Creator. It is plain here again that this angel is not the Lord Himself; for when God took oath, "since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself" (Hebrews 6:13). Now Christ is Himself the Creator, but this angel takes oath by other than himself.

There shall be delay no longer! We are entering upon a new phase of divine judgments. In Revelation 5:1-14 John wept much because no one appeared able to take at all the book of judgment, or even to look upon it. The Lamb then took the sealed book. Upon the opening of the first six seals, dire results followed among men: and again, after the seventh seal, six of the seven trumpets brought direct visitations from heaven upon impenitent men. Now, however, solemn oath is taken that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is

finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets. This expression, “the mystery of God,” in this connection seems to indicate all those counsels and dealings of God made known by Him to and through the Old Testament prophets, concerning His governmental proceedings with men on earth looking always toward the establishment of the kingdom in the hands of Christ. When Christ comes to take the kingdom, there will be no mystery, but, on the contrary, manifestation. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea”-that is, universally and compulsorily (Isaiah 11:9). It is important for us to remember that we are ourselves still in the days of “mystery.” If a man would walk godly, there is “the mystery of godliness” by which he walks, unknown to the world (1 Timothy 3:16); those who would walk “lawless,” must at present walk in “the mystery of lawlessness,” for God is not yet allowing “the lawless one” to be revealed, but restrains (thanks be to Him!) (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17). But when the seventh angel sounds, all this will be finished, and there will be open manifestation of all. So we shall expect Antichrist to be brought forth; Israel to be hated and persecuted by all nations, and Satan universally worshipped, for he is the god of this age! And we shall expect God to manifest His anger. He will do so, and fully-“in the days of the voice of the seventh angel.” “Delay no longer,” then, is the word that governs things-let us hold this fact in mind, from this seventh angel onward. And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

John is evidently, in spirit, upon the earth here. Also, that the voice should come from heaven to him, anew emphasizes the fact that the holder of the book is not Christ, but, as is said, simply an “angel.” It is again brought to our attention that this little book is “open,” not sealed; so that when the Seer has taken, eaten, and digested it, the revelations will all be such as can be understood from “the prophets” of the Old Testament, whose writings already have lain before men, “open,” for a long time. And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

God’s words, to one who loves them, are always sweet, as David says, “sweeter also than honey and the … honey-comb.” Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them.” But, while to Jeremiah, God’s words became “a joy and the rejoicing of my heart,” to John, upon digesting this little book, they became bitter. Its contents were such as, when pondered and understood, were of anguish to the prophet. It evidently contained the revelation found in Revelation 11:1-19 concerning the future awful “Sodom and Egypt” spiritual state of Israel (Revelation 11:8) and the Remnant’s experiences under the rage of Satan and his vassals, in Revelation 12:1-17 and Revelation 13:1-18.

They say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

Now this is exactly what John goes on to do, ending up with the ten kings allied with the Beast: their career and doom, in Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 19:1-21.

“They,” who told John he must thus prophesy, we may surmise were heavenly “watchers” (as in Daniel 4:13; Daniel 4:17): for the mind of God as to earthly judgments and prophetic programs is

well known by those dwelling in the light of heaven (compare Revelation 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 21:1; Revelation 22:9). And now, let us reflect upon the fact that blessing to earth's nations waits upon the condition of Israel, the elect nation. Christ will come, and "will turn away ungodliness from Jacob" and the receiving into favor of national Israel, will be as "life from the dead" for "the world": as Paul so clearly sets forth in Romans 11:26; Romans 11:15; and James, in Acts 15:16-17; as also all the prophets. But these same prophets with one voice witness that before Israel can become a joy in the whole earth, they must first taste the full bitterness of rejecting their true Messiah. The "false shepherd" must come. Apostate Israel will make a "covenant with death" and a treaty with God's great enemy. The last state of "Israel after the flesh" will become "worse than the first." But the counsels of God are ever settled and His word faithful. So that we shall see the Lord in Revelation 11:1-19 commanding John to measure "the Temple of God," with its altar and worshippers-even when the nation is apostate and the city "as Sodom"! And the heavenly mind regarding Israel sees her as in Revelation 12:1; though her future experience on earth will be terrible (Revelation 12:13-16). And a remnant will stand upon Mount Zion to sing heavenly praise! (Revelation 14:1-5) The two great prophets or "witnesses" whose testimony preserves Israel from doom, and lays the foundation of the fear of the Lord in the remnant, will now be considered.

01.09. Chapter 9: God's Last Prophets: The Two Witnesses: Their Tremendous Task- Rev_11:1-19

Chapter 9: God’s Last Prophets: The Two Witnesses: Their Tremendous Task- Revelation 11:1-19 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. The moment the words “the temple of God” are used, we know ourselves to be on Jewish ground. During the present dispensation Stephen definitely testifies that “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands”; while Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 and Ephesians 2:1-22, and Peter likewise (1 Peter 2:5), that The Church is at present the temple or sanctuary of God; none other being recognized on earth.

We are reminded also in the opening of Revelation 11:1-19 that the only temple of Israel recognized by God is in their own land, in their appointed city Jerusalem. We must go thither for the interpretation of the remarkable passage which is now before us. In accordance with this, let us conceive the Jews back in their land, and having built a temple unto their God, and that there are “worshippers” discerned by God, though not yet publicly recognized by Him. The “altar” is that for sacrifice, not for prayer.

Revelation 11:1-19 is anticipative in character. Matters are set before us that must later on in Revelation find their delineation in detail. Other Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, have abundantly prophesied a restoration or returning of the Jews to their land in unbelief, with not only a racial, but a national consciousness; and the construction of a temple such as John is told to measure here. The interpretation of The Revelation reasonably demands familiarity with God’s prior words. Such passages as Zephaniah 2:1-2; Isaiah 66:1-4; Isaiah 28:14-22 indicate what will be the moral and spiritual character of those who “gather themselves together” as a nation in the last days. [64]

[64] There are several distinct goings into the land of Canaan by Israel: first, under Joshua; second, under Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest (see Ezra); third, under permission of the Gentiles, “before the decree bring forth … the day of Jehovah’s anger come upon you” (Zephaniah 2:2). This returning we see before our eyes today, especially since the Balfour declaration of 1917. This movement will proceed until Jerusalem becomes, as we find it in Revelation 11:1-19, a “great city,” and Palestine, through human methods of irrigation and development has become prominent, especially financially so, among the nations. This will be the situation when the majority of Israel make their “covenant with death,” the treaty with the “Prince” of Daniel 9:27, and Isaiah 28:14-15. Having rejected Christ, the Jews will accept Antichrist (John 5:43). This situation will end, as we know, in Jerusalem being compassed by all nations to cut them off (Zechariah 14:1-21, Psalms 83:1-18, etc). It will be then that “the overflowing scourge shall pass through and tread them down” (Isaiah 28:1-29). The most of the Jewish nation will be slain. Fourth, that returning to Palestine described by the Lord when He says He will “set His hand again the second time to

recover the remnant of His people, that shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea" (Isaiah 11:11). It is prophesied in other passages that Israel and Judah shall be one nation at last, without enmity as to God's sovereign election of Judah as the royal tribe, and David's seed as the royal house.

Christians, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem"! But that does not involve the Jews' participation in the present movement (number three above). For Jews to gather back to Palestine now is to go back to a fearful program! In accordance with Israel's "temple of God" being again recognized, the Gentiles immediately take their place without: so we read in Revelation 11:2, And the court, which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given to the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. Now some may ask, "Are not the Gentiles at present treading down Jerusalem?" Certainly, according to Luke 21:24, Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But take care! Jerusalem is not here in Luke called "the holy city." On the contrary, our Lord left the temple in Matthew 23:38, with the words, "Your house is left unto you desolate." Today, no one spot on earth is recognized as holy above another: "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek." But the Church age having ended (Revelation 4:1), and God having sent certain preliminary judgments (Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21), with the result that men simply harden themselves against Him (Revelation 9:20-21), He now proceeds to final things. And in order to bring on "Jacob's trouble," He must recognize that nation upon whose blessing the whole world waits, namely, Israel (Romans 11:15; Deuteronomy 32:8); but whose terrible chastening must come before they become "a praise in the earth."

We see, therefore, that the Gentiles in Revelation 11:2 have the "without" place, being subordinate to the national acceptance and restoration of Israel.

Next we notice the Gentile's blindness, malignity and satanic inspiration in the words, "shall they tread under foot." When Jewish times come on with God, a Gentile has no business in Jerusalem whatever, unless he comes as a humble worshipper of the God of Israel and in His prescribed way! Jerusalem is the city of the great King, and while it is at present unrecognized by God, yet the very expression, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down," shows the abhorrence of God for the gross, hideous un-cleanness, godlessness and blindness of the Gentile. Read the account in Ezekiel's last nine chapters of the millennial Jerusalem, or Zechariah's closing verses, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holy unto Jehovah; and the pots in Jehovah's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holy unto Jehovah of hosts: … and in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite[65] in the house of Jehovah of hosts!"

[65] The word "Canaanite" means "trafficker." Thank God, the day will shortly come when one land will be entirely free from commercialism and "business"!

We must now notice the expression "forty-two months." This we see is exactly equivalent to three years and a half, as it also Isaiah to 1260 days. This exact expression "forty-two months" is also used concerning the duration of the blasphemy and power of the wild beast of Revelation 13:5.

We should be familiar with the great prophecy (which is indeed the secret of God's arrangements with Israel) in the ninth of Daniel, the seventy sevens. We know that one "seven" of years remains yet in the future, to pass upon Israel in their land and in their city, before the great six-fold eternal blessing of Daniel 9:24 comes to that nation. This time is spoken of in Daniel 12:7 as a "time, times (dual) and a half"-or three and one-half. This will be the time according to this Scripture when the Gentiles will conclude their "breaking in pieces the power of the holy people."

It becomes important to consider carefully these two time-measures in Revelation 11:1-19, the forty-two months of Revelation 11:2 and the 1260 days of Revelation 11:3. Of course, these two periods are equal in duration, but the question is whether they cover the same span or are successive. However, before we can consider this question intelligently, we should read further on in our chapter. And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two, hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire.

Here we have the most astonishing task ever committed to men-God's last two great prophets, His "witnesses," before the earth is given over to Satan and to Antichrist.

Let it be at once observed, though it may not be pleasing, that the question is not who these witnesses are. If that had been important here, God would plainly have told us. Some would make them Enoch and Elijah; some Moses and Elijah. We know indeed that Elijah is coming before the great and terrible day of the Lord, from Malachi 4:1-6, and from our Lord's words to the disciples descending from the transfiguration mount; but this at present should not occupy our vision, but on the contrary, the fearful realities before our eyes! Let us be concerned here with God's words, not with our surmises.

Suddenly, in the "great city," Jerusalem, now called according to Revelation 11:8, "spiritually … Sodom and Egypt," two divinely sent messengers appear. Iniquity, pleasure-seeking, godlessness is rampant-what could the words "Sodom and Egypt" stand for, otherwise? The Jews, with untold millions of money will have built up a city where, according to Revelation 11:9, "peoples and tribes and tongues and nations" like very Babylon, are present. Yet those Jews will have built a temple in the name of Jehovah their God, although not really knowing Him,-and the majority of the nation will be ready to make a covenant with Antichrist! The fact that today, in the midst of utter godlessness, Jewish synagogues as well as "Christian" cathedrals keep springing up, surely signifies that the building of a temple of God in a city that is spiritually called "Sodom and Egypt" is a possibility. The Lord Jesus even acknowledges the temple that old reprobate Herod, the Edomite, the Esau-man, had built (or so enlarged as practically to build), as His "Father's house," at the beginning of His ministry, and "My house" at the end; only finally He leaves it "desolate" in Matthew 23:1-39 when they had rejected Him officially. In the midst of the gross darkness that is covering the earth and the peoples, before Jehovah has risen upon Israel (Isaiah 60:2), there is this temple; and doubtless to it will these two witnesses be sent, just as the Lord Jesus preached in the temple, and the apostles after Him, even Paul, did likewise,-though it was "desolate," as regards God's

presence in it. The newspapers and radios will one day be crowded full of this news: “Two prophets appear in Jerusalem clothed like Elijah of old in sackcloth and crying out that judgment is at hand!”

Day after day the excitement will increase as these witnesses give their testimony. And what will that testimony be?

1. They will say that the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been rejected, is the “Lord of all the earth.” They will say (as said Elijah of old, in sudden apparition, at the court of Ahab), “As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” We see from the last phrase of Revelation 11:18, that they are addressing those that “destroy the earth.”[66]

[66] “God is resuming again His place as Lord over the earth. The two witnesses render testimony to this Lordship-to the Lord over the earth; not to the Father, nor to the heavenly glory, nor to the Lord of Heaven” (Darby). It should be remembered that God had committed rule upon earth to Israel; they having wholly failed. He gave it to Nebuchadnezzar and the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. We are reading in Revelation 11:1-19 of the ending of Gentile times and the transferring again of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). Israel must pass through the time of Jacob’s trouble, through The Great Tribulation; and the Son of David, who is now waiting at God’s right hand, must come to make Israel’s title and tenure good. It is a dreadful crisis which we are studying. .

Man, under Satan, has in every sphere of his being denied, and will to every possible limit, deny, God’s lordship of this earth. As concerning Christ, man has said, “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance.” Men say in their hearts, “There is no God”; for they desire none. The absolute antipathy of this world for God-oh, it is wholly awful!

2. They testify unsparingly of human wickedness to men’s very faces. You have probably never heard a preacher that told you to your face just how bad you were. I hope you have, but I doubt it. These witnesses will tell to the teeth of a horrid godlessness which is ready to worship the Devil, just what they are before God!

3. They will testify of the character of the judgments just past (Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13 and Revelation 9:1-21) as having been directly from God, and warn of coming judgments infinitely more terrible. So did every prophet, and so will they.

4. They will decry the blasphemous claims the wild beast will shortly be making (Revelation 13:1-18), that man is to be deified! They will denounce all the goodness of man as a lie!

5. They will testify that Jerusalem, although the holy city in God’s purposes, is spiritually “Sodom and Egypt,” and will announce coming judgments upon the city and people. They will tell the Jews that they “killed the Lord Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16), and that He will yet be the King over all the earth.

Now such witnessing as this brings out men’s wickedness. People fairly rave to destroy these witnesses! Many evidently attempt it, just as two presumptuous bands approached Elijah in 2 Kings 1:1-18 to their destruction.

Divine authority of such character and world-wide extent as was never committed to men, is given these witnesses. Elijah indeed shut heaven to the whole earth for three years and six months so that it rained not. But now if any even desire to hurt these witnesses-“fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies.” Not only do they also shut heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy, but, like Moses, they turn the water into blood! They smite the earth with every plague as often as they shall desire.

We emphasize the view that not the identity of these witnesses, but the character and history of their testimony is what the Spirit of God brings out here. [67]

[67] It would be well to reflect, for example, regarding Enoch, that he trusted God’s Word that he would not see death. So he will not, we are sure, see that Word fail!

Let us reflect upon the awful gap between this world and God, despite the “religious” forms we see about us. There is utter hatred of all that is really of God, and it is daily increasing. Hath not Judaism slain its thousands, and Romanism its tens of thousands, of God’s witnesses? Finally will be sent these two-the last prophets earth shall have from God! And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

Let us note first of all that these witnesses will finish their testimony. Every one of God’s witnesses, every believer, is “immortal until his work is done.” No servants of God ever encountered such fearful opposition and utter odds as they, yet they finish their testimony. Satan can do nothing without divine permission.

Next we read words that transport us over into Revelation 13:1-18 and into Revelation 17:1-18 -of the Wild-beast[68] that cometh out of the abyss.

[68] Greek, therion. This word is first used in Mark 1:13, when our Lord was with the “wild beasts” in the wilderness. Its meaning in Revelation may be seen from Revelation 6:8. The word indicates a beast of prey, of rapacity, of cunning, of unreasoning violence, acting according to its own cruel nature. It is God’s word for the last two great enemies of mankind as seen in chapter 13, and mentioned in Revelation 11:7 in anticipation. This awful being, the last head of the Roman Empire revived, and Satan’s very counterpart of the risen Christ, will be given power at last over these mighty witnesses of God, to “make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.”

Thus, before the eyes of deluded humanity, who have chosen falsehood, will be enacted a scene of apparent, complete victory of Satan’s Christ over God’s holy prophets. As our Lord said, “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” It will be in the very city where, as we read in verse 8, “their Lord was crucified,” that these two mightiest of all God’s messengers among the sons of men will be ignominiously slain. (Their Lord also seemed in this same city to pass under utter eclipse- yea, and did so-when He died at the hands of sinful men.)

Now comes the real revelation of the heart of man: glee, horrid, insane, inhuman, hellish, ghoulish glee! There is actual delight at the death of God's witnesses- utter unbounded delight! Newspapers have whole front pages of jubilation. Excursions are run into Jerusalem to see the unburied corpses of these prophets of God: peoples, tribes, tongues and nations look upon their bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their corpses[69] to be laid in a tomb.

[69] The singular number of ptoma is used first, to emphasize their condition,-"their wreck," as a German commentator puts it; but the plural afterwards when their individual bodies are distinguished.

These two witnesses, for 1260 days, in utter self-denial, clothed in the sackcloth of humiliation, lamentation, prayer, mourning and warning, had cried out on God's behalf. Now the tables are turned, and "they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry"! A regular Christmastime-of-Hell ensues: "They shall send gifts one to another." (Do not believe for a moment, that the gift-giving of the world at the present "Christmas-tide" has the least thing to do with divine grace!)

Notice now the rush to Satan's banner (the Beast), the moment he is allowed to kill God's witnesses. There is no moral or spiritual restraint left-no qualm of conscience! You must learn to believe the worst about humanity, or join the Devil's theology finally!

Now comes a change: And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Like their Lord in suffering and shame, they are now made like Him in resurrection and exaltation. They go up to heaven in the cloud and (what was not true of Christ), their enemies behold them! Great fear has already fallen upon them that beheld them, with the breath of life from God in them, and standing upon their feet. Now that utter denial of heaven, which has even now begun to spread over the earth, and will increase to awful proportions in those days, is itself denied by the mounting up to heaven, in the sight of men, of these two witnesses! Christ's resurrection comforted those who "saw him after he was risen"; the resurrection and ascension to heaven of these witnesses will verily terrify their foes! And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand names of men; and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. Four things follow in that very hour:

1. A great earthquake: God "shakes like a hut" this whole guilty earth, as He did at the time our Lord Jesus was slain by men, in the same city, Jerusalem.

2. One-tenth of this "great" rebuilt Jerusalem falls. There is yet to come, under the seventh bowl of wrath (Revelation 16:18-20), the greatest earthquake that has ever been. Be it noted here/however, that earthquakes are one of God's judgments (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11). Five distinct ones are mentioned in The Revelation. Men have forgotten to fear the God who declares in Isaiah 2:20-21, "Men shall cast away their idols … go into the caverns of the rocks, and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake mightily the earth." What does the modern scientist know about

earthquakes, after all his “investigation”? In the last great earthquake of Revelation 16:1-21, the cities of the Gentiles will fall. But do they believe it as they build their skyscrapers today?

3. Seven thousand are killed. When Elijah thought himself alone, God spoke of a remnant of seven thousand whom He had preserved. Here, however, matters are reversed. There is judgment-seven thousand are killed. We cannot avoid the belief that the number is significant. When Moses avenged the holiness of God upon the worshippers of the golden calf and the breaking of the law-three thousand were killed. When Peter preached the first sermon under grace-three thousand were saved. The form of expression in Revelation 11:1-19 is peculiar in the Greek: “names of men seven thousand.” Many have believed that this indicates prominent men. Seiss remarks, “They would not allow burial of the slain witnesses, and now they themselves are buried alive in the ruins of their own houses, and in hell forever.”

4. There is a general fright and a giving glory to the God of heaven. Let us notice at once that this is the only record of any public, human regard of God on earth, between the Church days in chapters 2 and 3, and the coming of Christ in the Day of Wrath and the setting up of the Millennium in 19. This is awfully significant! Notice further, that here in chapter 11, there is no ground to believe that it was a general, gracious operation. “There was the general effect of unrepentant religion-but the testimony not received-for that would have broken their wills. Fear acted on them externally to honor God formally, but only as One in heaven.” Again another writer calls attention to the demons confessing Christ’s deity, standing aghast at His approaching judgments, but showing not an element of change in their character: “When men have sinned their day of gracious visitation away; fighting, killing and glorying in the destruction of God’s prophets, they are not likely to be suddenly transformed into saints by the constraints and terrors of the day of doom, although obliged to confess that it is the invincible God of heaven that is dealing with them.” The second Woe is past; behold the third Woe cometh quickly.

Thus ends the second Woe, an awful time indeed! Men smitten by every plague at the hands of two of their fellow men, whom they could not help but know were God’s own, direct witnesses. So we read, “the third Woe cometh quickly.” This will be the handing over of all men to Satan, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 -“because they received not … the truth.” It will be the awful story of Revelation 13:1-18 -which we must duly and solemnly study.

Meanwhile it may be well to resume the question of whether the forty-two months and 1260 days of this chapter run concurrently or are consecutive.

Let us observe that if the Beast kills the two witnesses at the end of the forty-two months of his career, it would be just at the time of our Lord’s second coming; for we read in Matthew 24:29-30 :

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” But here in Revelation 11:1-19 instead of the awful advent of the Lord from heaven “immediately” after the killing of these witnesses, we read of a hideous celebration of their death by the nations and tribes of earth. True, after three and one-half days, these witnesses are raised and taken back to heaven, but there is no hint that the advent of the Lord takes place

“immediately” as Matthew 24:1-51 calls for, if this 1260 days be the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week.

We do not find either, in the account of the fearful history of the Beast in Revelation 13:1-18, which continues for “forty-two months,” any account of, or any place for, the prophesying of these two witnesses. For forty-two months “a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” is given to the Beast to blaspheme God, His name, His tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven. Also “to make war with the saints, and to overcome them”; and to have “authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him”-save the elect (Revelation 13:5-8). Furthermore, the godly Israelites of those days were distinctly warned by the Lord to flee “the abomination that maketh desolate” (the person and image of the Beast in the temple of God). The impression I feel very strongly from Revelation 11:7 is that it is at the beginning of the Beast’s successful blasphemous career, that he kills these two witnesses. From the object of the prophesying of these two witnesses, we see also that there must be a preparatory work done in the heart of the Israelite of those days. The extent of Israel’s present blindness and alienation from Jehovah, and of her utter worldliness and commercialistic idolatry, is too vast and awful to be measured by us. That these two witnesses have a ministry of judgment on the whole earth and to apostate Israel, as apostate, we see at once, but we must remember also two things: First, that they are the “two olive trees” which supply the oil of the Spirit by God’s grace and providence to that wretched, but true Israel, which really is the remnant. See Zechariah 4:2-3; Zechariah 4:6; Zechariah 4:11-14 (R. V.)-a wonderful passage! Second, that these two witnesses are “candle-sticks” as well as “olive trees” (Revelation 11:4). The Church will have gone to heaven. No one on earth yet has faith, although many have been sealed as the Lord’s. Luke 18:8 puts a question which must be answered in the negative: “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” After the Church is gone, the earth waits Israel’s conversion. We read in Isaiah 60:2 :

“For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

Now Israel will not themselves be converted until they see the “sign of the Son of man (that is, Himself) in heaven” according to Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:1.

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced. … 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.” So that, all things considered, I am compelled to believe that the two witnesses will prophesy during the first half of Daniel’s seventieth week. Their witnessing will lay the foundation of the fear of Jehovah in the remnant (although Jehovah will not be known, nor reveal Himself, until the end of the week, as the One “whom they have pierced”). The Days of the Voice of the Seventh Angel And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations

were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great: and to destroy them that destroy the earth.

Although this passage seems so simple and plain, yet for three reasons we should mark it closely.

1. It marks a crisis in God's dealings which must be fully understood and remembered as we proceed in this great book.

2. It gives God's own outline of the events that follow, so that we know the things He Himself emphasizes.

3. Preliminary meditation upon these themes (especially divine wrath, the rage of the nations and the "taking" by God of His own great power), will clear our minds in these days of Satanic fog, to understand the delineation in the succeeding chapters of the matters given in outline in our passage. Our lesson extends to "the destroying of them that are destroying the earth," therefore it includes the overthrow of the Beast and his armies at the end of Revelation 19:1-21 and the destruction of Gog and Magog at the end of the Millennium in Revelation 20:1-15; and, inasmuch as it covers the time of the dead to be judged, spans the great white throne judgment itself. The seventh angel's trumpet therefore, brings us to the portals of the New Creation-to Revelation 21:1-27.

We need to notice at once that the voices in heaven, and the twenty-four elders, celebrate the great events both in realization and in anticipation: in realization, because, at the seventh angel's sounding, God's whole administrative attitude changes, from hidden, to openly exercised, authority; in anticipation, because the actual subjugation of the enemies is yet to be accomplished. The "great voices in heaven" said, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ."

Note the word kingdom here, not "kingdoms," as in the King James Version. The verse means that the whole dominion of the world has, at the sounding of the seventh angel, become God's in actuality; that is, in the exercise of the power He always has had. Hitherto, in the divine program, it has not been fitting to pull the lever releasing the resistless flood of kingly energy. The sealed book was given to Christ in Revelation 5:1-14 with the acclamation of the universe. The succeeding chapters (Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21), showed certain visitations of divine displeasure, but God's Christ remained in heaven, the souls under the altar are commanded to wait. Men, meanwhile, repented not. Then the angel of Revelation 10:1-11 most solemnly announces that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel" God will finish His mystery and will reveal all His authority, according to all that the prophets foretold. When for example, Israel compassed the walls of Jericho, blowing warning ram's horns each day, there was a moment on the seventh day, when they had compassed the city the seventh time, that there came a long blast from the ram's horn, and God said "shout," and the walls fell flat. This may serve as an illustration of God's ways, both in judgment and in training His people.

Until the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15), what all heaven with holy eagerness had long looked forward to, had not been done-the taking of His great power by the blessed and only Potentate. And now hear in exultant acclamation: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign unto the ages of the ages"!

We all have seen the celebration of a successful political party after an election. The “campaign” is over; the stress and struggle, the, at times apparently, doubtful issue; the intense devotion to the candidate for office; and now the battle is won, jubilation fills the air! Relief in victory and hope of the future, fill men’s very hearts!

So, when at last “delay” is over, and the long, long ages of conflict between light and darkness are about to end, heaven with great voices of utter delight bursts forth into celebration!

We do not well, unless we also enter into the very spirit of this rejoicing. Our Lord taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.” All the hosts of heaven are waiting today the sounding of this seventh trumpet, with an eagerness of desire and a holy consuming longing we can hardly imagine. In utter, absolute devotedness to their God and to His blessed government and purposes, they have served through these ages since rebellion began in heaven, with jealous hope, every day, every hour, every moment, looking for the coming of the day when God will take over the government of this rebellious earth-take it over in power; Take His Great Power and Reign. The prophetic account of that glad day is given us, that we may join by faith in the scene that shall “soon come to pass,” and may rejoice with those that shall rejoice, in that blessed consummation!

Notice, first, that the elders, themselves already crowned, cannot therewith be content till God takes His great power, and exercises it. Rapture and worship then thrill them!

Again, they address God in His full revealed name as “Adonai-Elohim-Shaddai, who art and who wast,” no longer adding, “who is to come”! This act of taking His great power and reigning, has ended the long night of mystery, where, amid great trials, faith held fast to “who art to come.” Now it is in manifestation, heaven has stepped into a new stage of blessing! Our God, who is and who was, is reigning at last! He has taken His great power.

Once again, note that the words “didst reign,” show how definite, in the view of these elders, is that act of God by which He lays aside all obscure providential government to assume His royal prerogatives. The construction is remarkable: “Thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign.”

Let us now study humbly the five-fold results of God’s “taking” His power.

1. “The nations were wroth.” The anger of earth at heaven’s beginning royal interruption is unbounded. It is a great subject of prophecy-”why do the nations rage?” (Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 83:1-18; Joel 3:9-13; Zechariah 14:2-4). The hatred of fallen man against divine control began with Cain, in Genesis 4:1-26. Though a murderer, he utterly resented Jehovah’s interference. Saul pursues David, God’s elect king, like a partridge in the mountains. Absalom will be a patricide, ere he will submit. Ahab and Jezebel hunt Elijah in every kingdom on earth, once the prophet takes control of the elements! Why did Israel slay the prophets of the Lord? Only because they asserted Jehovah’s authority! Nebuchadnezzar is full of fury against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, if they dare disobey his blasphemous decree. Haman would have not only Mordecai, but all the Jews, killed, to appease his wounded vanity: for Mordecai “bowed not down.” The Jews spit in the face of the Lord Jesus saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” When it reaches Nero’s ears that Paul preaches “another king, one Jesus,” he must have him back to a second imprisonment at Rome and cut off his head. Look at the bloodstained path over which the martyr-saints have come, who dared claim rights for God and His Son in this world! Today men will

tolerate a preacher if he lets them alone. They can even patronize a preacher who does not touch their wills. Religion is decent, but surrender to God is intolerable to the nations of this world.

Now, in our lesson, when God ends all this time of long-suffering, and steps out, claiming in power that obedience to Him upon earth that is due Him from all His creatures, humanity will be found a hotbed of rebellion. It will be like striking a vast hornet's nest! Do you know that it is a public scandal in this universe-the history of this world? Men have so long been let alone, or visited by only occasional displays of divine power, that there is "no fear of God before their eyes." Look today at Russia, the anti-God nation. But the denial of God in Russia is but a hint of what all nations will shortly display, as we shall find in Revelation 13:1-18. When man's long carnival and carousal of selfishness is confronted by a will that is resistless, so that nations must bow to it or be stricken off the earth-then shall we see the events that lead to "the war of the great day of God, the Almighty"; and to the thousand years of iron-rod rule so lightly called "the Millennium," even by unconverted people today. It will be a time when this earth will obey the will of another than themselves!

2. "And thy wrath came."

God's wrath has been postponed so long that men deny altogether a God capable of anger and vengeance. Paul disposes of this in one searching question: "Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? Be it not! for then how shall God judge the world?" (Romans 3:5-6). God is Love; but God also is Light; and He hates sin with all the infinite eternal abhorrence of His infinitely holy being and nature! And He has already "appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). "Unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish."[70]

[70] Note the fearful progress in these words: wrath-stored up but possibly appeasable; indignation-more personal, at sin persisted in; tribulation-the attack, finally, upon the impenitent, of poured-forth fury; anguish-the eternal, terrible effect!

Perhaps the truest test of a doctrine, next to the reason why Christ shed His blood (and directly connected therewith), is, does it set forth a God capable of hatred of sin as sin (not merely for its disastrous effects upon creatures), and capable of visiting personal and eternal wrath upon those who choose sin as their way, who "loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil"?

We speak of this, because we must get ready, now, if we are to go on with The Revelation, to hear and believe the facts regarding the wrath of God. The "God" of Modernism, Universalism, Russellism, Spiritism, Christian Science, in short, the "God" the world dreams of, does not exist. The "god of this age" is Satan. He has blinded the minds of them that believe not. Men are in a fool's paradise who prate of the God of the Bible not being such a one as will punish sin! Wrath is indeed waiting, in this day of grace, but "Thy wrath came" will shortly be fulfilled.

3. "And the time of the dead to be judged." The "coming" of divine wrath involves that measuring out to each (unsaved) creature, that recompense due, in view of light had, and attitude and deeds. This is called judgment. Only the unbelieving will be judged, as we see in John 5:24, R. V., and John 3:18. Thus only the lost are in view in the words, "the time of the dead to be judged." For the

sin question, for believers, was brought up at the cross of Calvary; and a judgment day was held there, with all the infinite demands of God's justice against sin fully allowed, and fully and forever met! He "shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation."

"Payment God will not twice demand- First, at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine!"

4. "And the time to give their reward." This seventh trumpet ushers in the glad day of rewards!

"To thy servants the prophets." The prophets are first; and do we wonder? The prophets of God were first in time, and peculiar in duty and suffering. The word "prophet" means, one who speaks for another (Exodus 4:15-16 illustrates it). These Old Testament men of God gave out God's message to their fellows at all and any cost! Only read such experiences as fell to the lot of Elijah, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea and Amos [71]Shall they not be rewarded? They shall, and first.

[71] Read, if you would walk with a prophet, Jeremiah 1:4-10 -his commission; his sorrow over sinning Israel in Jeremiah 4:19-22; Jeremiah 8:18-22; Jeremiah 9:1; Jeremiah 9:2; Jeremiah 9:10; and the whole book of Lamentations; his terrible loneliness, Jeremiah 15:10; Jeremiah 20:7-8; his burden to speak his God's message despite all, Jeremiah 20:9; Jeremiah 10:19-22; his persecution and suffering, Jeremiah 38:1-13. Hath not God all these things in His heart marvelously to repay? The prophets are peculiarly dear-all of them, to their God. All heaven values and remembers them, though earth hated and killed them. Blessed coming day-wait for it!

"And to the saints." Probably all the saints of God are here included. The rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18) occurs, we believe, at Revelation 4:1. We know that Paul, Moses, David and Abraham are all looking to a "day" of rewards. That day has not come yet, though they have been eagerly awaiting it for centuries. Rewards are connected with the kingdom, as Paul shows in 2 Timothy 4:18. We know "the day of Christ" is connected with the rapture; "the day of the Lord" with The Revelation. But let us reflect that the seventh angel sounds at least three and one-half years before the revelation of Christ with His saints, as in Revelation 19:11-16. The seventh angel sounds before The Great Tribulation, into which the Church does not go. But we feel that God, dealing as He does according to works in the matter of rewards and only by grace in the matter of salvation, justly postpones giving these rewards unto this time-giving the prophets precedence, then all those called "saints" (as having separating light and privilege); and then,

"And to them that fear thy name, the small and the great." Here are those (like the "righteous" ones of Matthew 25:37-39), who did not have much light, but yet "feared the Lord."

It is a comfort to the heart, here, also, to find the "small" named before the "great": (contrast the judgment of Revelation 20:12, where the order is natural, not gracious).

5. "And to destroy them that destroy the earth." The seventh angel's trumpet does not say that all these things have been brought to pass; nor (as do the prophets) merely that they shall come to pass; but, as Alford says, "the hour is come for it all to take place."

Man, since the Fall, has been a destroyer of God's earth. "Destruction and misery are in their ways." It is said there were nine Troys; Homer's Troy is the second, built on the ruins of the first!

Also, man has appropriated all those inventions of “science” which he can to selfishness, and especially to war. The time will strike to stop all this. The destroyers shall be destroyed. “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea”-that is, resistlessly! The Heavenly Temple and Ark: The Faithful God. And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail. This passage, if simply believed, becomes a key to seven chapters,- Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21.

1. There is a literal temple in heaven. The one on earth was a pattern of the things in heaven (Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 9:22). [72]

[72] Moses made a pattern of the things in the heavens-“the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 9:24). If there were no sanctuary, no ark, literally, in heaven, of what did Moses make a pattern? And what mean such words as Revelation 11:19 : “There was opened the temple of God that is in heaven”? That there will be no temple in the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22) is just as much to be expected as that there will be a temple, or formal worship, for others than the Bride, (the wife of the Lamb). “And there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.” If these are “symbolical,” symbolical of what?

I have sometimes been asked “What became of the ark of the covenant when the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar? It surely must be preserved somewhere.” Human thoughts are surely not God’s thoughts, for He distinctly tells us (Jeremiah 3:16) that in the future kingdom the ark shall not be remembered nor come into mind. Of course, the Apocrypha must have Jeremiah running and hiding that ark! (II Maccabees 2:1, 8). Why is it that the very folks who thus inquire beyond what is written, concerning the temple of old, are filled with doubt concerning what plainly is written of the temple in heaven?

2. The real “ark of his covenant” which declares His purposes and His faithfulness, is there.

3. This ark’s pattern was given to Israel, not to the Church: the Church does not have to do with earthly temple-worship, nor with those governmental affairs of earth with which God has connected Israel.

4. The ark of Israel’s temple disappeared (for it was all typical of things to come); but when God begins again to deal with Israel and those governmental affairs with which Israel is bound up, the real ark appears in the opened temple on high.

5. The ark of old was the place of God’s dwelling, in the Holy of Holies, with His people. But here we see the ark connected with the putting forth of judgment, - lightnings, thunders, an earthquake. For God had said to Moses, when He renewed His covenant with Israel, after the great breach, of the calf-worship, that He would do thus: “Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people (Israel) I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation … for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee.” “In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them” (Exodus 34:10; Exodus 32:34). God is here in this part of The Revelation, showing that He mill do as He has said: therefore is His temple in heaven opened, and the ark-symbol of His covenant-keeping, seen.

6. This judgment-action of God will involve all the earth: for Israel are to be established as God's elect royal nation,-but punished first. And all nations will be brought up against Jerusalem to battle, at Armageddon.

7. Therefore, Revelation 11:19; Revelation 15:5-8 become luminous: God is acting in judgment, from His temple in heaven, and according to His covenanted arrangements, to restore the Kingdom to Israel, albeit by means so severe as to be bitter, indeed, for the Seer, who loved his nation, to know.

01.10. Chapter 10: the Woman, the Dragon, the Man-Child- Rev_12:1-17

Chapter 10: the Woman, the Dragon, the Man-Child- Revelation 12:1-17 And a great sign[73] was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered.

[73] The Greek word semeion, translated “sign” is used 77 times in the New Testament, and generally means an object set forth, or action done to accredit a person, or an utterance. Our Lord’s miracles are thus often named (John 20:30); and those of the enemy also (Matthew 24:24 and Revelation 13:13-14). But the sense of the word here in Revelation 12:1; Revelation 12:3, is to set forth in picture, the facts and counsels as they are before God. The woman thus shows God’s counsels and plans concerning Israel and Christ, as regards rule on earth; and the dragon in the character he bears before God; and his hate of, and opposition to, God’s plan to have Christ rule the earth. For the whole question, from Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21, is, Who shall rule, Satan or God? God’s Christ, or Satan’s? That this woman represents Israel is evident, for:

1. The place in the prophecy is Israelitish: The two witnesses have been stationed at Jerusalem, where temple-worship is again going on.

2. The words, “sun,” “moon,” and “stars” immediately remind us of Joseph’s dream, Genesis 37:9 -“Behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me,”-a forecast of Israel, in the last days.

3. The Church cannot be spoken of in this language, for she was chosen “before the foundation of the world” and her glory is not at all describable in terms of this present creation. She has union with Him who has gone “far above all the heavens”; whereas this woman’s connection is plainly with what we call the “solar system,”-that is, as viewed from earth.

4. That she is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a twelve-star crown, indicates the subjection of earth to her governmental glory: “The splendor and fullness of governmental authority on earth,” belong, by God’s sovereign appointment, to Israel: and the restoring of the Kingdom to Israel, under Christ, is the subject before us in this part of The Revelation 5:1-14. Israel is described in the prophets as travailing in birth; the Church never is (Micah 5:2-3; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 7:14).

6. Israel, not the Church, gave birth to Christ (Romans 9:1-33; Micah 5:1-15; Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 7:14). In no possible sense did the Church do so. Seiss, generally very helpful, most strenuously asserts the Woman to be “the Church Universal”-whom he calls “the Mother of us all,” etc. But this is a Romish relict, nothing else. The “church of all ages” is a pleasant theological dream, wholly

unscriptural. No wonder Mr. Seiss proceeds to call the Child “the whole regenerated purchase of the Savior’s blood,” though how the Mother and the Child can be thus the same company, even the author’s utmost vehemence fails to convince you! (Seiss: Lectures 26 and 28.)

7. It is very evident, and is most important to recognize, that this woman’s real history is on earth, persecuted by the enemy. (See Revelation 12:13-16.) It is the sign that is seen in heaven, while her experience proceeds on earth. When seen as a “sign,” we see God’s glorious purposes regarding her,-heavenly purposes, but to enter upon them, she is seen in a process of earthly persecution.

8. The subsequent earthly history (Revelation 12:1-17) of the woman corresponds exactly with what other prophets tell us concerning the trouble of Israel in the last days.

9. The period of that trouble, as we see in Revelation 12:6, coincides also with the last of Daniel’s seventieth week-The Great Tribulation of three and one-half years. And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man-child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days. In this second “sign,” or symbolic vision, of this great passage we have: (1) The dragon, his greatness and murderousness; his regal form; perfect wisdom (seven heads) and almost perfect governmental power (ten horns) soon to be developed in the revived Roman Empire as the Beast of chapter 13; next, his fatal influence in drawing to their ruin a third of the angels; then his devouring enmity toward the child of the woman. (2) The birth of the Male-child destined to rule with iron-rod the nations, and the taking up to God and to His throne (for the then present) of the Child. (3) The flight for 1260 days of the woman to a divinely prepared protection, and her “nourishment” there.

Although, be it noted, he is here called “great” and “red” and a “dragon,” in Ezekiel 28:1-26 he seems to be the highest creature ever made, the anointed one of the cherubim, “full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty,” probably leading the worship of the universe. Even Michael, the archangel, “durst not bring against him a railing judgment,” because he was of a higher order of being than angels-a “dignity” (Jude 1:8-9).

Moreover, he is seen as red. This is the color of murder and of blood. Our Lord says of him in John 8:44, “he was a murderer from the beginning”-awful history! Pride caused his apostasy; and utter hatred, deceit and violence continue his story, even after the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-8). [74]

[74] Let us remember, however, that although the Devil was a murderer from the beginning, yet God commands Ezekiel to take up a lamentation over him (Ezekiel 28:11-12). God “delighteth not in the death of any,” although He will fulfill Revelation 20:10).

Also, he is called a dragon. In this is a picture of the hideousness and horror that sin brings. Contrast the beauty in Ezekiel 28:1-26 with this shuddering word “dragon.” This word is used only in The Revelation, and occurs thirteen times, twelve of these concerning Satan. [75]

[75] “The dragon figured prominently in ancient and medieval mythologies as an embodiment of evil principle. It has been superstitiously dreaded and even worshipped, as in China, where it is the imperial emblem. It is commonly represented as a large winged serpent, with a crested head and powerful claws. In classical mythology, a dangerous, often a supernatural serpent” (Standard Dictionary). “The Hebrew word tannin or tannim is rendered by Greek, Drakon in the Septuagint. It seems to refer to any great monster, either of land or sea, as in Genesis 1:21; Job 7:12; Lamentations 4:3” (Bib. Cycl. McClintock and Strong). It is striking that just as inner Buddhism names its deity Sheitan, although not allowing the name to be pronounced because of dread; so the dragon was worshipped under that form and name in Babylon and many other lands. This shows how God compels this world to acknowledge whom they serve! Doubtless Satan hates to be portrayed as a monster with great jaws and claws and serrated tail. But the dragon legends of the nations simply support the Word of God!

If we compare him with the Beast of Revelation 13:1, we read: “A beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems.” We find readily, the likeness to, and the distinction between, Satan and his final world-power developed, by Satan and headed up by the fearful man of Revelation 13:18. In the dragon the seven heads (complete wisdom, Satanic sagacity, and “the concentration of earthly power and wisdom in cruel despotic exercise”) wear the diadems, while the ten horns, (since the head controls the horn which springs from it) set forth what will be the utmost form of his diabolical exercise of power. Now in Revelation 13:1, while the seven heads are there, it is the ten horns that wear the diadems. Satan, who is pictured in the dragon, has projected his plan of universal earth-rule by ten kings, who are to wear the crowns! He sees to that! It is the final form of the fourth world-power of Daniel 7:1-28. And how fearful the thought that the earth will, at that time, be so wholly given over to Satan (whom it chose instead of Christ) that the very dragon-form of seven heads and ten horns will appear in God’s description of that revived Fourth Empire which is coming! Compare Revelation 12:3; Revelation 13:1.

Again we read concerning the dragon, that “his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” This seems a direct indication of that proportion of the angels of God who are perverted by him into utter ruin. As we read in Daniel 8:10; Daniel 8:24, of Satan’s Christ, “It waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host and some of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them”; and “he shall destroy the mighty ones (angelic beings) and the holy people” (Israel). When we remember the hundred million angels, and millions upon millions after that, of Revelation 5:11, who remained true to God, we get some conception of the host, who by Satan’s “traffic” (Ezekiel 28:16) were drawn away from the adoration of God to idolatry of this highest creature of His. The actual casting down of Satan’s angels with him is recorded a little later in our chapter Revelation 12:7-9. The dragon’s desire is to devour the child, evidently knowing His destiny that He is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. (Of course, this is Christ, and none other.) Satan has always known from Genesis 3:15 God’s plan-that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. All Satanic activities are carried on under the double motive of ambition to rule and be worshipped, and, hatred toward the One whom God has chosen to take the kingdom Satan has usurped. The dragon, then, is Satan (Revelation 12:9). We have here the beginning of the end of the great warfare between God and His adversary begun in Eden. There the Serpent beguiled the woman, and God declared He would put enmity between the Serpent and the Woman, and between her Seed, and his seed. Now her Seed is

Christ, and none other, as Paul shows in Galatians 3:16. “Unto us a child is born” cries Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7) “of the increase of whose government and of peace there should be no end,” which is the exact subject before us in Revelation 12:1-17. Satan’s enmity and jealousy was against Christ, who was to “rule all the nations”: for had not Satan himself been their prince and god? This scene in Revelation 12:1-17 (like Zechariah 9:9-10), looks only at Christ as coming Ruler, and disregards all other history. Just as Zechariah saw Him ride into Jerusalem, lowly and meek, yet Zion’s King, and speaking peace to the nations, with dominion unto the ends of the earth, so with this passage (Revelation 12:5). Zechariah looked forward to His First Advent, John looks back to it: and both look on to His ruling-to the Second Advent. With Isaiah, Christ is the virgin-born Immanuel, the Child born who will have the government on His shoulder; Zechariah sees Him ride into Jerusalem upon the lowly ass-yet has Him ruling (making no mark of His rejection by Israel); John sees Him born unto Israel, despite the dragon’s efforts through Herod, the chief priests, and Rome; and then caught up to God and to His throne, as One that shall rule all the nations with an iron rod (without considering how long He shall have to wait in heaven before He “receives the Kingdom”).

It is necessary to remember that God emphasizes the fact in Revelation 12:1-17 that He is speaking in sign-language. Prophecy often speaks thus, noting desired facts, irrespective of chronological arrangement. So we have only to view those other Scriptures that concern the great end before us in Revelation 12:1-17, the setting forth of God’s King in triumph (though having to wait upon God’s throne) despite all Satan’s malice, to see who this Man-child must be. The Church is to be caught up “in the clouds” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18); but it is nowhere said of her that she is “caught up unto God, and unto his throne.” This place belongs alone to our Lord Jesus, according to Revelation 3:21. The Church will indeed share Christ’s future throne, but He only sits on His Father’s throne, “on the right hand of God.” To claim that the child is a victorious company of the Church, while the rest are pursued by the Devil through the great tribulation days, has, we are persuaded as its root, self-righteousness; as its fruit, division of the Body: and as its character, terrible blindness as to what God’s sovereign grace is. “I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,” said Paul.

“The things which are (the Church period), and the things which shall come to pass after these” (Revelation 1:19) is our Lord’s division of this book; and we must not depart from it. Therefore, we are not looking for Church things in Revelation 12:1-17, but on the contrary, we have from Revelation 11:1-19 in the testimony of the two witnesses, as well as in the measuring of the temple, and the designation of the city as that city where “their Lord was crucified,” an indication that we are on Israelitish ground.

Now there are three scenes in Revelation 12:1-17 : First, Christ born to Israel, and ascended, despite the dragon, to await His destined rule of the nations; second, the casting out of Satan and his angels from all place in heaven, and the joy of the heavenly throng over this; third, the wrathful persecution of the Woman (Israel) and her Seed, and her divine protection for 1260 days-The great tribulation. The woman flees to “the wilderness.” If we do not understand prophecy, we make Israel’s fleeing immediately consequent upon our Lord’s ascension. But instead of this, we find the Jews in the Book of Acts long and steadfastly resisting and persecuting those who are really the godly remnant of Israel-those who had believed on Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

Therefore, we must see between Revelation 12:5-6 of Revelation 12:1-17, the whole stretch of history from our Lord's ascension to the yet future Great Tribulation; for the woman is nourished under divine protection 1,260 days: the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week. [76]

[76] Historical interpretations of these 1,260 days, which seek to apply it to church history, simply reveal neglect or ignorance of, the great principle of prophetical interpretation to which we have referred. It is my profound and increasing conviction that "the historical interpretation" of The Revelation is not only wholly astray, but is a great stumbling block to the understanding of the book. It ignores our Lord's plain outline in Revelation 1:19 (See Greek or Revised Version, and follow the phrase "meta tauta" through the book). And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.

Michael, as we know from Jude 1:9, is the archangel; (although other "chief princes" are there, Daniel 10:13). We also find from the last verse of Daniel 10:1-21, and the first verse of Daniel 12:1-13, that Michael has been assigned by God to care for the destiny of the Jewish nation, and that his special activity on their behalf will come at the time of "the great tribulation." He will "stand up" at the very time which we are now considering (Daniel 12:1-2).

We should be moved deeply at the former humility of the mighty archangel, in the Jude account, in his actions toward the very being he is now at last sent to war against, and to overthrow! Many of us are kept from preferment by our arrogant or critical attitudes toward those foes whom God has not yet cast down; to say nothing of our too ready tongues toward other saints and servants of our Lord. There is a great lesson for all of us in the example of Michael! "Before honor goeth humility."

Now, at last, the longsuffering of God permits the Devil and his fallen host to be cast out of any access to heaven whatever! The record states they are cast down to the earth, and of course, it means what it says. Satan's sphere will be "the earth and the sea." He will, evidently, be allowed his freedom on earth: and it will be "woe," both to the earth and to the sea. [77]

[77] It will be well to remember the successive steps in Satan's judgment: 1. He is cast, as the "covering-cherub" as "profane" from the midst of "the stones of fire," that is, from his first place as leader, evidently, of the worship of God in heaven (Ezekiel 28:14-16). This, I have always felt, is what our Lord meant in Luke 10:1-42, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." The brightness of this being would make his fall as "lightning." Also, the distance from his former glories, even to that "place in heaven" he now holds as the accuser, would be great and absolute. 2. He is cast down, here in Revelation 12:1-17, from whatever position he is allowed at present (as in Job 1:12; 1 Kings 22:21; Zechariah 3:1), to the earth. 3. He is cast into the abyss, in the center of the earth, at Christ's coming, and there spends 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3). 4. Upon being

released at the Millennium's end "for a little season," and leading men again in desperate rebellion against God and His people, he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone forever (Revelation 20:10).

Upon the occasion of his casting down to earth, all his Scripture names are announced: "The great dragon … the old serpent" (his hideous character and malignant, poisonous deceit as God sees it) "he that is called the Devil (slanderer) and Satan (God's absolute adversary and ours), the deceiver of the whole world"-what a list! If, in the back yard of your home, were a den of rattlesnakes, headed by a king cobra, and they had been there all your life, hissing and threatening, and you should come home some evening to find that they had been at last utterly driven out, to return no more at all, would you not rejoice? So will heaven when the enemy and his host are cast out forever!

It is well to remember constantly that we who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ have an Advocate with the Father; and that it is, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate." Also, as in Peter's case (Luke 22:1-71) our Lord prays for us before Satan is even allowed to sift us! Also, that we have already been forgiven all our trespasses once and for all (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13) so far as the pardon of the Judge is concerned. There is now "no condemnation." It is the forgiveness of fellowship of which God speaks in 1 John 1:9, forgiveness by the Father of His child, not to be confused with the once-for-all act of the Judge.

It is very significant that Satan accuses the saints before God, as if by our sins or failures as saints we are brought up again into God's court (as all were, indeed in Romans 3:1-31). But it is with the Father that we have an Advocate, and He Himself, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, is the propitiation for our sins! No real believer's sins come up in judgment, to endanger his eternal safety (John 5:24 R.V.). They do not come in before God as Judge: they did so come at Calvary, and were all put away forever! The accusation of the saints by the enemy may be a mystery to you, but God suffers it at present, so be patient. And reflect that Satan's accusations have never availed against one saint; that they drive the saints to dependence upon God; that they get rid of his self-confidence (as with Job and Peter); that they make to shine his choice of holiness and God and heaven as against all difficulties, and that faith through all, highly honors God and brings about the eventual utter overthrow of the enemy. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? (1 Corinthians 6:3). The "great voice" heard in Revelation 12:10 is that of the redeemed-it seems to me, all of them. They are those whose "brethren" have been the object of Satan's enmity and accusation. (It is, of course, only saints on earth that Satan accuses; those in heaven are entirely beyond it.) The word "they" of Revelation 12:11 seems to indicate that this verse has to do with such saints as are still upon earth; although the verb is in the past tense-"overcame."[78]

[78] Alford calls the present tense of accuseth "the present participle of the usual habit," and many excellent students believe that the word "overcame" has reference to those already in heaven. This may be true. Yet those saints still on earth also get the victory over the dragon, as we shall see, and their only path is to "love not their lives." The three elements of victory over Satan in any event are shown in Revelation 12:11 : (1) The ground of it-the blood of the Lamb; (2) the outward course of the victors-the word of their testimony; (3) the inward settled attitude of the victors-they loved not their life- unto death.

Now let us look at the opening words of this celebration in Revelation 12:10 : “Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.” How utterly idle is the discoursing of modernists and religious educationalists and social reformers about “the kingdom.” Their talk is full of “the kingdom this” and “the kingdom that”; whereas our Lord Jesus has not yet taken His kingdom. It has not yet been given Him of the Father. We are not living in kingdom days, but in days when Satan is the prince of this world and the god of this age, also, when he is accusing the saints before God. Only those born again ever see the kingdom of God; and “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”-wholly a separate thing from human arrangements and reforms! is the only form of the kingdom of God now.

Woe is announced to the earth and sea upon the Devil’s going down; for he has “great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.” Our Lord Jesus told us that there is no truth in the Devil; that is, he receives none, holds none, loves none; yet he knows that Scripture will be fulfilled and he will shortly be in prison in the abyss; though the knowledge is not a belief in the sense of controlling his life, bringing about any repentance. And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. The persecution, desperate and deadly, by the enemy of the nation of Israel is now before us-”the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Satan hates Israel: first, because they are God’s elect royal people; next, because of that nation is Christ (Romans 9:5) who is to have the kingdom upon Satan’s over-throw; and finally, because Israel is the perpetual proof before the eyes of men of the truth of the Scriptures and of the fact of Jehovah God. But we find God rendering peculiar miraculous assistance in those terrible days to the real Israel, not those merely “of Israel” (Revelation 9:6). That is, the remnant of those last days, in the “time, times, and half a time”-the three and a half years of The Great Tribulation.

Armies are sent out “as a river” by the serpent to destroy Israel. These forces are swallowed up by miraculous cataclysms:-as an ancient army was completely obliterated by a sand storm. God will protect Israel. He will make the earth help His nation when Satan and man seek to overwhelm them. Forty years, once before, in a great and terrible wilderness, Jehovah sustained them!

Finally, unable utterly to destroy Israel, the dragon goes to make war with any other godly left on earth: “the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.”

Now this is not the description of the Church of God, as we know. The Church is not under law, but grace; whereas these keep “the commandments of God” (that is, the Old Testament). They also keep and hold the testimony of Jesus” (that is, especially, the four Gospels). This is not “holding fast the Head” in heaven, as the Church does. It is, rather, a holding the truth that Jesus was the true Jewish Messiah and that He will come and have a kingdom shortly.

Dark, dark days, these! Let us thank God for the Gospel of grace and publish it everywhere while it is called today. The night cometh.

01.11. Chapter 11: The Beast And His Prophet- Rev_13:1-18

Chapter 11: The Beast And His Prophet- Revelation 13:1-18 The Lord Jesus said, “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” We now come to consider those who come not to save the world, but to damn the world, and whose fearful work, except for God’s elect being preserved by His infinite power, would destroy all men! And he stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

Now, however we may regard these words as descriptive of the revival of the Fourth Empire in its last form (and we know it is so) yet it seems to me far better to take the last verse of the chapter as the key to its understanding. “The number of the beast … is the number of a man!” Just as it is the judgment of the great harlot of Revelation 17:1-18 that is in view, rather than her history, so here in Revelation 13:1-18 it is the man who heads up and becomes the exponent of this last phase of the fourth world power that is before the mind of the Spirit. That there are difficulties is freely acknowledged; nor is the claim made that all these difficulties are here dissolved or disappear as we study this great chapter-great in the depiction of the quintessence of evil!

We see at once, upon looking on the verses above, that this awesome being called the wild-beast (therion)[79] is the utmost production of him who is called “the great dragon… The Devil … Satan, the deceiver of the whole world,” in his fury upon being cast from the heavenly regions down to this earth.

[79] This word is used 46 times in the New Testament-38 of them in Revelation; and its first use, in Revelation 6:8, reveals its meaning, a beast of prey. Contrast ktenos (as Luke 10:34). Not until now has God permitted His great adversary to bring forth this “man of sin.” There has been hitherto “one that restraineth” (2 Thessalonians 2:7 R. V.) who we believe to be the Holy Spirit, by His presence on earth in the Church-a direct action of God (Psalms 76:10). [80]

[80] Remember that while 2 Thessalonians 2:6 reads, “That which (to, neuter) restraineth,” the seventh verse, in detailing more particularly the fact, uses the masculine, “he who (ho) restraineth.” The words, “ye know” of verse 6 (oidate) rather indicate, it seems to me, a knowledge arising from consciousness, as well as instruction on the apostle’s part. The Greek word originally means “to see,” “to know for one’s self.” Christians are all aware that their protection from the inrush of the enemy is the indwelling Spirit. “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.”

Now from Daniel 2:42; Daniel 2:44, we know that the ten toes were to be ten kings, in whose days “shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” The ten horns of Revelation 13:1 correspond to those of Revelation 17:3, interpreted in Revelation 17:12, “The ten horns … are ten kings … receive authority with the Beast for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and

authority unto the Beast." The Beast, therefore, of Revelation 13:1-18 is a man who controls absolutely the royal authority of the ten kings at the time of the end, and this by their own united will. Thus we see on these horns in Revelation 13:1, ten diadems (R. V.). They are ten distinct powers; perhaps (according to the two feet of the image) five in the east and five in the west, although, knowing that "all that dwell on the earth" shall worship this last World emperor, we do not need to insist upon this. Moreover, the ten horns are kings, not kingdoms; and kings that do not become such till the Beast arises. Revelation 17:12. The fact that the leopard of Greece, the bear of Medo-Persia, and the lion of old Babylon (Daniel 7:1-28) are all seen in this Beast, shows how all-inclusive of human things will be his character; he sums up all the brilliancy (Greece), all of the massive ponderousness of power (Persia), all of the absolute autocratic royal dominion (Babylon), that the Gentiles have ever known.

Satan, being the prince of this world and the god of this age, and being desperately set on ruling men and being worshipped by them, is now given his chance. Because men by trifling with the truth, and by utter impenitence have opened the way, God will now send them a strong delusion that they may believe the devil's lie ("the lie"- 2 Thessalonians 2:11, Greek). The Beast, therefore, set before us in Revelation 13:1-18, is the dragon's masterpiece of delusion, leading to worship of himself (Revelation 13:4).

But, men being what they are, it will require a "Christ," or specially prepared man, to lead them to adore as their god, Satan, who sends forth his "Christ." In this, of course, Satan copies God's plan of salvation by the Lord Jesus. "No man hath seen God at any time," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," our Lord told us. To God it was infinite condescension and love that "God (should be) manifest in the flesh." Christ humbled Himself by becoming "in the likeness of men" (Php 2:1-30). It was also in Christ as man that the eternal counsels of God lay. The climax for the redeemed is, "They shall see His (God's) face." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Now Satan imitates all this. Instead of revealing himself directly to the mass of humanity, he selects two men, one to be worshipped, and the other to be his "prophet," to secure such worship; for men are gross and crass generally, unable to perceive or appreciate the intellectual and spiritual marvels of the being who is called "the dragon." And so it would be contrary to the pride of Satan openly to reveal himself to them. But it is in direct conformation to man's nature to place before his eyes this Beast, a being who is the exponent and expression of the Satanic power behind him. Thus the superstitious awe and wonder of man would be drawn out; and the human imagination (which marvelous faculty man almost lives in, and which is fairly creative in its power) would be appealed to more powerfully than in any other way.

Even the Beast himself will retreat one step from man, in the same way, when an "image" is made of him by the second beast!

Thus will lie in the deluded world's inner consciousness "the likeness of an image" of man, a wonderful man, who has returned in a manner beyond their knowledge from the unseen realm of the dead. And all the while the worship of all men will really be retained by Satan himself; for it will be known by all that it is the dragon himself that has given "his authority unto the Beast."

We have, then, Satan worshipped through his chosen vessel, or “Christ,” a worship carried on through a fearful, speaking, breathing image, that can kill non-conformists or cause their death! This is “the lie,” the inescapable damning lie, that the world in its dreamed of “progress” is about to enter into! And I saw one of his heads as though it had been slain unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast.

Here then is Satan’s permitted imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ! The Greek word for “slain” is the same as that of Revelation 5:6 : “a Lamb … as though it had been slain.” It is because of His victory over death, after being publicly killed, that God’s saints hold fast to Christ; and all the world has been put in awe of Him.

Death is the unconquerable tyrant, the universal terror, through fear of which men are “all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15). But now, they are able to cast off their fears at last! One who has been slain with the death-stroke of a sword is “healed”; a killed body stands up! One who has been in the “abyss” repossesses this slain body. It is not resurrection like unto Christ’s, who left the realm of the dead forever, in “newness of life.” But neither is it mere resuscitation of a body in which life has not become extinct; for this “beast” will have gone down into “the abyss,”-will have left the body entirely. There will be, therefore, first, the killing by a sword-stroke of the body of one of these “heads”; and, second, the entrance into that body of that one of the seven kings whom God will suffer to be brought up from “the abyss” to be the “beast” to deceive men and to “war against the Lamb” (Revelation 19:19).

It is not merely the fourth world power (Rome) that is here (as in Daniel 2:1-49), but chiefly the history of the “little horn” of Daniel 7:1-28, which springs out of that empire. This must be kept in mind. It is a man that is before our eyes in Revelation 13:1-18, all through. God says he is a Man in Revelation 13:18.

Now as to the “heads,” we must go to God’s own interpretation of them in Revelation 17:1-18, where we find, as regards the woman, “the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth”; but we note that this sentence reads right on, “and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition.” Returning to Revelation 13:1-18, as to the empire, it is in Revelation 13:3 “one of his heads … slain unto death.” But we see from Revelation 17:1-18, that this head was one of the seven Roman emperors, of which five had fallen when John wrote The Revelation. One, Domitian, was reigning, “the other” the seventh, not yet come. It might be such a man as Napoleon, for the Fourth Empire is still on until the stone strikes it; but it is more probably one who will rule after the more formal restoration of the Roman Empire. [81]

[81] Mussolini, with his ambitions for the restoration of old Rome, his Caesar-ideals, his inflexible will, his undiminishing energy, is a portent of what one of these emperors will be; and also proof how quickly such an one may rise into power! Of course Mussolini does not begin to fill the vast picture of the Beast of Revelation 13:1-18.

Now from these seven, the Beast of Revelation 13:1-18 comes. He is an eighth (not the, as A. V.) but is, withal, one “of the seven.” We remember that he was said in Revelation 11:7 to “come up out of the abyss.” Now the abyss (Greek abussos) is a word used ten times in Scripture, seven of

these in The Revelation. We found in Revelation 9:1 that there was a shaft leading down to it; that it was in the heart of the earth according to Romans 10:7, compared with Matthew 12:40; that it is, so far as the human race is concerned, the realm of departed spirits-those who have died (not of the saved, of course, for these are now “with Christ”).

We are forced, therefore, to the conclusion that the Beast of Revelation 13:1-18 has been brought back by permitted Satanic agency from the realm of the dead, and that this fact is known to those on earth; to whom the fact that the Beast had had the death-stroke of the sword, and then afterwards lived (Revelation 13:14) was a well-known event of his history. Consequently the whole earth wonders after the Beast! How quickly now is swallowed up all the “wisdom of man” which God had long ago declared to be foolishness, as concerning divine things. Now it is shown to be futility itself also against the delusions God permits to come upon those who “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”[82]

[82] Seiss well comments: “Did not men (at the French Revolution) sing halleluias to the busts of Marat and Lepelletier, and conveyed a woman in grand procession to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, unveiled and kissed her before the high altar as the Goddess of Reason? Nay, at this very hour, there resides a man in the city of Rome, whom one-half of Christendom itself hails, honors and adores as the vicar of Jesus Christ, the vicegerent of God upon earth, infallible, the sole possessor of the keys of heaven,-a man whom the greater festivals exhibit as a divinity, borne along in solemn procession on the shoulders of consecrated priests, while sacred incense fumes before him. Let there come, then a man from among the distinguished dead! Let him prove by signs evident that he is verily a great emperor returned to life again; let him show the intelligence, the energy, the invincible power, and whatever else has made and marked the glory of the mighty, and let there come with him a great prophet to exercise all this power in the one direction of a new universal religion, advising and urging with eloquence and miracles, in the name of absolute Wisdom, the worship and adoration of that man, as the only right worship in the universe; and what is there in humanity to withstand the appeal! As surely as man is man, the same that he has hitherto been, it will and must be a grand success. The Saviour so anticipated, and says that if it were possible to break down Jehovah’s promises the very elect would be deceived!”

How frightful then the scene! Men have rejected the wounded, slain but risen Lamb of God. And now they are given over to bow in absolute helpless “wonder” before another wounded one “slain unto death,” but who lives,-a fearsome lost creature from “the abyss,” re-entered, for Satan’s fell purposes, into a body that by its very death-scar compels the world’s worship as the victor over death! (All, thank God, but those written in the book of life of the Lamb; and these are kept not by their own power, let us well remember!) And they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?

Here we have the utter helplessness of the Christ-forsaking world falling into the very jaws of the Devil, most fearfully set forth! On the one hand their worshipping the dragon and his awful Christ; and on the other their shrinking impotence to resist him. The whole earth will have suddenly become a thousand-fold worse off than Russia today! For in Russia they are denying God; but the whole nation has not yet been given up consciously to worship the Devil himself, as Revelation 13:8 of Revelation 13:1-18 declares all on earth, but God’s elect of that day, will do. Of course, no

one is “like unto the beast.”[83] They have back on their hands a “son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17), one they knew to have died, one whose history was universally known. Rome once was in anguish over the irresponsible hideousness of Nero. What if an individual of these seven emperors (of which Nero was one), should return to be “the man on horseback,” the “superman,” the great “world hero” that they have so long desired? And one will come!

[83] As to this solemn, divine characterization of this man, it is well to recall that one of Napoleon’s marshals shouted in horror when he heard of the emperor’s escape from Elba to rush back to his power in France: “What! is the wild beast loose again?” And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue (literally to do, or go ahead) forty and two months. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, even them that dwell (are tabernacling) in the heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain. [84]

[84] Alford here remarks, “These last words are ambiguously placed. They may belong either to gegraptai (was written) or to sesphagmenou (was slain).” He connects them with the latter, adducing 1 Peter 1:19-20 : “That death of Christ which was fore-ordained from the foundation of the world, is said to have taken place in the counsels of Him with whom the end and the beginning are one.” But the habit of Scripture is to connect election with the writing rather than with the ground, of that election, the death of Christ. The passage from Peter is rather against, than for, Alford’s contention: Christ was “foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake,” etc. In Daniel 12:1, referring to the exact “time of trouble” with which Revelation 13:1-18 is concerned, we read of those being delivered who “shall be found written in the book; as also in Isaiah 4:3, the spared remnant are described as “every one that is written unto life in Jerusalem.”

Hengstenberg says, “The expression ‘from the foundation of the world’ (in Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8) must not be referred to the slaying of the Lamb”; and quotes Bengel: “The Apocalypse often speaks of the Lamb slain; it never adds from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 9:26). They who hold Him to have been slain in the divine decree from the foundation of the world, may with equal justice speak of Him as having been also born, raised from the dead, ascended to heaven.”

“There was given to him”-six times (the number of manifested evil) this phrase is used (Revelation 13:5 twice, Revelation 13:7 twice, Revelation 13:14-15), in connection with this dreadful man called the Beast (literally, Wild beast). It indicates judicial un-leasing of powers of incipient evil of which this world does not yet dream.

“A mouth speaking great things”-that is what the universities, the scientists, the wise ones of the earth throng, even rush, to listen to; and God will let them hear from the mouth of this man of sin, marvels beyond their utmost imaginings. Even today Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Spiritist, and “psychical” folks of all sorts, prate about the undiscovered, unused “powers” that lie in human nature; while science glories in its discoveries of the physical secrets of this universe. With such knowledge today human educationalism is captivated. What will happen when God permits

Satan's super-man to tell them utterly unexpected marvels! But connected with these marvels will be blasphemies. Such derision of God, of His Son, of His salvation, as has never been heard or permitted on this planet will then come forth. Especially those "tabernacling in the heaven" -probably referring to Christ and His Church lately caught up and known (despite all earth's hatred) to be above the earth, will come in for blasphemous execration. Satan, filled with disappointed hatred, will pour through this creature such words as will make Russian blasphemies seem trifling! He will deny that Jesus is, or ever was, the Christ of the Jews (1 John 2:22); and also deny the Father and the Son, as all Christians hold.

Forty-two months (three and one-half years, or 1260 days) the Beast is thus to continue on his way. The Lord Jesus said to the rabble who came to arrest him, "This is your hour, and the power (Greek exousia) of darkness." What a scene followed in the next few hours! But God will give up the whole earth, except His elect, for three and one-half years to this direful scene of Revelation 13:1-18. The saints (for there will be saints then, although not the Church) will be "overcome," that is, over-powered, by this monster. Right will be trampled. Testimony will be stilled by the quick hand of martyrdom. "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples." If any man hath an ear, let him hear. If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. This thrice-repeated word, "if any man" is addressed to any gracious ears then upon earth. First, let them hear God's words, for there is no other possible way of deliverance at any time for God's saints but through faith, and faith cometh by hearing.

Moreover, let them be warned against opposing this awful Satanic power by force. If any one undertakes to take captive this monster or his minions-into captivity such a one will go. If any one shall undertake to oppose him with the sword, by the sword he will fall; for God has given things over for the "hour" to Satan, whom the world has chosen.

We are emphasizing lastly words that we always need to lay to heart, "the patience and the faith of the saints." Patience means suffering on in steadfastness, through trial, and it takes faith thus to do. But God's grace of patience and the faith of His saints will triumph even in the darkest hour the earth has ever known or ever will know! The saints of those days (though not the Church) will find true "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Satan's Steel Trap: "Worship My Christ, or Starve!" And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived. And it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. He

that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.

Let us now look briefly at the rise of this second Beast, the third of the Satanic trinity. The first Beast was from “the sea,” this one from “the earth.” Of course John, in Revelation 12:1-17 and Revelation 13:1-18, is speaking in sign language (Revelation 12:1-3); yet it must be remembered that both these “beasts” are human beings. The first is definitely called a man (Revelation 13:18). But the doom of both the first and second, as described in Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 20:1-15, prove both to be human beings. Systems, forms of empires, etc., are dealt with by God on earth; but only persons are cast into the lake of fire.

It is generally taken that “the sea” from which the first Beast arises, denotes (as in Revelation 17:15) “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Inasmuch as in Daniel 7:1-28, the rise of the four great world-powers, which are all expressed in the Beast of Revelation 13:1-18 is described (compare Daniel 7:1-8 with Revelation 13:1), this interpretation of Revelation 13:1-18 seems necessary. We may add, that while in Daniel it is “the great sea,” the Mediterranean, around whose shores all four great earth-empires had their existence; it is “the sea” in Revelation 13:1-18. For here the Beast secures universal dominion, hence, perhaps, the more general expression. [85]

[85] To use the term ecclesiastical to describe the character and career of the second Beast of Revelation 13:1-18, seems to me both an inaccurate and a misleading thing. The Beast and his ten kings have destroyed from off the earth the harlot of Revelation 17:1-18, and in so doing, have annihilated all things “ecclesiastical” whether of apostate Christendom or of paganism. “All that is called God,” or that is “an object of worship” (2 Thessalonians 2:4, Greek), has been banished. Therefore, to call the second Beast an “ecclesiastical power” is delusive. Just as well, might Jannes and Jambres with their God-opposing miracles in Egypt, or a Simon Magus with his “magic,” or a Hermann the Great, be called “ecclesiastical.” The whole business of the second Beast is to support him “whose coming (parousia) is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The mere fact that he “doeth the great signs” of Revelation 13:13-15, gives him no claim to be called “ecclesiastical” in any sense, for that term carries with it the idea of human religion: whereas, this second Beast is wholly, directly, and openly Satanic. To employ, therefore, the term “ecclesiastical” regarding him, as over against “the civil power” is to imagine the present religious constitution of society to have, at least in some measure subsisted, and consequently to destroy or render impossible a conception of the real situation in those dire days. The second Beast is merely the prophet, the willing but absolute tool, of the first Beast. That he has “two horns like unto a lamb” does not necessarily imply that he is imitating the Lamb of God, for men will have then rejected the very thought of that meek and lowly One. What the world is looking for even today, is not a meek One, but “a man on horseback,” one who will lord it over them. The “horns like unto a lamb” merely indicate that the second Beast instead of being “a king of fierce countenance” like the first, will have the relatively plausible and persuasive ways of a great deceiver of men. The “civil power” has become the “ecclesiastical,”-if by the latter term you mean that which engages the worshipping faculties of man; for it is the first Beast who is a god to men: and that before the second is on the scene! But it must be remembered, from Revelation 11:7, that it is the first Beast who is operating at Jerusalem at the close of the first half of Daniel’s seventieth week (when he kills God’s “two witnesses”); also, from

Revelation 11:9, that Jerusalem is at that time crowded with peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations. Hardly a “settled state”!

Again, the second Beast is always close to the first-his Prophet, Premier, exponent, and nothing else but that, according to Scripture. And it is the first Beast that he lauds and acclaims as the object of worship, and that chiefly on the ground that the first Beast had had a “death stroke,” and has been “slain unto death” (Revelation 13:3 -Greek) and now lives!

We now quote the Endor witch’s description of Samuel’s appearance (and he did appear!); “I see gods coming up out of the earth.” Many draw from that the inference that the second Beast is likewise a spirit from Hades. It may be so-(see Seiss). But it is the first Beast that the Scripture declares comes up from the abyss-and whom the whole world recognizes as having had a previous earth-history. Let us remember this carefully. Prophecy is full of this one man’s career, both in type and direct prediction.

If Judas Iscariot (as some predict) were permitted to return and direct the Israelitish nation’s apostasy to Satan-worship, as he once helped them to crucify their true Messiah, he would scarcely let himself be known as Judas! For he is despised as a traitor, even by godless Jews-was despised in his own day (Matthew 27:3-4). Judas went from apostleship to “his own place” for future judgment; the phrase “his own place” merely contrasting with that place of honor from which he “fell away.” Is the first beast “Antichrist”? That the first Beast is the Antichrist of Scripture, may appear from the following considerations:

1. In John 5:43, our Lord says, “I am come in my Father’s name and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” (The Greek is “en to onomati to idio,” which we almost might read, “in name peculiar to himself”.) But the second beast of Revelation 13:1-18, comes to establish the name of the first. He (the second beast) “causeth all, … that there be given them a mark … that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the Beast (the first beast) or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16-17).

2. In Revelation 16:13, the trinity of hell is named “the Dragon … the Beast … and the false Prophet”; as also in Revelation 19:20, “the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight.” A prophet is one who speaks for another, coming in the name of another, as all know. How could this second beast of Revelation 13:1-18 fulfill John 5:43, if he comes in the name of the first Beast, and not in his own name?

Mr. Darby says (Coll. Writings, Prophetic Vol. 1, p. 306) “When the question as to power comes on, and Antichrist rises up in his full form against the Lamb, he is finally cast down, and put, with the false prophet, in the lake of fire, and his followers killed” (italics mine). Whatever question Mr. Darby ever had regarding the identity of Antichrist, his words here reveal that when he wrote them he counted Antichrist as the first Beast, and the second merely as his “prophet.”

Proper interpretation must regard these two Beasts of Revelation 13:1-18 as two men. They are on the scene at the same time; both have fearful energies of evil; but the second does nothing independently of the first. We read, “he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight” (or presence). He also works wonderful “signs” which are done “in the sight” (presence) of the first Beast. The word means just what the same word (enopion) means in John 20:30, where our Lord’s miracles are said to have been wrought “in the presence” of His disciples,-emphasizing that

fact!

3. Practically common consent regards “the man of sin” of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 as the Antichrist. But of him it is said, “he … opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.” But this is the exact contrary of the actings of the second beast in Revelation 13:12; Revelation 13:14, who “maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed … saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived.” The second beast is nothing but the “prophet” of the first Beast. Once admit (which we shall find we must do) that the first Beast is a man, and not any kind of a system, not even the Fourth Empire as such (Revelation 13:18) and we are driven to conclude that the first Beast of Revelation 13:1-18 is “the man of sin” of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 -the “lawless one”: for he owns no one but himself. He could not be described as leading the earth to worship another,-as does the false prophet, the second beast of Revelation 13:1-18. And exactly the same is true of “the king” of Daniel 11:36.

4. Some assert that the character of the second beast as the “false prophet” to the first Beast, is a later form of his evil energy; the first stage having been as an independent or at least distinct “king” rising in Palestine and fulfilling in that country such passages as Daniel 11:36 -the willful king; or 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17, “the man of sin”; and later bringing by deceit the Jewish nation who have received him as Christ to subjection to and worship of the civil power, of the first Beast, etc. But such an interpretation cannot fill the picture drawn in Revelation 13:1-18, even if we could conceive of the second beast ever doing anything in his own name. For the first Beast is immediately set before us in Revelation 13:1-18 as himself the great and direct religious blasphemer of those days. “And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, them that dwell (tabernacle) in the heaven” (that is, especially, the Church which has at that time been raptured and is “tabernacling,” after the first stage of Christ’s coming, in the regions out of which Satan has been cast).

He makes also immediate and successful “war with the saints.” Again, there is given him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation (including Palestine!); and still again, “all that dwell on the earth shall worship him”-except the elect of those days (Revelation 13:6-8).

Moreover, there is given him “authority to continue forty and two months,” i.e., the whole duration of the tribulation, the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week.

Now where is there room in this scene for more than one being to “set himself forth as God,” in “the temple of God” or anywhere else on earth? All prophecy crowds down stupendous issues into this brief and terrible period!

5. We know from Daniel 9:26-27, that the last prince of the Roman Empire will make “a firm covenant” or treaty with the Jews in their land for seven years, and that “in the midst of the week,” i.e., after half the seven years are passed, he (this Roman prince) will “cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” If there is at that time in Palestine an “Antichrist” setting himself forth as God, where does the fancied alliance between this king and this false Christ in Palestine come in, so that Revelation 13:1-18 can be fulfilled? There is no hint that the second beast of Revelation 13:1-18 ever has been anything other than subservient to, or “prophet” of, the first Beast! It is

without question the first Beast, the last Roman emperor, who will fulfill Daniel 9:27, causing Jewish worship to cease, and becoming “the abomination that maketh desolate” by “standing where he ought not” (Mark 13:14), “in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15) i.e., in the rebuilt Jewish temple at Jerusalem as seen in Revelation 13:1-18, where, (although not yet owned of God) with respect to the Gentiles the place will be “holy.”

It is reliably reported that Dr. Theodore Herzl, the great organizer of Zionism, in his zeal to secure a national home in Palestine for Israel, not only appealed to the Pope for help, but to the Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey (“Abdul the Damned”), even telling the latter that if he would let the Jews have Palestine, they would adopt him as their promised Messiah.

If we compare the history of the first Beast as seen in Revelation 13:1-18 with the career of the willful king of Daniel 11:36 and “the man of sin” of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17, we find complete simplicity and accord, the second beast of Revelation 13:1-18 coming in merely as what he is called-a prophet of the first. But if we undertake to name the second beast a mere Jewish Antichrist, deceiving that nation finally into worship of the “civil power,” the Roman ruler, we cannot claim either 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 or Daniel 11:1-45 as referring to him, because these passages set forth one operating “in his own name,” in resistless power, and in self-deification.

6. The condition of the Jewish nation in the last days must be considered. First, they will say, “we (will be) like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:20). Second, they will be possessed of tremendous treasure in which they are trusting to “redeem them,”-to buy them independent political status. Third, they will have established their own worship in their own temple, with daily sacrifices, offerings, etc. Fourth, there will be a godly remnant living in Jerusalem and Palestine-though the mass of the nation will be apostate-who will sustain the fear of Jehovah, and His worship. Fifth, this worship will be interrupted by intrusion from without (according to Daniel 9:27), by a power in which the majority of the nation have a frightful confidence, according to Isaiah 28:15 : “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement … We have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.” This can be nothing else than a conscious and intelligent recognition of the source and nature of the first Beast; for he is “the beast that cometh up out of the abyss.” He will be a spirit from the lost world who will be allowed to come back on earth for Satan’s purposes. Indeed, he will be one of the seven former emperors of Rome, according to Revelation 17:8; Revelation 17:10-11. Here, then, is Jewish worship suddenly interrupted, not by a Christ who has arisen among them, but by the last prince of the Roman Empire (Daniel 9:27) who, as we shall find in studying Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18, is Satan’s counterpart and counterfeit of the risen Christ, having been “slain (margin Greek) unto death” and his “death-stroke was healed” (Revelation 13:3) to the amazement of the world. It will not do to call this “death-stroke” the fall of the Roman Empire.

7. We should remember also that Satan offered Christ “all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them” (Matthew 4:8), if He would worship him. Our Lord refused, but another will accept, and receive these kingdoms (Revelation 13:7-8). But this is the first Beast and not the second! Our Lord Jesus Christ, we know, will finally take over the kingdoms of this world. “All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him” (Psalms 72:11). What else but a king was Christ to be? “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king, then? Jesus answered; Thou sayest it, because I am a king (margin Greek). To this end have I been born.”

Consequently, we see in Revelation 19:19, “the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army.” What is this but Antichrist? It is the awful climax of intelligent opposition to the Lamb: “These (the ten kings and the beast) shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14). So that Mr. Darby’s words quoted under point 2, express the exact truth! To call the Antichrist merely an ecclesiastical deceiver of the Jewish nation, is not to fill the scripture account of this monstrous being, who sets himself above all that is called God,-to whom the second beast is merely the “false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight” (Revelation 19:20). This “prophet” is always at the Beast’s side,-working in his presence.

8. The voice of history and tradition calls to us that the Antichrist and the last Roman emperor are to be identical. Victorinus, voicing an impression that was very common in early Christian centuries, says, “Nero will be raised from the dead, appear again at Rome and persecute the Church once more, and finally be destroyed by the Messiah.” Augustine first mentioned this idea concerning Nero. Even Tacitus, the Roman historian, spoke of many believing rumors about Nero’s possible return (Hist. II. 8; 1, 2). Sulpicius Severus said, “It is current opinion of many that he (Nero) is yet to come as Antichrist.” Note carefully, we are not insisting at all that Nero will be the Antichrist, but that the early Christians believed that a Roman imperial persecutor, possibly Nero, would be the Antichrist.

9. We are distinctly told in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 that “the man of sin” will be brought to nought by “the forth-shining of our Lord’s arrival” (Rotherham’s Translation, 2 Thessalonians 2:8). The Greek words are,“te epiphaneia tes parousias autou” Our Lord’s coming (parousia) opens with the rapture of the Church. [86]

[86] We believe this occurs in time at Revelation 4:1, where Church testimony ends. It is Christ, in connection with His ruling the nations, who is the man child of Revelation 12:5 and His ascension is viewed there only in connection with His rulership, and not as to its date in history.

Note the exact meaning of the word in Php 2:12, “As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (parousia) only, but now much more in my absence (apousia).” Now, we know from Revelation 19:20-21, that it will be at our Lord’s manifestation as described in Revelation 19:11-16, that this last World emperor will be brought to nought. Indeed, the lake of fire, long prepared, is at that time, according to Isaiah 30:33, to be “made ready” for him!

We are compelled, therefore, to view the future as filled with one great figure; although, as we shall see, the second beast will be “exercising all the authority of the first beast in his sight”; he is the active agent by means of Satanic signs and wonders, (done where the first Beast is,) in turning the worship of the earth to the man whose name is set forth by those numerals that express all that man in himself can be, or do, energized by Satan-“Six hundred and sixty and six.” We feel that the first Beast must be called the Antichrist. [87]

[87] We desire to commend the three lectures of Joseph Seiss on Revelation 13:1-18, as found in the second volume of his, “Lectures on the Apocalypse.” On Revelation 12:1-17 we cannot agree with Seiss that the Woman, is “the Church of all the ages”; but his chapters on the Antichrist, Revelation 13:1-18, are spiritual, masterly, and very edifying indeed. In brief review, we find Revelation 13:1-18 to reveal:

1. As to Satan:

A. His hatred toward God and toward His saints.

B. His peculiar rage at being cast from heaven to earth.

C. His deadly ambition to be worshipped as God.

D. His copying God's plan: of a "Christ," or one fully empowered, under his control, through whom to work; and then of an agent or "prophet" of that false Christ, who will carry directly into effect the Satanic program; and of astonishing miraculous energy to accredit before the world his system and himself. (All this God calls "the lie" in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 -Greek.)

2. As to Man:

A. Man's willingness to lose his own soul to gain the whole world (as do these "beasts," who are human beings).

B. Man's desire, from the fall onward, to "be as gods."

C. The finale of man's refusing to "have God in his knowledge," and his turning to the "likeness of an image of corruptible man" (Romans 1:1-32).

D. The development by man to the full of that final form of economic life, godless international commercialism, by which man falls into Satan's steel-trap: they can "neither buy nor sell," except they have the beast's (that is, Satan's) Mark 3:1-35. As to God:

A. The inexorable, inescapable, righteous operation of God that "gives up" such to believe an eternal damning falsehood (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17).

B. The bringing upon the earth of the "third woe," "The Great Tribulation"; because of which, except, for His elect's sake, God had "shortened the days," no flesh would be saved! (Mark 13:19-20).

C. God's infinite unconquerable grace, which preserves His saints, with "patience and faith" even in those frightful days (Revelation 13:8-10).

We must read and ponder these scenes of Revelation 13:1-18; as we hope to be protected from the last-day errors; as we hope to understand the prophetic Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments; as we desire to "escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). For all the forces of hell that head up in Revelation 13:1-18 are marshalling in public or in secret today!

While it is most interesting to seek to identify this second beast, it will perhaps be better, to discover the general plan of Satan, in turning the world from the worship of God to the worship of himself-for this is what he seeks.

Satan's creed concerning man, and the way to manage man, is plainly seen in the first two chapters of Job, and may be summed up in Job 2:4 : "Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." And we all know this to be true, except concerning God's elect, in whom are the operations of the infinite power of divine grace. "They

loved not their life even unto death" (Revelation 12:11).

Satan will take advantage of this "self-preservation law"; and, while on the one hand exhibiting vast miracles, and uttering unheard of blasphemy against God, through his great final agent (the first Beast), he will also, by the second, drive men into the desperate alternative of accepting his Christ, or being refused sustenance on the earth; no man shall be able to buy or sell without the mark of the Beast stamped upon him, upon his body.

We read from Revelation 14:9-11, this means eternal damnation! So that what takes place in Russia, of blasphemy, coercion, persecution and death, is but a small whisper, is but a feeble portent, of what will be worldwide under the fearful trinity of evil, Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet. [88]

[88] It is ever the plan of the great ones of earth to retire from direct gaze, and operate through representatives. This enhances the mystery and power of their names. It is hard to obtain readily an interview with the "big bosses" either of business or of politics! When the Dragon sets forth the Beast, men worship the Dragon all the more fatuously. When the Beast retires behind his Prophet working miracles in his name, and most especially when that Prophet causes an image of the first Beast to be made and to speak, to exercise even murderous powers for those refusing adoration-then Satan's steel-trap on mankind has been sprung indeed!

Satan's own Prophet now springs the double jaws of the Great Dragon's awful steel-trap on the souls of men. Between the jaw of damning miracle-backed soul-delusion, and the jaw of bodily self-preservation, man is caught! He cannot escape if he would, for he must eat to live on this earth; and he would not escape if he could, for, like the flame-dazzled moth, he has fallen in blinded worship at the feet of his destroyer! No pen of any language can describe a doom so awful, a fate so fearful!

Human science and philosophy are in the dust: for here is a being returned from past history, from the unseen realm of the dead-and how can man's puny wisdom cope with this? And here is a breathing image-speaking, no one knows how! Men fall in worship. And to crown the terror, this fearsome image is able relentlessly to slay those who refuse it homage. Where, then, are man's boasted powers, his vaunted progress? Vanished, gone forever! The whole world has fallen below the level of the African fetish-worshipper. The whole world has fallen flat before mysteries it cannot even dare to seek to solve! Men will know they are worshipping the Devil; and, being given up to believe the lie, they will actually be content and confident to abandon their intelligence and all their natural God-given judgment, and have their consciences murdered. Nay, they will delight to do all this. There never will have been a day so certain of itself as the day that receives Satan's Christ! Reason confronted by Satanic miracle, will abdicate her throne to credulity. "All power and signs and lying wonders" said Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. They "shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the very elect," says the Lord in Matthew 24:1-51. And then "the mark of the beast" or "the number of his name," branded in the flesh of men, on forehead or right hand-what fearful tyranny!

Yet men dream they are free! While God says of them in 1 John 5:19, "The whole world lieth in the evil one." Men hate preachers who tell them this today, but they will shortly find whose slaves they are-all they who are not born of God, God's elect. And then eternal doom follows! God will

graciously and most solemnly and strikingly warn of this, by sending a loud-crying angel over all the lands (Revelation 14:9-11), announcing in every tongue that those who worship the Beast and receive this fatal mark of hell on the forehead or hand, shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and that “the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever.” The fearful guilt of this apostasy to Satan and his Christ, is seen in its punishment. No unwitting sin is this; but willful revolt to hell from all the love of heaven. It will be a world that has heard and rejected the Gospel that will fall into Satan’s steel-trap. “A savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life,” the Gospel of grace ever is. “Let us break their (God’s and Christ’s) bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us”-this is the cry of the raging nations of those terrible days. It is “against Jehovah and against his anointed” that they thus “set themselves” and “take counsel.”

“Cease ye from man.” His pride is folly; his wisdom is foolishness; his freedom is bondage; his “program” is rebellion; his “progress,” delusion. All his thoughts are, “There is no God”! As to the man whom the number “Six hundred and sixty and six” represents, God will give full “understanding” when it is needed, in those three and half years of horror and danger. He has never failed His saints. The Church saints will not be there (as we have seen), but many there will be who “worshipped not the beast … and received not the mark” (Revelation 20:4). And they will know and understand this man. His number will be plain then, for it is the number of a man. Those who “keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus” will all have divinely given wisdom in this matter.

Probably the marking out of this terrible Satan-Christ has been hinted at all through the Christian centuries; even as John says, “As ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists” (1 John 2:18). Irenaeus reminds us that the word Latin, spelled with Greek letters Lateinos (which Alford shows “would be the usual way of writing the long T by the Greeks of the time”) makes Six hundred and sixty-six in their numerical value. Others have called attention to the same fact concerning Nero Caesar, spelled in Hebrew. Many other remarkable tracings have been made through the years, as if Satan were ever seeking to bring forth his “man of destiny”; but (as is actually true) ever being hindered by God’s restraining action, as we read in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. It is startling in our own days to see the number, Six hundred sixty-six used boldly for advertising commercial products! Godless commercialism will be the final flood which rushes down the Devil’s sluiceway, to be dammed and governed by the Beast and his Prophet to control all men. The mathematical probability, that the number, Six hundred sixty-six should be selected by chance in such advertising, is too remote to consider.

Now, concerning the present state of preparation for that “universal monopoly” by which Satan, through his two terrible agents, will control the bodies and souls of men, much may be seen in our own day! Modern invention and industrialism has brought into being vast properties and holdings such as railroads, automobile companies, radio corporations, utilities of all sorts; which, finding competition unprofitable, have formed and are reforming combinations of ever greater extent. This enables private men of outstanding ability to manage and control more real power than many of the smaller governments! Plutocracy has come into its own! A world-bank and world-coinage are at hand.

We also see in our times the rapid and resistless accumulation of capital prophesied in James 5:1-20 (R. V.), “Ye (rich) have laid up your treasure in the last days.” Communism will not succeed in crushing capitalism utterly, as it so fondly hopes. For Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar as to the final form of Gentile government, “There shall be in it of the strength of the iron,” though “mixed” with “earthenware.”[89]

[89] It is striking to note that the democratic principle (as over against the imperial iron) is first called in Daniel 2:1-49 merely “clay” (the masses of men), Daniel 2:33; then “potters’ clay” (men moulded by orators and agitators), Daniel 2:41; and finally “earthenware” Daniel 2:41 (R. V. margin), and “brittle,” Daniel 2:42 -after the fires of revolution have hardened them for action into solid blocs.

“Internationalism” (Satan’s own darling plan) is supposed even by many preachers, ignorant of God’s Word, to be human large-mindedness. But God formed nations, and set “the bounds of their habitation,” as well as “their appointed seasons” (Acts 17:26). And it was as a judgment upon earth-unification that nations came to be at Babel: “Jehovah, said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this (their self-idolatrous tower) is what they begin to do: and now nothing (in the way of rebellious pride and sin) will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:6-7). Yet a “world-language” has been what men have been seeking to invent ever since! The idea is inspired of hell. Since Babel it is unnatural sin for a man to forget patriotism, and talk about world-stuff! Leave that to the atheists, the Communists. (The Christian rises above all earthly things, indeed, in Christ risen: but yet Paul said, “I am a Roman,” and, “I am a citizen of Tarsus-no mean city.” The loveliest Christians we have known were glad to reveal their God-given love for their own land!) In Russia the tyranny of monopoly is in flower. One can hardly buy or sell, except he abjures God with the atheistic Soviets. In America, that capitalism (which the Soviets profess to hate) is none the less stealing the liberty of the poor man, or the small-business-man, quietly away. And no one but Christ (at His second coming) will ever deliver the oppressed (Isaiah 11:1-16; Psalms 72:14).

It is the story of history that man never, except by revolution, recovers lost freedom. And then it is only by selling something more precious than what is gained!

01.12. Chapter 12: The 144,000 On Mt. Zion- Rev_14:1-5

Chapter 12: The 144,000 On Mt. Zion- Revelation 14:1-5

There are seven distinct sections in Revelation 14:1. The Vision of the One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand (Revelation 14:1-5).

2. The Angel Proclaiming the Eternal Gospel (Revelation 14:6-7).

3. The Prophetic Announcement of Great Babylon's Fall (Revelation 14:8).

4. The Angelic Warning of the Eternal Doom of the Beast-worshippers (Revelation 14:9-12).

5. The Proclamation of the Especial Blessedness of those who should "die in the Lord" from that time (Revelation 14:13).

6. The Vision of the Harvest of the Earth (Revelation 14:14-16).

7. The Vision of the Vine of the Earth and the Winepress of Blood (Revelation 14:17-20). To outline the chapter in brief:

1. The Lamb's 144,000 seen in contrast to the nations and Antichrist.

2. The six "other" angels and their messages.

3. The two "sharp sickles" and what they reap. The Vision of the One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish. This is one of the most remarkable scenes, in every way, of The Revelation thus far. The "servants of our God" whom the angel sealed on their foreheads in Revelation 7:2-8, before any "hurt" should come, are here seen with the Lamb, having, like those three in the fiery furnace, passed through the fearful divine judgments unharmed (see Revelation 9:4), and then through the horrors of the forty-two months of Antichrist (Revelation 13:1-18). They are seen on Mount Zion, the selected seat of the glorious earthly reign of one thousand years, of Christ and His saints. The 144,000 of Chapter Fourteen- Who Are They?

I. Are they the sealed company of Israelites of Revelation 7:1-17?

(1) The number 144,000 agrees. (2) They and these in Revelation 14:1-20 are sealed on their foreheads. (3) They stand on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. (4) They pass through the time of trouble, are victorious, etc.

II. Are they especially devoted saints from all the ages?

(1) The repetition of the number 144,000, one of governmental completeness and fullness, is not necessarily conclusive proof that the two companies are one and the same. (2) Those in Revelation 14:1-20 are indeed sealed on their foreheads, but the form of the seal is the Lamb's name and the name of His Father; whereas those of Revelation 7:1-17 were sealed as "the bondservants of our God." (3) Those in Revelation 14:1-20 were "purchased out of the earth": they are not said to be of Israel's tribes. (4) They are all men (Revelation 14:4): note the double statement "not defiled with women," and "virgins." (5) They are therefore Nazarites unto God, having forsworn even lawful things for a separate walk. (6) They "were purchased from among men, the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4). (7) They were absolutely truthful: consequently, "without blemish." (8) They "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

We will give certain further comments concerning this company, not seeking dogmatically to assert, however, that they are the Israelites of Revelation 7:1-17, though they seem to be these.

For, although we have thus spoken of them, we cannot but leave the question open for further light. Because, in all other Scripture we can recall, Israel's victors are always named as belonging to that elect nation, and the favor of God is seen as arising from that national election. Whereas, these of Revelation 14:1-20 do not have that mark, but rather seem to be from a larger circle than Israel-even "from among men"; and their peculiar distinction appears to be a reward for their utter self-abnegation. As Dean Alford says, "We are perhaps more like that which the Lord intended us to be; but they are more like the Lord Himself." Only let it be remembered, a "greater" place is given, in sovereign grace, to the Body of Christ: as our Lord spoke regarding John, in Matthew 11:11.

They are the "first fruits" of the millennial reign. They connect the dispensations-somewhat as Noah did, who passed through the judgment of the flood into a new order of things. Therefore, the Lamb is seen standing on Mount Zion (before He actually conies there, as in Revelation 19:1-21 and Psalms 2:1-12), that with Him may be seen this overcoming host, who will very shortly share His actual reign there. [90]

[90] That the number 144,000 is literal you cannot doubt, without sitting down beside some Sadducee. It is well, when people claim that the Scripture does not mean what it says, to ask, "Who, then, shall say what it means?"

Seven things are told us of this amazing company.

1. They had written on their foreheads the Name of the Lamb, and the Name of His Father! In marvelous manner they were thus blessedly blazoned out, that all might see! It proclaimed their ownership-they were the Lamb's and His Father's. It exhibited their character-they were Nazarites to God, and His holy ones forever. It announced their destiny-they were to be associated wholly with the Lamb whom they had wholly chosen! Beautiful badge of blessedness!

Now, no one who thoughtfully reads Revelation 13:1-18 and Revelation 14:1-20, together, can avoid the profound conviction that these, with the Lamb's and His Father's Name in their foreheads, are set before us in direct contrast with those who took in their foreheads the name or number of Satan's awful Christ. [91]

[91] Indeed, it has occurred to us that the presence of the heavenly seal in the foreheads of the remnant from Revelation 7:1-17 on, is so evident to men that Satan is forced to undertake to break its influence by demanding the opposite seal in the foreheads of his devotees. And especially may this be true, when we reflect that God preserves (as in Revelation 9:4) those who have His seal, from woes to which others are subject. This earth will at last learn what the words mean, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve!" Of course the Church is not in this scene-cannot be. But how instructive all is for us in a day when darkness is put for light, and light for darkness! And how it thrills our hearts to know that God can triumph as easily in such days as Revelation 14:1-20 portrays, as in our own days. Grace enabled Enoch to walk with God while the earth was ripening for judgment; and grace enabled Noah to pass safely through the judgment!

2. This 144,000 (and no others) could learn and sing the "new song" that burst forth "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: … of harpers harping with their harps." A "new song" was begun in Revelation 5:9-10, upon the Lamb's taking the seven-sealed book of judgment, and in celebration of His worthiness to do so, and in view of the earthly "kingdom of priests" He thus made possible. The angels, and then all creation, celebrated thus Him that sat upon the throne and the Lamb.

Here in Revelation 14:1-20, we are not told the words of the "new song." But we know it was of rapturous, thunderous exultation. All heaven has been looking forward eagerly to it. It is connected directly with the setting up of the glorious reign on earth: for the prophetic appearance of the Lamb on Mount Zion with the 144,000 is the signal for it. Only one other event outdoes it in the rapture it gives to heaven, and that is the marriage of the Lamb, in Revelation 19:1-21. Therefore we ought to wait here; to let our hearts be filled full, as it were, with the spirit of this song and its occasion. If we are in tune with heaven, what gives heaven such ecstasy, must move us deeply! To those who have followed, in the prophets, the story of "the remnant," noting all God's love, His earthly purposes of blessing, His sympathy through their sorrows, in their sorrows (for, "in all their affliction he was afflicted"), His promises to them for the hideous days of the end-to such, the scene that opens Revelation 14:1-20, is a delight indescribable!

Into the heavenly song that now breaks, and swells on with its many "harpers harping with their harps" no one of earth could enter in spirit. Why? These 144,000 souls have passed through fire; have dwelt among lions-to be faithful! So, in their measure, have all those saints who have "suffered with Christ." After the troubles are over, and the Lord is come, and the kingdom set up in glory and majesty and power, on Mount Zion, and the Lord is "King over all the earth," and the thousand years of peace are come, it will no longer be possible to learn the song that these will learn-the song of absolute fellowship with the Lamb in suffering.

Ah, how much we miss! "All that would (will) live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). There is a will here. Do we choose to suffer with Christ, that we may also reign with Him? The Millennium, the peaceful days-how lovely they seem to us! But ah, how much more will this 144,000 know (though they are earthly saints) than others whether of Israel, or of the Gentile

nations! Christ Himself, “though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” God is infinite; and there are things of God, and in God, that only suffering gives the capacity to know! And the days are coming, when suffering for and with Christ will be forever over. Oh, let us listen when God tells us that this suffering remnant, while remaining earthly saints (and not having died, though being at the gates of death constantly, under Antichrist) learn that new song that will be sung “before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders.” No one else on earth will know it, or can know it![92]

[92] We should constantly remember that the Church, the Body of Christ, as ministered by Paul, as indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has a calling immeasurably above and beyond this 144,000; or, for that matter, far beyond anything yet revealed in the book of Revelation! Even in Hebrews, Christ and His own are seen as “all of one,” and they, His “brethren.” Where, so far, in Revelation, is such a relation set forth? Even in the seven churches of Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22, Christ is (and must be) Judge. The glorious, overwhelming truth of oneness with Christ, His “fulness,” members of Him, is not set forth. Oh, alas, we do not see it; or we forget it; or we neglect it; or we grieve the indwelling Comforter. And then, we are blind. We can no longer interpret Scripture. We part company with Paul’s epistles, and we desire Moses and Elijah along with Jesus-Moses to give a “rule of life,” and Elijah to call down fire if we fail to beep the “rule.”

3. “They had been purchased out of the earth.” That is, though being men on earth, they are not, properly, in the earth. Neither do they belong to heaven-though they learn, and can sing, the song that is being sung there. They have been “purchased.” They belong only to the Lamb and to His Father. They will be connected with the Lamb’s earthly rule and reign. They will therefore have their sphere on earth; but it will be manifest publicly that they have been purchased out of the earth. This, in reality, is true of Christians, now! Yet we are to remain among men, for Christ, as witnesses, and are bound up in many proper earthly relationships and responsibilities. But not these 144,000! They will have manifestly been bought away from earth entirely. We look for a body like to Christ’s heavenly body-a higher state than these. But these will be men in human flesh with the open seal of the Lamb and of His Father upon their foreheads! Their history looks three ways: a.It is the elect remnant of the old nation of Israel. b.It looks forward to that “receiving” of Israel in the 1000 years that shall be “as life from the dead” (Romans 11:15). c.It is in touch with heaven-it knows the song sung there!

Most wonderful counsels are those of God! And what a day it will be, when the Lamb of God returns to reign gloriously! What a day-with the Church in the heaven-lies (instead of the angels-Hebrews 2:5-8), with the twelve apostles (Matthias in Judas’ place) on thrones judging (as those with heavenly wisdom) the twelve tribes of Israel; with the Lord, the Lamb, as their returned Messiah, delighted in as the King in His beauty, the King of Israel; with the mountain of the Lord’s House (Zion) raised above all hills of earth, the wondrous temple of Ezekiel 40:1-49; Ezekiel 41:1-26; Ezekiel 42:1-20; Ezekiel 43:1-27; Ezekiel 44:1-31; Ezekiel 45:1-25; Ezekiel 46:1-24; Ezekiel 47:1-23; Ezekiel 48:1-35 upon it, and all the nations coming up to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts! And Christ, the Bridegroom saying to us, “Behold, thou art all fair My love, there is no spot in thee!” And all about us, at that time, these personal attendants of the Lamb, who follow Him “whithersoever He goeth”!

4. The fourth particular revealed regarding this company of 144,000 is, “These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.”

Now there is one way only to take these words and that is, in their literal sense. To do this aright, we must compare Scripture with Scripture: for the opinions or prejudices of men must not be allowed here. And first, let us remember again, that we are not dealing with Church things or with Church days. “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled,” we read in Hebrews 13:4. And again, Paul directs Timothy, “I desire therefore (in view of the tendencies described in 1 Timothy 5:14) that the younger (women) marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for reviling.” And concerning himself (1 Corinthians 9:5), “Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” And even in 1 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 where Paul declares, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman. … I would that all men were even as I myself. … It is good for them if they abide even as I,” he proceeds with the plainest directions for life in the marriage relation; which, even for those saints who are so desirous of prayer as to separate themselves “by consent for a season,” is yet the normal and safe relation in which to continue.

Yet we must, as the days grow darker, weigh well the apostle’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:25-31. These days are evil. “Distress” is upon us. The apostle uses the fact here to counsel the saints to ponder well the steps they take. “The time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives be as though they had none; and those that weep (especially in bereavement, evidently), as though they wept not; and those that rejoice (especially in domestic bliss), as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as though they possessed not; and those that use the world, as not using it to the full: for the stage scenery of this world is passing away!”

It is not to be with us (since our Lord and Head and Bridegroom is absent, rejected) as it was with Israel when they were told by Jehovah to enter Canaan and sit peacefully under their vines and fig trees. This world hates us as it hated Christ. Nor is it with us as it will be when our Lord returns and the meek shall at last inherit the earth. All is really present distress! Christ is off His throne. The Church is away from her Bridegroom. Israel is out of her land. The servants have not yet their rewards. Satan is yet in the heavenlies. Creation yet groans. Christ has not yet seen of the travail of His soul, and been satisfied. But if “distress” is upon us, so that we are to use earth-things “as though we used them not,” what will be the condition of those shortly to pass into The Great Tribulation-the elect remnant of Israel, the 144,000? If, even now, the apostle can say, “Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife” (1 Corinthians 7:27), what would he say to those of the days of which the Lord said: “Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! … For then shall be great tribulation such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:19; Matthew 24:21). But not merely in the wisdom of avoiding the complexities of days of distress, do these 144,000 appear. They are complete Nazarites unto God, as touching their relation to women. They are as was their Lord. The explanation given us is explicit: “They are virgins.” Because of the awful doctrine of Rome (really of demons, 1 Timothy 4:2-3), which forbids to marry, earnest students of Scripture have feared, or at least failed, to let the plain words of the Lord and His apostles have their simplest meaning-that it may be “given” of God to some men to abstain from the marriage relation, not from tradition or bondage, but to be the more peculiarly separated, in some service, unto Him. Only those thus divinely led and gifted, our Lord plainly says, in Matthew 19:11-12, can “receive this saying.” Also,

the connection with the kingdom is quite striking here in Matthew, though Paul speaks of the same “gift” in 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Corinthians 7:17. But in the fearful days of abandonment “as in the days of Noah”-when lust and violence will again fill the whole earth (as we see beginning now!) how wonderful to behold this company of 144,000 who have chosen to be entirely separated unto the Lamb and unto His Father, and who are thus, despite the days!

5. “These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Let us again remember that they are not the Church, which, as the wife of the Lamb, has a wholly different and closer relationship than any others can have. But these are the personal attendants-the bodyguard, so to speak, of the Lamb. Their movements with Him “whithersoever he goeth” remind us of that absolute one-ness of mind and movement of the cherubim (with Jehovah enthroned) of Ezekiel 1:1-28. Remember also the devotedness of David’s mighty men, who may well typify these: for both are connected with the throne of David-on Mount Zion.

6. The next word about this 144,000 is that they were “purchased from among men, the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.”

Now James tells us that the Church saints now are “a kind of first fruits” of God’s “creatures.” Paul definitely says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (or creation); and this is the great fact to be held by us in our walk, by the rule of a new creation (Galatians 6:15-16 R. V.).

We must discriminate here in Revelation 14:4. “First-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb” are kingdom words; and not mere salvation words. The “Church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:1-29) has already gone up on high; the millennial things are not yet come, the kingdom is not yet set up. But this 144,000 belong to that kingdom (as is seen at once by their being with the Lamb on Mount Zion). Marvelous wonder of God’s grace and keeping power: they come alive through the fire of Antichrist’s days, to walk as “first fruits” into the 1000 years-an earnest-purchase from among men for the reign of heaven on earth! And “first fruits” mean that harvest is on! The sight of this 144,000 should remind us that “life from the dead” for the world is made doubly sure by this preserved remnant, just as its promise is connected with the national receiving of Israel. Read Romans 11:15.

7. And finally we read: “In their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.” The days of Antichrist were days of falsehood. His miracles are called in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, “signs and lying wonders” (Greek, pseudos). And it is there said that because they received not the love of the truth God sent them “a working of error that they should believe the lie” (Greek, to pseudei). “The Lie” is that Satan is God, and that the Beast is his Christ and to be worshipped. The gulfs of deceit of damnation are opened wide! All is pseudos, pseudos, on every side. But in the mouth of this 144,000, we read, was found “no lie.” And the Greek word is, no pseudos!

Now when we turn to Zephaniah 3:13, and read the description of the remnant of Israel after the Millennium has begun, we find: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid”-we are at once reminded of those great passages in Jeremiah 31:1-40 and Ezekiel 36:1-38, which describe in detail the manner of God’s salvation which He will visit upon the saved of Israel in millennial times. “I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it” (Jeremiah). “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will

take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Now all this must be literally fulfilled for Israel. This is no description of our salvation-which is that ye are in Christ; Christ is in you; and the indwelling Spirit would "form Christ" within you. But this prophetic utterance describes the fulfilment by restored Israel of "every jot and tittle of the law" before the "heaven and earth pass away"-as they must do at the close of the 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-15).

These first fruits, therefore, of Israel, this 144,000, are "without blemish" (Revelation 14:5). They are a public example and pledge of what the "all-righteous" nation of Israel will be in the Millennium! What will happen to Israel has already happened to them! "Without blemish" -men on earth in the flesh!

Brethren, we have no excuses to make for dwelling thus upon this 144,000. To understand prophecy is to become absorbed (amidst other wonders) with what God has said He will do to, and through, the remnant of Israel! And we would the more magnify Jehovah's promises concerning Israel and the coming thousand years' reign of Christ "before his ancients gloriously" (A. V.), because some who claim loudly to be "fundamentalists" either deny Israel's future glory wholly or resort to some poor word like "a-millennialism,"-that is, no Millennium. In the rest of Revelation 14:1-20, God witnesses publicly by six angels against the awful state of things brought about by Antichrist in Revelation 13:1-18, and prophetically pictures the fast coming judgment in the two sickles.

01.13. Chapter 13: The Six Other Angels- Rev_14:6-20

Chapter 13: The Six “Other” Angels- Revelation 14:6-20 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters. This is a gospel, not an announcement of doom, as is Revelation 13:8; although there is no record that it is believed or heeded. It may not be. Noah was a “preacher of righteousness,” in view of the coming flood; but no one believed him except his own family. This gospel is called (and here alone in the whole Bible) an eternal gospel; one adapted for all ages (the adjective is aionion, that is, “constantly befitting,” “everlastingly applicable”). But it is peculiarly so at the hour when the whole earth, except God’s elect, are madly and blindly worshipping the Beast and his image (Revelation 13:8). And it must be constantly remembered that the days of the Antichrist are on, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21, Revelation 17:1-18, Revelation 18:1-24 -despite prophetic visions of both the coming victory and kingdom of Christ, and of the Great Day of Wrath which shall bring that kingdom in. Universal idolatry, hideous, unreasonable, absurd, God-provoking, as it is, will fill the earth during the time of our present chapter. Slavish, abject prostration before an image of the most wicked man of the human race, with its consequent obliteration of the glory of the Creator, will prevail, even among the majority of Israel (Daniel 9:27; Isaiah 28:15).

God created man in “his own image”; but six times in Revelation the worship of the Beast is described as directed to “his image.”

Now this hateful thing idolatry is called in Romans 1:23, changing “the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man.” And the fact is that this departure was willful, as seen in Romans 1:20, “The invisible things of him since the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity.”

We see then at once a most cogent reason for calling this message an eternal gospel; for it is the recalling of men to the fear of the living God as Creator, and giving Him worship; inasmuch as He is the One who hath “made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.” In the midst of the multitude of utterances by the Old Testament prophets as to God’s anger at idolatry, one stands out like a flash of lightning in a blackening sky. It is the single Aramaic verse in the great Hebrew prophecy of Jeremiah-(Aramaic or Syrian being the language of the nations, over and against God’s language, the Hebrew) - Jeremiah 10:11, “Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens.”

Now we find an angel flying in mid heaven proclaiming this eternal gospel. This should not astonish us. It is then no longer the Church age, when the gospel of reconciliation through the blood of the Cross is being proclaimed for simple faith. (How astonishing that any Christian should dream that the true Church is on earth at the time we are considering!) Angels warned Lot in

Sodom and rescued him there from doom. The Law on Sinai was ministered by angels (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19) and especially by one-possibly Michael (Exodus 23:20-23; Exodus 33:2). Jehovah distinctly declares of this angel “my name is in him,” although Moses was not permitted to know him (Exodus 33:12). The very name “angel,” both in Hebrew and Greek, means “messenger,” and an angel from God is one with a message or commission from Him. Therefore we do not wonder that when universal idolatry prevails, man having refused to hearken to the preachers of the gospel of grace, and God having withdrawn them by the rapture of the Church, he will declare this eternal gospel by the mouth of a mighty angel, who, flying “in mid heaven” all over the earth, will proclaim to every creature, in words understandable, and unmistakable, that the hour of God’s judgment has come; bidding men turn quickly to the Creator of them, and of all things! The Prophetic Announcement of Great Babylon’s Fall And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Babylon occupies much notice in Scripture but Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 18:1-24 are devoted to it. Here, however, let us note:

1. Babylon has been the center of Satan’s operations from the flood onward; idolatry as far as we have any knowledge began there; and the Babylonian system was extended to all the nations, being Satan’s plan to destroy the knowledge and worship of Jehovah; substituting therefore himself.

2. We find here the pregnant expression concerning Babylon the great, “The wine of the wrath of her fornication.” These are three distinct subjects. First, in Jeremiah 51:7 we read, “Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah’s hand that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.” It is the madness of Babylon’s idolatry that is described in Jeremiah 50:38 : “It is a land of graven images, and they are mad over idols.” This was Babylon’s wine. Next, we have in Jeremiah 25:15, the wine of wrath, “Take this cup of the wine of wrath at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee, to drink it.” Loving the creature rather than the Creator, and idolatry rather than God, God gave them over to the system of Babylonian Satanism that brought God’s wrath upon them. [93]

[93] Jeremiah 25:15-26 is an astounding passage, revealing as it does the judicial operations of Jehovah through His prophets outlined in God’s commission to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:10 : “I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” Next is recorded the awful power for evil committed to Babylon, destroying with its idolatrous influence one nation after another,-Judah, Egypt, Uz, Philistia, and so on, 21 or 22 peoples being enumerated in the series, ending with the king of Sheshach-“he shall drink after them!” That is, the city of Babylon, the source of destruction, was to be the last destroyed, which we find fulfilled in The Revelation-Sheshach is the ancient name of Babylon (Revelation 16:19).

Thirdly, the last subject is “fornication.” Remember this, when we study Revelation 17:1-5; Revelation 18:3.

3. “Fallen, fallen” indicates coming double destruction, as Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 will show: of a system, then of a city. The idolatry which originated at Babylon will yet bring wrath on all the nations, and lastly cast Babylon down to the doom of Sodom. See Jeremiah 50:40 -yet future, we believe. The Angelic Warning of the Eternal Doom of the Beast-worshippers And

another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

God's faithful warning comes again by the mouth of an angel, and that "with a great voice." Not only that the Beast's rebuilt capital city Babylon is to "fall"-is fallen, in God's vision, but that unending torment awaits the Beast's worshippers.

What a fearful "hour of trial" is coming on the earth! (Revelation 3:10). Note that to involve the torment of Revelation 14:10-11, one will not only have "worshipped" the Beast or his image, but have deliberately taken his mark -shut out all God's warnings, and chosen Satan's Christ.

Now see what God at last justly does:

1. He withdraws all mercy forever-the wine of His wrath that these shall drink will be "unmixed," unmingled with any compassion whatsoever.

2. It will be in "the cup of his anger" that His wrath will be served out to them. The impenitent daily and hourly "treasure up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath": but God withholds His anger. He waits. He suffers long and is kind. But-"who may stand in Thy sight when once thou art angry?" (Psalms 76:7); Consider an Infinite Being "willing" (at last) "to show His wrath and make His power known." Consider His words, "Vengeance is mine: I will repay." The same verse that says "love is strong as death" declares "jealousy is cruel as Sheol." The creature of this human race for whom His Son died who turns his back on the God whose name is Love, and chooses His enemy, the old serpent and murderer-God plainly tells us what He will do with him! He shall have "indignation forever"!

3. Consider the carefully described means of visitation upon such: "tormented with fire and brimstone." Brimstone is the most terrible substance known in its action upon human flesh-in its torment when it touches the body. Combined with fire it is absolute agony, unutterable anguish! And it is meant to be so: for it will be the infliction of divine vengeance unlimited.

4. Consider the onlookers: "In the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb"! Vast, "innumerable hosts," of those holy servants of God who watched the fearful choice of these now doomed humans, for whom, to the angelic astonishment, the Son of God once tasted death,-men that hated love and despised holiness: all the countless millions of angels are there, in deep, awful and holy approval of the divine sentence, - for their God hath done this! And in the presence of the Lamb! Oh, where in the universe is such a sight? Mercy is gone forever if the Lamb stands there: and He will![94]

[94] Let the daringly foolish that deny eternal punishment, and who profess to believe in a God incapable of wrath stay away from this spot!

5. Consider the duration: "The smoke of their torment (compare Genesis 19:24; Genesis 19:28) goeth up for ever and ever."[95] And its unceasingness: "They have no rest day and night." Let

God speak. Let us be still, and believe, and fear. The wickedness of those who even think rebellion against the eternal retribution described thus plainly by God, will become so great as to ruin all faith in God's Word. It is not your right to question. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth!" (Isaiah 45:9).

[95] The definite article is not used here. It is eis aionas aionon; for the abstract thought of "age-abidingness" is before us. In Revelation 20:10 the definite article is used, referring to this passage, and emphasizing the fact that the torment (which the wicked share with the Devil-Matthew 25:41) will endure through all the endless ages.

6. Finally, behold the marks of God's patient elect, "the saints," in contrast with these self-doomed and damned rebels. God will have His witnesses, in every scene of man's sin. These, of course, are not the Church. They are God's "elect" of Luke 18:1-8, who will cry for avenging from the adversary, in that awful time of trouble,-the remnant of Israel and those who help them. They are marked by "keeping the commandments of God," for they are on Old Testament ground yet, as to law. And they have also "the faith of Jesus," which is the earthly, Jewish confession of Him, according to Matthew's gospel. What they show, preeminently, is "patience." They must wait, and suffer, and still wait; as the Lord saith in Luke 21:19 : "In your patience ye shall win your souls."

Saints' Death Best! And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.

Never before could such a word be spoken! Always it had been better, heretofore, to live out the full time of a saint's pilgrimage on earth: both for the sake of others, and for the learning of obedience by daily divine discipline. Now, however, the fearful days of Antichrist are on! Death is better than life, and for two reasons here announced by the Spirit:

1. Rest will be entered upon from their labors. The word here is hina-in order that they may rest. Rest is; at last obtainable in no other way but by death. When our Lord said to the mob led by Judas in Gethsemane, "This is your hour, and the authority of darkness" (Luke 22:53 -Greek), He contrasted that hour with "when I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched not forth your hands against me." No wonder the next words are, "And they seized him." There was no path then open to Him but death, if He would come home to His Father. And there is a like hour coming on the whole world (Revelation 3:10). He (the Beast) shall "wear out the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:25). "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Revelation 13:7). Not a life of discipline under God's hand (as now) but death, (and doubtless with tortures such as only ages of Satanic malignity make possible), will be the lot of the faithful of those days-those "in the Lord." Rest, therefore, will come only through dying!

Neither will it be, as now with us, that they can expect the Lord at any moment. Prophetic times will be known then, and just how much of the 42 months is left!

2. The second reason that those will be "blessed" who die "in the Lord" at that time, is-that their works accompany them. Four times in this very chapter the Greek work translated "follow" (aboloutheo) is used: in Revelation 14:4, "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"; in Revelation 14:8, "a second angel followed"; in Revelation 14:9, "a third, followed them." It is the word used of the disciples and multitudes "following," in accompanying our Lord (Matthew 4:25; Matthew 8:1,

etc.). So that we see that these are the last martyrs, in Revelation 14:13. They are seen as the third company of the reigners with Christ, in Revelation 20:6. [96] They get a higher place than those, even of Israel, who merely “inherit the kingdom” as in Matthew 25:31-46.

[96] The first are those who are already seen sitting on the thrones, to whom “judgment” was given-the Church, according to 1 Corinthians 6:2; the second company are, we believe, those martyrs seen under the fifth seal, in Revelation 6:1-17 -now at last raised (they lived) and those also up to the days of the Beast; and the third-the martyrs under the Beast, as in Revelation 14:13. They are the last; when their company is made up, the Lord arrives to avenge them all. See Revelation 6:11.

Notice that John is called to write, here. It is of especial importance, therefore,-to be laid to heart in particular. And while Revelation 14:13 of our chapter has always a precious application to the death of any saint, it is only these last martyrs to whom the Word is directly addressed. “From henceforth” is a definite time-mark. (It is aparti, as in Matthew 23:39; Matthew 26:29; Matthew 26:64.) It denotes a change of circumstances and conditions; and literally is: “from now.” The Vision of the Harvest of the Earth And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

It is, we have no doubt, the Lord Jesus who is set forth here; but we must attend, in interpreting a passage, to what that passage sets forth. Then we compare it with other Scriptures. And thus we see here:

1. The “white cloud.” This is the first object brought before the Seer’s eyes.

2. One is sitting upon the cloud. Although He “maketh the clouds his chariot” and will come thereon, it is His position, not His movement, here noticed.

3. This Sitter appears as a son of man. There is no note here of the marvellous display of glory which our Lord always emphasized as attending His return as Son of man (Matthew 24:30; Mark 8:38, etc.). The fact that this One who is to reap the earth is a son of man is alone set forth. But compare the words of our Lord in John 5:22; John 5:27 : the Father “hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: … and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man.” (Do not read “the son of man,” here, or you will miss the meaning.)

4. On the head of Him sitting on the cloud is a golden crown. The mere fact that He is sitting as a God-appointed King, is indicated-His royal right, for He will come as Son of man, and inherit all dominion as such. Psalms 8:6 will be fulfilled.

5. “In his hand a sharp sickle.” Not the glory of His person, or the process of His coming, but the fact that He is ready with a reaping instrument, is here emphasized. Rights over the harvest, (whatever the harvest is to be) are manifest. “Thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor’s standing grain,” said the law. Therefore, He is to reap a field over which He has authority. Now, it is striking to discover that the “sickle” is mentioned just twelve times in the Bible, and seven of

these are in our verses here! Also that the Greek word translated “sharp” (oxus) occurs seven times in The Revelation: four times describing the sickle here, and three times, that two-edged sword which proceeds from the Lord’s mouth for searching judgment. Inasmuch, therefore, as all after Revelation 4:1, as regards Church matters is meta tauta, or “after these things”; and inasmuch as the preserved remnant of 144,000 is seen before this (Revelation 14:7 and Revelation 14:1-5); and inasmuch as the martyrs under the Beast are addressed in Revelation 14:13, as the blessed who shall die: are there any left for this sharp sickle, but the wicked of the earth?

6. “Another angel … from the temple”; this is evidently the temple in heaven, as in Revelation 14:17. From the presence of the Father, who hath set within His own authority-time and seasons (Acts 1:7; Matthew 24:36) the message is sent by this angelic mouth to the Lord to “send forth his sickle.” We need not wonder at this. Angels have the present world in their administration; they know and report to God continually as to its matters; especially, as in Sodom’s case (Genesis 18:1-33; Genesis 19:1-38); and that of Ahab (1 Kings 22:1-53), concerning times when iniquity is full, and judgment is due. So the “crying with a great voice” is really God’s message to Christ, who has been, all along “expecting” such a message (Hebrews 10:12-13; Psalms 2:7-9).

7. “Send forth thy sickle, and reap.” Many say this reaping is of both saints and sinners. But we feel that this ‘Revelation scene is purely one of judgment. From the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:1-58) we learn that “the harvest is the consummation of the age.” But, while in the parable, the householder says: “In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn”; in the interpretation of the parable, the Lord says: “The harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the age. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Now note most carefully here, that while the angels gather out the wicked for the fire, they leave the righteous where they are, on earth, where the kingdom is set up. “My barn,” then, of the parable, becomes, necessarily, this earth as ruled by the Lord, when His Father’s kingdom has at last come. Therefore the “sickle” of Revelation 14:1-20 is seen to be one primarily of judgment on the wicked. [97]

[97] That the angels will also “gather together” the earthly elect at the Son of man’s coming is seen in Matthew 24:31. But that these are not “reaped” as are the others, is seen from the preceding verse, where “all the tribes of the earth mourn” at His appearing.

8. “The hour to reap is come.” This is an ominous announcement! Through the Old Testament prophets again and again we have the warning of a harvest time for the wicked, at this very end-time. We shall note this especially in the next vision-of the vintage. But both harvest and vintage are set forth in Joel 3:13 : “Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: Come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.” This verse in itself is a complete answer to those who claim that the harvest in Revelation 14:1-20 means the saved, and the winepress the wicked. Both passages in Joel refer to the wicked; and that both refer to the wicked in Revelation 14:1-20, is shown by the place in The Revelation where it is found and by its

conformity to all other Scripture. Note also the sickle, in Joel 3:1-21! It is there used, as here, for cutting down the over-ripe workers of iniquity!

9. “For the harvest of the earth is dry.” The Greek word here is the same as is used of the fig-tree in Mark 11:20; and in Luke 23:31 the adjective form is used: “What shall be done in the dry?”-meaning the dreadful “last state” of Israel in the last days! And at this reaping time of all the earth!

Next we have the Actor, the act, and the result-all that God desires us to see: all in one brief sentence! It involves, of course, the second coming of the King of kings, of Revelation 19:1-21, with all the heavenly hosts in the Great Day of Wrath. But God wants us to behold, in the majestic simplicity of Deity, what will be done, ere the details come before us. Ah, and alas! how little men dream of the end of all their pride and their ambitions! “The earth was reaped”: that is the end of all things of which man boasts! The Vine of the Earth and the Winepress of Blood And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Here is before us-not the harvest, but the vine of the earth. Christ is the true Vine. But we now have before us those in active living league with Antichrist! The true Church is gone; false Christianity swallowed up by the Beast and his ten kings (Revelation 17:16-18), and all the earth (but “the elect” of those days) of “one mind, to give their kingdom unto the beast”-Satan’s Christ.

Thus comes “the vine of the earth.” Moses spake long ago of this day, in his great song in Deuteronomy 32:31-35 :

“For their rock is not as our Rock, Even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, And of the fields of Gomorrah: Their grapes are grapes of gall Their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of serpents, And the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with me, Sealed up among my treasures?

Vengeance is mine, and recompense, At the time when their foot shall slide: For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things that are to come upon them shall make haste.” When we come to the gathering of the nations, in Revelation 16:1-21, to Armageddon, we can look more fully at the great movement under Antichrist to “cut off Israel from being a nation.” But we must quote Joel’s words here:

“Proclaim ye this among the nations: Prepare war; stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears.” (Just the reverse of what Christ the Prince of Peace will do when He comes! - Isaiah 2:4.) “Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat (just east of Jerusalem); for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of

decision" (Joel 3:12-14).

It needs to be known and remembered by us all that this earth is at war with God Almighty! And, although today is a time of salvation, and of restraining grace, when that salvation ceases, and restraint is removed, the whole earth will rush to cut off the name of Israel from the earth (Psalms 83:1-18).

Then God will meet them! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." The Lamb of God will come forth. As the Deliverer of Israel He will fulfill Isaiah 63:1-19. He will trample the embattled nations of this whole earth, millions upon millions of them, from Bozrah, in Edom, (where He will begin-Isaiah 63:1) to Megiddo at the foot of Mt. Carmel-the Harmagedon, or Armageddon of Scripture.

What movements of God's "mighty ones" are in Revelation 14:19. For now we quote the verse in Joel 3:1-21 which we omitted above: "Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down O Jehovah." We know, from Revelation 16:13-14, that the movement of the nations to Armageddon will be of Satanic energy (though commanded, prophetically, of God) but the disposition of those forces of all the earth into such a place and order that they may be trampled as one mass by the Son of Man Himself (Isaiah 63:1-19; Revelation 19:15) will be by angelic power.

Ah, such a fearful sight! Rivers of human blood "unto the bridles of the horses"! Yet it will be. If Josephus could say that when Jerusalem was taken by Titus, the Roman soldiers "obstructed the very lanes with dead bodies; and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fires of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood" (Wars: 6, 8) - what folly to doubt this word of God that a river of blood will run when the Son of God tramples the nations of all the earth in the Almighty's anger! Yea, a river from Edom to Carmel, 1600 furlongs! We dare not read the verse that tells this, except as God's literal fore view of fact!

Here in Revelation 14:20 is the Great Day of Wrath of all the prophets. Isaiah 34:1-17 tells us that Edom (where the slaughter begins) shall be "made drunken with blood," and its very dust "fat with fatness" at that slaughter. "Without the city" means Jerusalem. Blood to "the bridles of the horses"-four feet of human blood for two hundred miles!

It is a literal trampling of the enemies of the Lord, in His fury: for He so declares, in Isaiah 63:1-19.

Reader, no honest soul can read Revelation 14:1-20, and ever hear again Satan's preachers of "a world growing better and better."

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah."

Chapter 17

01.14. Chapter 14: The Seven Last Plagues- Rev_15:1-8; Rev_16:1-21

Chapter 14: The Seven Last Plagues- Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21 The Day of Wrath is begun by the appearing on earth of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man, in Palestine, trampling the allied armies of all the earth (Revelation 14:20; Revelation 19:19-21). This day inaugurates the thousand-year reign.

Therefore, all judgments seen under the seals, trumpets and vials are prior to this Great Day. They are preliminary visitations of wrath before the Great Day of Wrath at Christ's coming to earth. This fact should be constantly kept in mind. We shall repeat it again and again. The Four Gospels furnish us with an excellent example of that method of God's Word which we find in the book of Revelation. Matthew sets forth Christ as Israel's Messiah; Mark, as Jehovah's Servant; Luke, as Son of Man; John, as Son of God; each book goes over the same period, each bringing out certain peculiar phases of the Lord's life on earth. In The Revelation we saw that the sixth seal revealed in a panoramic, prophetic way the Great Day itself, though several years before it. Then, under the seventh seal, we went back to various particulars, leading up to that Great Day. Again, the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15-18) revealed the anger of the nations, the coming of God's wrath, and the accompanying tremendous matters: yet we went back, in Revelation 12:1-17 and Revelation 13:1-18, to consider in vision God's plan about Israel,-the woman's warfare with Satan, the development of the Antichrist, etc.

Then again, at the close of Revelation 14:1-20, we had a vision of the Son of Man reaping the harvest of earth, and treading the winepress of Armageddon, destroying the rebel nations, who had gathered to destroy Israel. But now, in Revelation 15:1-8 and Revelation 16:1-21 we return to consider certain particulars preceding the Great Day of Wrath and Armageddon: visitations of God's preliminary judgments, just as the ten plagues in Egypt were preliminary to the complete overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea.

We must keep this in mind, lest we try to make the book of Revelation a mere chronological narrative.

We may call attention further to this method in the case of "Babylon the great." In Revelation 14:8, Babylon is announced as fallen, but it is only so in anticipation. In our present Revelation 16:19 we observe her visitation in the earthquake of the seventh vial. Then, in Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 18:1-24 we go back to consider what Babylon is; her history; her relation to the world-power and to the Antichrist; and her final earthly destruction.

Revelation 15:1-8 and Revelation 16:1-21 are a complete section so we will give the outline of their contents here:

1. "Another sign in heaven"-the Seven last Wrath-Angels, Revelation 15:1.

2. The Vision of the Victors Over the Beast, Revelation 15:2-4. (As always preceding judgment, the triumph of Grace is shown: compare Revelation 7:1; Revelation 7:3; Revelation 7:9.)

3. The Connection of the Seven Vials of Wrath with the Heavenly Temple, and the Reason Therefore, Revelation 15:5-8; compare Revelation 11:19.

4. The Seven Terrible Vials of Wrath. (Literal plagues, of course, like those upon Egypt) Revelation 16:2-21. The Seven Last Wrath-Angels And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. The first “sign,”[98] in Revelation 12:1, revealed God’s heavenly counsels concerning Israel; the second in Revelation 12:3, the great opposer of those counsels, the Dragon, in his opposition to God’s plan of governing this earth by His Son through redeemed Israel. Satan opposes God’s Christ with his false Christ in Revelation 13:1-18. All the nations of the earth are by this devilish scheme led into Satan-worship. This brings the flood of evil to its height and calls forth the divine judgments of the seven vials of wrath, Revelation 15:1-8 and Revelation 16:1-21.

[98] We find the word seemeion (translated “wonder” in the King James Version, and “sign” in the Revised Version) occurs seventy-seven times in the New Testament, beginning with Matthew 12:38-39. It is sometimes rendered “miracle” in the King James Version (where rhetoric rather than accuracy so often governs). It is not to be confused with “mystery” (musteerion); for in the very first verse of Revelation the word is used in verb-form: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, the things about to come to pass … and he signified it, by his angel,” etc. The whole book of The Revelation thus is governed by this word, which sets forth the manner in general of its presentation to John. Our Lord’s use of this verb in John 12:33; John 18:32; John 21:19, signifying by what … death he should die,” plainly shows that instead of the word setting forth something mysterious or hidden, the contrary the plainest announcement of the facts that would occur was given.

It is necessary to rid our minds of that unbelieving: conception of The Revelation that fills it with constant secrets, making it amount to an hallucination. The Lord commanded John not to seal it up (Revelation 22:10); and it is therefore not sealed, but open to Christ’s own (Revelation 1:1). The use therefore of the word “sign” in Revelation 15:1 is not intended to convey in the least the thought that this chapter and the following one contain unreal things, or those not literal facts; but the exact opposite. The word “great,” moreover, indicates that something of outstanding importance is to be set forth.

Consequently, when those judgments are about to take place, it is announced that it is a “great and marvellous” thing that is signified. When Israel had the terrible breach with Jehovah at Sinai, and God had finally agreed to pardon them, He said in Exodus 34:10 : “Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation.”

These seven angels, pouring out the seven bowls of wrath, are indeed a “great” sign, for “in them is finished the wrath of God.” We shall see them proceed from the temple of God in heaven-all patience having been now exhausted. (The temple stood for mercy and worship.) The sign is also “marvellous,” for the more we study these chapters the more the weight of these final terrible visitations grows upon us. It is the last expression of God’s indignation before Christ comes in person in the Great Day of Wrath. [99]

[99] Remember constantly that Christ must come Himself, at the last, and tread the winepress alone, in His anger (Isaiah 63:3-5). The wrath of God is general, world-wide, and in view of man's iniquity and idolatry. The wrath of the Lamb is particular-against Antichrist and his king and armies gathered for the double purpose of cutting off Israel from being a nation (Psalms 83:4), and of "making war" against the Lamb (whose presence, with His army, seems to be evident to those on earth- Revelation 19:19; Zechariah 12:10) to prevent His rescue of beleaguered Israel.

Before the out-pouring of these terrible vials, however, God gives us a vision of those who triumphed over the indescribable awfulness of the days of the Beast. (Revelation 15:2-4). And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

Again the "sea of glass" comes into view. It was "like unto crystal" in Revelation 4:6 when first seen. From that passage also we are shown its position "before the throne." This description is of vastness-a sea: like unto glass-settled, unruffled, peace; like unto crystal-the purity of God's own Throne. See "the terrible crystal" of the firmament above the cherubim in Ezekiel 1:22, which appears to be the same as in Exodus 24:10.

Now, in our lesson, this sea of glass is "mingled with fire." And this has, we believe, a two-fold significance. First, these saints "that come off victorious" have been called to pass through the very worst furnace of trial ever known. It has been well said that while we are called on to oppose the world, the flesh, and the Devil, these have had a fourth foe, even Satan's Christ, a being brought back from the abyss, and known to be such, to whom all the earth has been given over, and whose delusions were so strong as to deceive if it were possible, the very elect. Second, God Himself is "a consuming fire." Moses saw the bush, that it was not burnt, although the fire was there! We are here beholding the last martyrs before Christ's coming, and it should thrill our hearts to read that this glassy sea before God is now "mingled with fire." It celebrates on the one hand what they will have passed through and on the other hand their nearness to and association with God!

We have then, "those that come off victorious (literally 'those conquering away from') from the beast and from the image of him, and from the number of the name of him," standing upon this sea. We also find that they have "harps of God," i.e., as Alford so well says: "part of the instruments of heaven, used solely for the praise of God"; and (Govett) "real instruments, of God's making."

Now, although the Church of God (which these are not) has an unspeakably higher vocation than they, being members of Christ Himself, yet we must not fail to give God the glory for the victory of these through the greatest possible temptation and trial God's great enemy could bring upon them. We must not fail to enter in spirit into the glorious reward given them. Earth has bowed beneath the hideous blandishments of Satan's Christ; these resisted him unto death. They then passed

through fire, yea, all the fires and agonies possible, and now they stand on that glorious crystal sea, mingled with heavenly fire, which celebrates their victory. And what do they sing to the accompaniment of those heavenly harps? “The song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”[100]

[100] It is deeply suggestive that Moses is here called “the bondservant (doulos) of God” and the Lord is called, as is usual in this book, the diminutive arnion, which means “the little lamb”! (Compare amnos in John 1:29-36; 1 Peter 1:19; Acts 8:32). DeWette surely rightly believes that the change to the diminutive arnion, a word used only in the Apocalypse, is meant to put forward permanently the idea of His meekness and innocence. It is the exaltation noted as the result of perfect obedient patience in Php 2:6-11; and it is of the utmost importance that we grasp firmly and hold fast constantly the fact that it is God the Father who exalts Christ as the result of His patience; that it is God the Father who insists upon Christ’s judging and executing judgment because of His infinite patience and humiliation (He being the Creator) in becoming a Son of Man, and dying the death of the cross. In our Lord’s lovely life He left absolutely everything to the Father, who win in due season absolutely exalt Him, and that in the scene of His former rejection and shame.

Note then, in the song they sing, the celebration first of the works, and then of the ways of “the Lord God, the Almighty,” the “King of the ages.” No gracious heart can read Revelation 15:3-4 repeatedly without being profoundly moved. The song of Moses celebrated the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea-the mighty work of God. Jehovah is “fearful in praises, doing wonders.” The song of the Lamb brings out God’s ways as righteous and true. Christ prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” The ways of God with the Lamb involved for him all meekness and suffering, as the path to kingdom and power.

Moses stands for the power of Jehovah who “caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,” who brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, by the stretched-out arm of might. The expression, “the Lamb,” reminds us of those ways of unutterable grace, though in righteousness and truth, in which our Lord walked on earth. These witnesses, upon the glassy sea, celebrate this double song before God.

How beautiful are their words as they address them directly to the God for whom they suffered all things rather than yield to Satan! “Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name?” Again, “Thou only art holy.” These witnesses chose holiness in the face of a world gone over to sin; and they have come where holiness alone is! There is exquisite beauty here. And again, their faith in the victory of their God is declared: “All the nations shall come and worship before thee.” Not yet has this come to pass, yet they are celebrating it in God’s very presence!

Finally they cry, “Thy righteous acts have been made manifest.” Coming from those who passed through the horrors of the persecution, torment and fire of the Beast, through all the rage of Satan, these are most beautiful words![101]

[101] “The fiery persecution under the Beast was a trial far exceeding in its combination of suffering anything hitherto experienced (Mark 13:19). The pagan persecutions of early times, and the still more exquisite and refined torments under Papal Rome, come short of the horrors of the Great Tribulation” (Scott).

They find not a word of fault with their God. All His acts they call “righteous acts”! Mediate upon this, ye who feel yourselves tempted and tried and suffering over-much. Some day you will declare His ways to be good and His acts to be righteous! The Connection of the Seven Vials of Wrath with the Heavenly Temple And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with precious stone, pure and bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

1. There is a literal temple of God in heaven. Unless this is clearly seen and believed, much will be obscure. Was not Moses commanded when he was to make the tabernacle, “see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount” (Exodus 25:40)? Now these tabernacle things are distinctly called, in Hebrews 9:23, “copies of the things in the heavens.”

We saw in Revelation 11:19, that “there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.” Also, in Revelation 8:3, we find a golden altar before the throne of heaven.

2. It is true that in the New Jerusalem John beholds no temple; and the reason is given that our Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. In that city they will see His face directly. All formal mat- ters are past-especially governmental matters such as are connected with the temple of which we read in The Revelation 3:1-22. With the heavenly temple in The Revelation, only judgment matters are connected. Even in Revelation 8:3-5, where the prayers of God’s saints come up, it is with the effect upon earth of thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake! Again in Revelation 11:19, upon the opening of the temple of God in heaven, and the vision of the ark of His covenant, there follow “lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.” And now, upon the opening of the temple in our present chapter there came forth the seven angels with the seven last plagues.

4. We find in the temple, in Revelation 11:19, the ark of God’s covenant; and again, in Revelation 15:5, the remarkable expression “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven.” This indicates that God is about to fulfill His covenanted promises toward Israel, for to Israel belong the covenanted things (Romans 9:4).

We are back on Old Testament ground, prophetically. Consequently, we saw in Revelation 12:1, immediately after the mention of the ark of God’s covenant, the great sign which sets forth in heaven God’s counsels concerning the Woman, who represents Israel. They will involve the full accomplishment of God’s word in Psalms 2:1-12 -that He will set His king upon His holy hill of Zion,-despite the opposition of all the earth! In connection with the opening of the temple in Revelation 11:1-19, we had not only the vision of the Woman and the Dragon, but the war in heaven, the casting out of Satan into earth, the bringing forth of the Antichrist and his False Prophet, and the ghastly reign of iniquity on earth, with the fearful persecutions of God’s saints.

5. Now we are to behold the last plagues, i.e., those final visitations of God upon the nations, and the vexing of them in His sore displeasure, before He sends His Christ, the Lamb of God, to

execute the fierceness of His wrath in person. For the earth is now worshipping the Beast: and the jealousy of the Living God burns like fire!

6. One of the four living creatures, those beings “full of eyes,” deep in the intelligence of the purposes of the Almighty, now gives to these seven angels “seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.” There is finality about this scene that brings the utmost awe into our hearts. The temple from which these angels come; their holy glittering aspect; the bowls of wrath ready to be bestowed for pouring; the solemn formal presentation of a bowl to each angel; the material of these bowls -gold, setting forth the very glory of God; the fact that these bowls are full; and that they are full, not of grace, as when David said, “I will take the cup of salvation”; nor of mixed mercy and wrath, as when Habakkuk cried, “In wrath remember mercy”-no longer this: but “full of the wrath of God.” The name of God here is connected definitely with these solemn words, “the wrath of God, who liveth unto the ages of the ages.” Let us speak in low, slow, measured words here. Let us fear; and observe earth’s wickedness with its attendant punishment, with deep humility and awe!

7. What follows should be contrasted with like scenes, when mercy was present:

“The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power.”

We read in Exodus 40:34-35 words of great blessedness. Moses had constructed the tabernacle which God said He desired that “He might dwell among them,” and had finished it, according to the divine directions:

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.” This was blessing indeed! Again, when Solomon had built the temple according to the directions given David, his father, by the Spirit of God, and had made his great prayer of dedication, we read in 2 Chronicles 7:1-4 :

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah filled Jehovah’s house. And all the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah was upon the house; and they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and gave thanks unto Jehovah, saying for he is good; for his loving kindness endureth for ever.”

Here again was unlimited blessing. The very priests are unable to enter the temple or to minister; for all was full of the glory of the blessed presence of Jehovah. But what a fearful contrast here in Revelation! Sin had caused God to leave His earthly house in Jerusalem: first the glory left (Ezekiel 8:1-18; Ezekiel 9:1-11; Ezekiel 10:1-22; Ezekiel 11:1-25); then the Lord of the house Himself came and saw, and left it desolate (Matthew 23:37-38).

Now, in Revelation 14:1-20, the majority of Israel are in covenant with Antichrist himself (Daniel 9:27; John 5:43); the nations are in hellish league with Satan to refuse God’s Son His throne. So we read these awful words:

“None was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.” No words of ours are needed here. Only calm reflection upon the fact. God will so turn to

anger, at last, that all else ceases, even in heaven! Wrath will be the only business. “Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?” (Psalms 76:7).

Ah, Russia, could you but read and mark and turn and repent!

Ah, America, could you but know the end of your godless ways! The world seeks today the cause of the “great depression”; but she does not seek that God who caused it, and who alone can relieve it! That we may understand these seven last plagues, three things must be held firmly in mind:

First, that the whole earth (except God’s elect) has gone mad after the Beast (Revelation 13:8), and God’s “hot displeasure” must be manifested, according to Revelation 15:8. “God will listen to naught now but to the demands of His righteous indignation. The sin of earth is beyond endurance; the unpardonable sin is abroad.” “Ah,” cries the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, “I will ease me of mine adversaries!” There must be this divine relief for Him who declares, “Vengeance is mine.” Centuries of long-suffering mocked, despised, by a devil-worshipping earth, arouse at last divine fury. So these bowls of wrath are poured out on the whole world of rebels.

Second, that the all-nation invasion of Palestine by the Beast and his armies, while it is prepared for, under the sixth bowl (Revelation 16:12-16), and though the earth-armies are gathered to Armageddon, yet they will be given over to Christ Himself, to be trodden down at His personal coming in the Great Day of Wrath, according to Revelation 19:11-15. That great day will come as “destruction from Shaddai” (Isaiah 13:6). “Rebellion will be crushed then: for the rebels will be taken off the earth (Matthew 13:40-43). On the contrary, these seven bowls are seven visitations from God in anger on men, while the Lord Jesus is yet absent from earth; and while men are still suffered to rebel and blaspheme. They are hardening judgments, like those upon Pharaoh; indeed, men grow steadily and rapidly more hateful toward God, from the opening of the first seal of judgment in Revelation 6:1-17.

Third, that these seven bowl-judgments are literal! There is no other reasonable interpretation possible. Shall we believe that the ten plagues upon Egypt were actually as described in Exodus, and dare to turn away these “seven last plagues” of The Revelation from their evident open significance? Four of the ten Egyptian plagues are here repeated: boils, blood, darkness, and hail. What kind of interpretation is it that believes the one and denies the other! There the visitation was in a single land: here, in all the earth. Is it the extent of the horror that appalls the heart? Have we not read, through all the prophecies, of the day when God will “return judgment to righteousness” amidst earth-wide visitations? “Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?” said Pharaoh’s servants to him. Nay, he knew it not nor did he believe it, but rushed madly on into the overwhelming sea! So will earth, under Satan (Pharaoh’s antitype), rush madly to its end. [102]

[102] Because these seven judgments, like the other judgments we have considered, are as definitely hardening judgments as were the plagues upon Pharaoh, it will be profitable to the real students of The Revelation to read the account of the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7:1-25; Exodus 8:1-32; Exodus 9:1-35; Exodus 10:1-29; Exodus 11:1-10; Exodus 12:1-51), Read the different expressions concerning Pharaoh: when he “saw that there was respite, he made strong his heart and hearkened not unto them”; “the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn (Hebrew-heavy), and he did not let the people go.” “Jehovah hardened (Hebrew-made strong) the heart of Pharoah, and he

hearkened not unto them." "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and made heavy his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not let the children of Israel go." "Moses and Aaron did these wonders before Pharaoh: and Jehovah made strong Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land."

Remember, in Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh's first word to Moses: "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go." But remember chiefly God's word to him by Moses, in Exodus 9:14-16 : "For I will this time send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou hadst been cut off from the earth: but in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

Remember that Romans 9:14-18 is just as much inspired by the Holy Spirit as John 3:16. The whole history of this present world is meant to show forth, through God's gift of His Son at Calvary, not only His own infinite love, but also the absolutely deadly nature, character and power of sin; together with its proud insanity, as rebellion of the mere creature against the Infinite Creator: together with the sure and just end of all such rebellion; in order that all eternity may be able to look back, and contemplate, and fear, and reverence forever, and serve the Holy One! For we need to consider, that God hates what men call "civilization," and "human progress"! All man's system: his philosophy (which has self-wisdom as its postulate); his science (which discovers "Nature" and denies its Creator); his art (which demands the beautiful in form, but abhors holiness in fact); his inventions (designed, from Cain's city onward, to make earth livable without God); his religion (which denies God's righteousness and hates God's Christ and His shed blood); his government (which has no place whatever for the King who patiently awaits, upon His Father's throne, the moment when He shall receive the throne to which He only has the right) and, finally, those pleasures which man delights in-all of which consists in the indulgence of that "mind of the flesh" which is "enmity against God." The Lord will shortly strike, crush, destroy, wipe out, efface and remove even from memory[103] this hateful, abhorrent, abominable thing-man's "independence"! "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," will be carried out to the letter! And that involves crushing the present earth system as one would stamp out a nest of wasps.

[103] "The memory of the righteous is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." There goes the whole history of Adam the First, and all his selfish line! "The former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

Out of the heavenly sanctuary-where the redeemed multitude (Revelation 7:15) serve their God day and night-comes this awful command! God's house, meant to be "a house of prayer for all nations" now becomes the court of judgment upon God's enemies: for it is evidently God's voice which we hear in this verse. And the first went,[104] and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and that worshipped his image.

[104] “The first departed (apelthen): each angel, as his turn comes, leaves the heavenly scene, and, from the space between heaven and earth, empties his vial upon the appointed object” (Alford). It is astonishing to mark, in The Revelation, the direct control God gives His angels over the powers of “nature,” and the power to execute “the judgment written.”

Compare Exodus 9:9, where Moses and Aaron sprinkled ashes of the furnace upward in the sight of Pharaoh, “and it became small dust over all the land of Egypt, and became a boil breaking forth with Mains (or blisters) upon man and upon beast.” Since we believe Exodus, we believe Revelation. God creates evil as well as good, as He says: “I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah that doeth all these things” (Isaiah 45:7). We will do well to arm ourselves with this thought. God is constantly creating judgments, as well as saving the lost Right in this world, new diseases which baffle boasted science spring forth, and men take no thought of God in the matter! The judgment of the influenza killed more people than the great war. But even in Christian circles, where is there a solemn asking of God as to the cause of either the war or of the influenza? Just as truly as the Egyptians in Pharaoh’s day turned to their magicians, so does Christendom turn to “science” to solve all its troubles. We thank God for every alleviation of misery that it pleases Him to grant. But we must not forget that He has declared in countless places in His Word that His government involves the infliction of calamity upon persistent evil doing.

Note that it is the time of the Beast, the Antichrist, all through these seven bowl-judgments. Also note that they are crowded into a relatively brief space: for the sores of the first bowl are still upon men in the darkness of the fifth bowl. The sixth bowl, involving the gathering of the hosts to Armageddon will not need more than a few months to bring to pass. It will be as in Egypt, one plague crowding upon another.

Now when this first angel pours out his bowl, sores, or ulcers, break out upon those who have the mark of the Beast, and those who worship his image. It is this infinitely hateful thing that makes God’s jealousy burn like fire. Not upon the animals also, as in Egypt under the sixth plague, but upon men only-men who have allied themselves with Satan, does this universal and horrid thing come. “A noisome and grievous sore”: “Evil-in itself; painful to the sufferers” (Alford). One feels that the words involve hideousness, and incurability (Deuteronomy 28:27; Deuteronomy 28:35). These Beast worshippers are final rebels; they are shortly to be with the damned. Now they taste of hell on earth. Read Revelation 15:8 again: this will not be a time of mercy. And on their part, as we shall see, they hate God more and more, and are “still stricken.” And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea.

Blood is the vivid, terrible mark of death-the wages of sin. This was the first plague in Egypt-the Nile turned to blood.

Now the sea covers far the greater portion of this globe. God, who made it, now turns it to blood-“as of a corpse lying in its own gore.” So the billions, trillions, shoals, of sea-creatures die; and come floating to the surface in horrible, rotting witness of the wickedness of men! There is no escaping these words of God: “every living soul died.” What a frightful stench! What fearful possibilities of disease! Yet remember that this is exactly what God is doing. “Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste … and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof… Therefore … few men left … For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as

the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done" (Isaiah 24:1-13). "I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even a man than the pure gold of Ophir As the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel" (Isaiah 13:12; Isaiah 17:6). When God cleared off this race in the days of Noah, He left eight persons. It will be "as it was in the days of Noah" again, shortly: and, although God will yet suffer the human race to have another thousand years on earth (Revelation 20:4-6); nevertheless, He will so reduce earth's population, that "few men will be left" to start that thousand years. And this will be so whether you believe it or not: for God cannot lie! And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters: and it became blood.

I stood some time ago at De Leon Springs in Florida, where a great volume of wondrous water poured like a crystal river from-whence no one knows: but it will be a fountain of blood in that day, and all the rivers of earth and all the fountains of water! (You need not be worried over God's own elect in that time: for He called water out of the flinty rock through forty years for His people, and He will not let His elect suffer from His hand!) And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art and who wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink; they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

Here we see that angelic being in charge of the waters that supply the earth,-a beneficent being certainly; and also the altar itself, which should have spoken for men's forgiveness: both bowing to God's judgments as just and true! For men had poured out the blood of those messengers of God who warned and pleaded with them: and underneath the altar were thousands upon thousands of martyrs, whose prayers for divine vengeance must now be fully answered. So the angel bows, as the beautiful rivers and fountains he had administered are now turned to blood! All sympathy of heaven is with God: note that, sinner, or world-bordering Christian! Let this speaking altar make you tremble! Flee to Christ and be safe: for the breakers of judgment show just ahead for this whole world! Oh may we be among those that "only with our eyes shall behold, and see the reward of the wicked"!

I cannot leave this third awful visitation of avenging the blood of God's saints and prophets, without a word of earnest warning to all Christians to beware of the false security of these days! "Blood, it polluteth the land; and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numbers 35:33). Very many known man-killers are abroad in America today. God will yet remember it. And especially will He remember and avenge the blood of His martyrs.

I shall quote here from a really great man of God, already almost forgotten, but who will shine in Christ's swift-coming day! In prison over and over for the Word of God in England, hear one of the experiences narrated in his "Journal". (This occurred in 1651):

"Being at liberty (from prison) I went on, as before, in the work of the Lord, passing through the country into Leicestershire, having meetings as I went; and the Lord's Spirit and power accompanied me. As I was walking with several friends, I lifted up my head, and saw three steeple-house spires, and they struck at my life. I asked them what place that was. They said,

Lichfield. Immediately the Word of the Lord came to me, that I must go thither. Being come to the house we were going to, I wished friends to walk into the house, saying nothing to them whither I was to go. As soon as they were gone I stepped away, and went by my eye over hedge and ditch, till I came within a mile of Lichfield; where, in a great field, shepherds were keeping their sheep. Then was I commanded by the Lord to pull off my shoes. I stood still, for it was winter; and the Word of the Lord was like a fire in me. So I put off my shoes, and left them with the shepherds; and the poor shepherds trembled, and were astonished. Then I walked on about a mile, and as soon as I was got within the city, the Word of the Lord came to me again, saying: 'Cry, Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield!' So I went up and down the streets, crying with a loud voice, Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield!' It being market-day, I went into the market-place, and to and fro in the several parts of it, crying as before, Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield!' And no one laid hands on me. As I went thus crying through the streets, there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood. When I had declared what was upon me, and felt myself clear, I went out of the town in peace; and returning to the shepherds, gave them money, and took my shoes of them again. But the fire of the Lord was so in my feet, and all over me, that I did not matter to put on my shoes again, and was at a stand whether I should or no, till I felt freedom from the Lord so to do: then, after I had washed my feet, I put on my shoes again.

"After this deep consideration came upon me, for what reason I should be sent to cry against that city, and call it, THE BLOODY CITY! … But afterwards I came to understand, that in the Emperor Diocletian's time, a thousand Christians were martyred in Lichfield. So I was to go, without my shoes, through the channel of their blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs which had been shed above a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets. So the sense of this blood was upon me, and I obeyed the word of the Lord. Ancient records testify how many of the Christian Britons suffered there. Much I could write of the sense I had of the blood of the martyrs, that hath been shed in this nation for the name of Christ, both under the ten persecutions and since; but I leave it to the Lord, and to His book, out of which all shall be judged; for His book is a most certain record, and His Spirit a true recorder" (Geo. Fox's Journal, page 98).

Alas, how many faithful preachers of this our own day have died of broken hearts and starvation wages, at the hands of self-righteous professors, wicked spirit-resisting church officials, and purse-proud "influential" people: who do not dream that they, too, have shed the blood of the martyrs! And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

First, note the absolute power of God over His creation. The Beast, whom the earth has chosen, has no power at all to direct creation, or to deliver his votaries from these troubles.

Second, our Lord said there would be signs in sun and moon and stars: and here they are!

Third, "science" says the sun is "cooling off" which proves afresh God's words, that "the wisdom of men is foolishness with God." And the reason is, they leave God out!

Fourth, since “there is nothing hid from the heat of the sun” (Psalms 19:1-14), there will be no refuge from this plague: nor does God intend there shall be (except for His own, for whose sake He even “shortens” these fearful times).

Fifth, men know well-ineradicably, that the true God (whom they have abandoned and hate) has “power over these plagues.” Even Russia today cries she will drag down God from His heaven: thus advertising that she knows He is there!

Sixth, they “repented not to give him glory.” These are true God-haters. And we see anew the folly of those who claim that the fires of hell will “purify” any one! Every one who goes into judgment goes in sin’s awful hatred and resentment against God. It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Romans 2:1-29). Men not won by grace will never be won.

Seventh, they blaspheme. Settle this, that men will increase in this fearful sin till the Lord comes. Do not look for human nature to mend: it never will! Only the restraining power of God keeps under the flaming out of “the wrath of man” from the most hideous blasphemies, this hour. And God’s restraint will by and by be fully “taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17). Ah, the wickedness that will then be loosed! And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

First, the Beast is a man (Revelation 13:18); therefore his throne is in a definite place: rebuilt Babylon on the Euphrates, we believe,-Satan’s ancient capital, in the “land of Shinar,” where “wickedness” is to be set on its base in the end-time (Zechariah 5:5-10).

Second, darkness, like that of Egypt in the ninth plague in Exodus, suddenly falls upon the throne and capital and kingdom of the Beast. Satan cannot relieve it. How long it lasts, we know not. “Thick darkness,” that could be felt was on Egypt three days; while God’s people had “light in their dwellings” (Exodus 10:21-23).

Third, men are shut in with their horrid sores and pains: there is no alleviation. What must the “outer dark- ness for ever” be, and that with the Almighty’s wrath following them on!

Fourth, still the consciousness that “the God of heaven” is doing this, is upon them! The dragon cannot efface that consciousness, even when he is worshipped!

Fifth, these lost wretches are set in their evil ways and works: “they repented not.” If there is no repentance under God’s hand here, when men still breathe the breath of earth, how infinitely less in hell! Yet fools hope for “repentance beyond the grave.”

Sixth, it should be carefully noticed that this darkness is not that darkening of the sun and moon just before our Lord’s arrival in the Great Day of Wrath, of Revelation 19:11-15. This is merely one of the “signs” connected with The Great Tribulation, as spoken of in Luke 21:1-38 and Mark 13:1-37. For the sixth bowl, which follows this, must cover time for the nations to gather to Armageddon, whereas, immediately after the sun’s final darkening, the Lord, as “Son of man” comes as lightning upon a black heaven. And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sun rising. This is the literal Euphrates. There can be no other real interpretation of this passage. [105] Imagination has very often substituted for exposition, even in

such a plain passage as this.

[105] “This is the only understanding of these words which will suit the context, or the requirements of this series of prophecies” (Alford). “This must mean the literal river” (Seiss). “This means the literal river Euphrates” (Larkin). Darby (Synopsis) and Kelly (Lectures) both so state. Govett (Apocalypse Expounded) 1813-1901. who wrote, as Spurgeon quaintly says, “a hundred years before his time,] and whom Seiss largely follows, says with his usual common sense: “Against anyone traveling from the East to the West, the Euphrates interposes its broad barrier, difficult to be surmounted even by individuals; and much more by kings and their armies.”

Let us note regarding the Euphrates and its “drying up”:

1. It is mentioned twenty-one times in Scripture; and called “the great river” five times, as the Mediterranean was called “the great sea”: for the Euphrates was the eastern, as the Mediterranean was the western boundary of God’s own people’s inheritance.

2. It was a protection to Israel, both because of the difficulty of its passage, and because of the fact that God had placed a wilderness west of it, between it and Canaan. Only at the upper or northern part was it practically passable (so that Babylon is called by the prophets, the enemy “from the north country”). Even the Roman Empire had its eastern bound here.

3. It is nearly two thousand miles long (1,780). It rises in the Armenian Mountains, flowing at first toward Palestine, to within less than 100 miles of the Mediterranean, then turning away southeast to the Persian Gulf, winding upon itself constantly. It is navigable for 1200 miles. It flowed through old Babylon, which was (and may yet be) the commercial center of the whole world (Revelation 18:1-24).

4. It was first seen just outside Eden in Genesis 2:1-25, where human sin begins, and is last seen here in Revelation 16:12, where sin reaches its height. Twice in The Revelation does it appear: in Revelation 9:13-15, where “at the great river Euphrates” we saw four angels bound, the loosing of which issued in killing the third of the earth’s population. Here in Revelation 16:12, it’s drying up permits countless thousands to rush forward to their doom at Armageddon.

5. The solemnity of the crossing of the Euphrates to invade God’s land, by these eastern hosts, is very awful indeed. That the western nations, under the Beast, the last Emperor of the fourth world-power, should invade Palestine does not startle us so much: (the Roman Empire often persecuted the Jews, and ruled them many centuries). But that these recently pagan hosts from the East, who have now heard the gospel of Christ from thousands of faithful missionaries and rejected it, choose the Antichrist and march to Armageddon to help destroy the Jews (since the Church has been taken up out of their reach) is appalling! That dry bed of Euphrates will be an eastern Rubicon: for all will know whither they are bound, and why, as the sequel shows.

6. Now it is well to reflect that the greater part of mankind is east, not west, of the Euphrates: witness in millions, China’s 440; India’s 330; Japan’s 80; then Siam, Indo-China; the wild hordes of Afghanistan, of Turkestan, of Tibet; not to mention old Persia. I omit purposely Siberia and Asiatic Russia, which prophecy assigns to an entirely different invasion of Palestine than that of Revelation 16:1-21 -see Ezekiel 38:1-23; Ezekiel 39:1-29. These vast peoples of the East have ever marched overland, in hordes like those of Genghis Khan (who conquered the earth, from

China to Poland). They are not accustomed to travel as Westerners do. They come on foot and horseback. So that the drying up of the great military barrier, the Euphrates, will “open their way” to Palestine. (Otherwise, through Russia-impossible! or a long ocean voyage-likewise.) But they must be stirred up by a mighty movement, if they are to leave their homes and their lands, and go on a vast “crusade” to a far off goal; and that with Westerners! For there is an almost unaccountable, but terribly real, enmity of jealousy, between Orientals and Occidentals. As Kipling sang, “Oh East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, Till earth and sky stand presently at God’s great judgment Seat.” But Kipling perhaps did not know what the word of prophecy plainly tells us, that East and West, like Herod and Pilate, will come together in a great meeting to oppose God and His Christ, over a thousand years before the last Judgment! All the earth will be friends in a common cause, when the hour for Armageddon strikes. [106]

[106] Prophecy after prophecy tells of the united rush of the nations into Palestine, just before the Great Day of Wrath of Revelation 19:11-15 (See Joel 33-14; Zephaniah 3:8; Zechariah 12:3; Zechariah 12:9; Isaiah 24:1-2; Isaiah 24:8; Obadiah 1:15, etc.). Tens of millions, probably hundreds of millions will gather to that slaughter I The weak, those too old or feeble to go to war, will cry, “I am strong,” says the word of the Lord in Joel 3:1-21. The blood will be “to the bridles,” remember. That word will be fulfilled! And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto (literally upon) the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

Now comes the gathering unto the most fell war, fallen man, under Satan, has ever yet rushed into.

1. Note, that it is a war for which they gather: the battle is never joined: for the Lamb has but to come forth, and the Beast is taken, and the False Prophet, and hurled into the lake of fire; and the Devil cast into the abyss. But the gathering unto this war becomes the business of this world for weeks, months: what a scene!

2. Note the source of this earth-wide movement:-three special evil spirits, doubtless leading millions of others who help them, from hell’s trinity, the Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet.

3. Note the means of persuasion: miracle-working, before the rulers of all the earth. Jannes and Jambres, Egypt’s magicians, thus blinded Pharaoh. They also brought up frogs! (Exodus 8:7). Scripture’s constant testimony is that “great signs and wonders” will be performed in that time by Satan’s agency.

Seiss well says: “These demon-spirits are the elect agents to awaken the world to attempt to abolish God from the earth; and they are frog-like in that they come forth out of the pestiferous quagmires of the universe, do their work amid the world’s evening shadows, and creep, and croak, and defile the ears of the nations with noisy demonstrations, till they set all the kings and armies of the whole earth in enthusiastic commotion for the final crushing out of the Lamb and all His powers.” Alford’s phrase is, “The uncleanness and the pertinacious noise of the frog.” Go by a marsh some Spring evening, when the slimy filthy unseen frogs are fully squawking. You can hear nothing else! And now comes a solemn, direct word of warning from the Lord’s own mouth, to such

saints as may be here in those days. We read in Revelation 16:15 :

(Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.)

1. Note the aspect of His coming here emphasized by the Lord: it is as a thief-to surprise and to despoil. This is His coming to the world. It is “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2). But we are not looking for that day but for the day of Christ; as the Spirit tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 : “We beseech you brethren in behalf of (huper) the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him”-that is, the rapture-“be not quickly shaken from your mind,” (into which I brought you) by feelings, or false preaching, or pretended epistle from me-into believing that the day of the Lord is just at hand: for the apostasy must come before that, etc. In 1 Thessalonians 5:4, Paul contrasts absolutely the state of the Church with that darkened state of carnal security, in which the Lord’s coming catches the world as a snare. Paul says, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light,” etc.

2. Note again, that the Lord faithfully keeps His saints posted as to where they are, in His dealings, (if only they will hear!).

3. Note that watchfulness (the hardest of all tasks) is necessary at all times, by all saints, since the Lord ascended.

4. Note that blessedness is connected with watching; shame, with carelessness.

5. And lastly, that there is here no promise of rapture to be waited for; but a danger of having to walk (here on earth) exposed to the gaze of angels and a godless world-naked, that is, publicly bereft of evident divine direction and protection. I know this passage is difficult, in view of the warning to Sardis (Revelation 3:3), and the counsel to Laodicea (Revelation 3:18). But both watchless Sardians, and naked Laodiceans share (as it seems to us) the doom of the world; with the added shame of having had a place and a name and through carelessness, lost all. And now proceeds the vision of the great gathering of the nations by the foul spirits from hell’s trinity. And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

We cannot emphasize too strongly that in the three series of divine judgments-first the seals, second the trumpets, third the vials (or bowls) of wrath-we have those preliminary hardening actions of God upon an impenitent world, by which He prepares that world for the Great Day of Wrath-at Christ’s coming as King of kings, as seen in Revelation 19:11-15. From the advent of the Antichrist in Revelation 13:1-18 there is no mingling of mercy with wrath. Read again Revelation 14:9-11. The purpose of God in bringing the ten plagues upon Egypt was “to show in Pharaoh his power, that his name might be published to all the earth.” Pharaoh had said, “My river is mine own and I have made it for myself” (Ezekiel 29:3). This is the exact spirit of the world today and it is intensifying hourly.

Now the effect of the judgments of the plagues was so to harden, by mighty miracle after miracle, the hearts of Pharaoh and his host, that they rushed madly upon “the thick bosses of his (the Almighty’s) buckler” into the most stupendous scene human eyes had ever witnessed: the waves of the sea piled like a wall on each side: and ahead, the hosts of Israel, marvelously lighted in their

march by a vast pillar of fire.

Such a scene comes before us under the sixth seal. Then the overwhelming was of the armies of one nation, Egypt. Now, we behold the hosts of all the nations of earth gather for an indescribably vast overthrow at Armageddon.

We have seen the first bowl become a horrid sore upon the Beast-worshippers: the second turn the waters of the sea into blood; the third, the rivers and the fountains of the waters, so that all the earth had blood to drink; while the fourth bowl is the signal for power, such as has never been known, to be given to the sun (which the scientists had told them was “cooling off”!) The result of all being blasphemy against the God whom they knew had power over all these plagues. Now, under the fifth bowl, utter darkness enthralls the throne of the Beast and his kingdom-that is, all the earth, except, doubtless, the dwelling places of God’s people then on earth (Exodus 10:23).

Now out of this darkness, instead of repentance, comes only increased blasphemy and utter impenitence (Revelation 16:11). At the darkness under the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-17) there was exhibited great terror: “they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?” That men under these divine judgments will be increasingly hardened is doubtless the truth: but when the most hardened of all come to the Great Day of Wrath itself, there will be no blaspheming, but sheer blasting terror (Isaiah 2:12-22). Remember the text of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:7): “Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him.”

Armageddon

Here, then, by divine appointment, but by Satanic agency, are gathered the hosts of earth; as Ahab, by God’s counsel and command, was deceived by an evil, lying spirit, to go to battle to his death (1 Kings 22:1-53).

1. What is Armageddon, or, more accurately, Har-Magedon? Its name means, “Mountain of Megiddo.” (See Stanley’s Sinai and Palestine, chapter 9; or Thomson’s Land and the Book on “Megiddo.”) It was here the Lord so marvelously helped Barak overthrow the Canaanites (Judges 5:19). The region is named from Megiddo, a royal Canaanite city (Joshua 12:21). To the northwest is Mount Carmel where, at the mouth of the Kishon River, Elijah killed the hundreds of Baal’s prophets. Mount Gilboa, where King Saul, the persecutor of God’s king-David-fell, is southeast. And on the north or northwest, overlooking all, is Mount Tabor, where Barak assembled the hosts of the Lord against the enemy. From Judges 4:6; Judges 4:12; Judges 4:14, and Jeremiah 46:18, I feel that the “mountain” (Hebrew Har) in Har-Magedon is Tabor. “Megiddo” is named twelve times, the governmental number, in Scripture; and the last time in almost the form we have it here: Megiddon, in Zechariah 12:11 -a reference to the mourning for poor Josiah who fell in the same region, trying to defend Babylon against Egypt (2 Chronicles 35:22-25). (Oh that he had been the only saint to fall meddling in world-quarrels!)

2. Why does God bring this host here? For destruction. God will yet deal with this earth according to His offended majesty, until a man shall be “more rare than fine gold,” until the land is “drunken with blood.”

God has no apologies for slaying the Canaanites; or giving Jerusalem over to Babylonian captivity, and then to Roman slaughter; or letting famine waste millions; or the plague, ten millions. We desire to offend this adulterous generation's apologists for God.

3. Christians should arm their minds with this outlook as to "the rulers of this age, who are coming to nought" (1 Corinthians 2:6); so that when they "hear of wars and rumors of wars," they may obey their Lord, and "see that they be not troubled"; knowing that whatever marchings to and fro, in this war or that, may occur, they can be only some preliminary to the earth wide crusade against God and His Christ that will gather in that great plain of Esdraelon, in Palestine-not many miles from the very town where the Christ they hate grew up before the Father as a tender plant, and of that dry ground, Israel.

Yea, they will rush as Egypt after Israel, over the Euphrates' bed and over the "tongue of the Egyptian sea" (also dried up) in pursuit of the remnant of God's chosen nation, to "the mountain of destruction"-Armageddon (Isaiah 11:15-16). So in the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath we have these two most awful things: the gathering of all earth's nations to Palestine into actual warfare against Almighty God-this is the sixth bowl; and that fearful shaking of this earth in divine retributive anger so long prophesied, which divides Jerusalem into three, reduces all Gentile cities to ruins, engulfs in the earth restored Babylon, the last great world capital, banishes all islands and mountains, and casts those terrible hailstones over this earth, which had been reserved "against the day of battle and war" in Jehovah's "treasuries of the hail" (Job 38:22-23).

"It is done!" is the great voice from the throne, when this seventh bowl is poured out. Men would not have the Savior's "It is finished!" on Calvary; so they must have the awful "It is done!" from the Judge! Alas! Alas! Oh, that men today would hear and be warned to flee from the coming storm! And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and mountains were not found. And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

01.15. Chapter 15: The Judgment of Babylon- Rev_17:1-18; Rev_18:1-24

Chapter 15: The Judgment of Babylon- Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24

Introductory We are not able to resist the conclusion that there is a double destruction before our eyes in these two chapters.

1. The overthrow of the woman in Revelation 17:1-18 is accomplished by the Beast and his ten kings.

2. The Beast and his ten kings are being at the time adulated by the earth, the Beast himself universally worshipped (except by God's elect). All the kings and powers of the earth are subject to him, as we saw in Revelation 13:1-18.

3. The Beast, his kings, and of course the whole earth with them, join in the destruction of the harlot, whom we see at the beginning of Revelation 17:1-18 riding the revived Roman Beast.

4. Evidently Romanism, with its situation on the Seven Hills of Rome, is indicated by this woman, "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." The whole earth, with its kings, is delighted at the removal of the last vestige of this hateful harlot, who really has been a burden, spiritual, mental, political, and financial, to all the nations over which she has held sway; although they committed spiritual "fornication" with her: that is, she pronounced them "Christian," and they gave her money and "reverence."

5. But in Revelation 18:1-24 everything is reversed. While the destroying of the drunken harlot, "mystery Babylon," was a delight and a relief to all the earth, the overthrow of the great city Babylon in Revelation 18:1-24 is exactly the opposite. The kings of the earth wail and lament over the smoke of her burning!

6. Instead of being an external directress of the last empire, the Babylon of Revelation 18:1-24 is the beloved capital of the whole earth's activities, and for this cause men mourn her overthrow.

7. The Beast and his ten kings could not have destroyed the harlot in "one hour"; but such is declared to be the suddenness of the doom of the great city of Revelation 18:1-24. "One day," and "one hour," God says.

8. That which characterized the iniquity of the harlot was the martyrdom of God's saints and especially of the witnesses of Jesus; but the character of the iniquity of the city overthrown in Revelation 18:1-24 is that of a godless, luxurious commercialism, making "merchant princes" of those dealing with her. Roman Catholicism, as a system, has never enriched the nations of the earth, but rather the contrary. Witness the late rebellions against Rome's arrogating to herself, free from taxes, vast parts of the territories of such lands as Mexico and Spain. At the height of her power over the European nations, in the days of Hildebrand, Gregory VII, in the eleventh century, we see the spirit of the harlot who rides the Beast in Revelation 17:1-18. The Emperor Henry IV of

Germany and his whole people are excommunicated, for disregard of a papal decree; and the Emperor must stand in the cold three days in Italy, waiting on the proud Pope's arrogance, before he is "forgiven." No wonder that when the world gets loose by divine permission from the restraints of conscience toward the name of the Father and the Son under Antichrist's blasphemies (which holy names the "harlot" has had to use) they rush in hate to destroy this hideous religious tyranny from the face of the earth! But, on the exact contrary, the kings of the earth and their subjects weep and wail in bitter mourning over the destruction of the great city of Babylon of Revelation 18:1-24.

9. The manner of the final overthrow of Babylon, as described in Revelation 18:1-24 and in the Old Testament prophets, forbids us to conclude that the destruction of the papacy is there contemplated, and proves that it is rather a sudden, direct visitation of God. In Jeremiah 51:25-26, Jehovah speaks: "I … will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith Jehovah." Again in Jeremiah 51:8 "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed."

Now Cyrus captured Babylon (about B. C. 540) on the night of Belshazzar's great feast of Daniel 5:1-31, but it was not at that time "destroyed." In fact, many in the city did not know for two or three days that the city had been taken! Babylon became a provincial capital in the Persian Empire. In the third empire, that of Alexander the Great, we find that it was a place much loved and delighted in by the great conqueror, who indeed drank himself to death there.

Peter wrote his first epistle from Babylon-(1 Peter 5:13). At the end of the fifth century, the "Babylonian Talmud" was issued by the Jews of Babylon, who had several universities there. It seems to have been a center of activity of this exiled race. In the tenth century Babylon is again mentioned as still in existence; and 200 years later it has grown considerably. It was afterwards further increased, and was called Hillah, as at present. Over 10,000 people were there thirty years ago. The town is constructed of the bricks of ancient Babylon.

Therefore, it appears impossible that the great prophecies concerning Babylon's final overthrow, whether in the Old Testament or in Revelation 18:1-24 have been finally fulfilled. For instance, "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there" (Isaiah 13:19-20).

Again, "It shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith Jehovah, so shall no man dwell there, neither shall any son of man sojourn therein" (Jeremiah 50:39-40). And in Revelation 18:21-23, "Babylon, the great city, (shall) be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters … no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, … any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill … no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp … no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride … no more at all."

Here is utter desolation, and it is accomplished according to Revelation 18:19, in one hour. "In one hour is she made desolate." Revelation 18:17, "In one hour so great riches is made desolate." "In

one hour is thy judgment come," we read in verse 10. The horror of her overthrow is "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah"-it is so fearful! In Revelation 18:9, "The kings of the earth … when they look upon the smoke of her burning" stood "afar off for the fear of her torment"; and in Revelation 18:15, the merchants of all luxuries (29 being specified) "stand afar off for the fear of her torment." Again, in Revelation 18:17, "every shipmaster, and everyone that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning."

We are reminded of Abraham's gazing upon Sodom's destruction (which Babylon's final overthrow will equal): "And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Jehovah: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the Plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis 19:27-28). (Abraham, thank God, was already "afar off" from that burning, for he lived twenty miles away, up in the Hebron mountain with God!)

10. There remains this solemn fact: that there is a great commercial metropolis overthrown by God in Revelation 18:1-24, and that in connection with the seventh bowl of wrath, immediately preceding our Lord's second coming (Revelation 16:19; Revelation 19:11, ff.). (Now the harlot was destroyed at least three years before, when the Beast and his ten kings began their power!) We read in connection with Babylon's overthrow as described in Isaiah 13:1-22 : "Wail ye; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; as destruction from the Almighty shall it come … For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine … And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isaiah 13:6, Isaiah 13:10, Isaiah 13:19).

Now, it matters not that in Isaiah 13:17, God mentions the invasion by the Medes, for it is the common method of prophecy to look upon some event for a moment, and then see through it, as in a dissolving view, the greater event of which it was merely a type. For instance, in Zechariah 9:9 our Lord is seen riding into Jerusalem upon a lowly ass and its foal, but verse 10 goes on, without explanation of what intervenes, to say, "And he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth"-which is at His second coming!

11. When the final destruction of Babylon, the literal city, was prophesied by Jeremiah, we find God's solemn warning to His people to flee from it: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and save every man his life; be not cut off in her iniquity: for it is the time of Jehovah's vengeance … My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and save yourselves every man from the fierce anger of Jehovah" (Jeremiah 51:6; Jeremiah 51:45).

Now note that Jeremiah could not have been prophesying of the mystical or papal Babylon; for "the mystery of iniquity" did not then exist; but Babylon the city was the avowed enemy of Jehovah's nation Israel. Again, mark carefully that when Cyrus took Babylon, neither Daniel, who that night prophesied to Belshazzar the end of his kingdom, nor the other Jews, fled from Babylon! As a matter of fact, Daniel was immediately elevated to the triumvirate of presidents under Darius the Median, who received the kingdom at the hand of the conqueror, Cyrus. But these prophecies of Jeremiah accord perfectly with the voice from heaven of Revelation 18:4 "Come forth, my

people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." If the city of Babylon is restored as Antichrist's capital, at the end of this age, godly Jews will be warned fully to flee, as in Jeremiah 51:45-46; Jeremiah 51:50.

12. We are forced then, to the conclusion that the overthrow of Babylon, as the revealed center of iniquitous luxury and Satan-worship, the culmination of man's glory, lies yet in the future, in the land of Shinar, where Babylon's history began! The vision of the ephah of Zechariah 5:1-11 corroborates overwhelmingly the thought of the revival of commercial Babylon. A woman, called Wickedness, is seen sitting in an ephah measure, covered with a round piece of lead. (An ephah would be, to a Jew, a perfect symbol of commerce.) Two women with "wings of a stork" (an unclean bird to Israel- Leviticus 11:19) bear this ephah away "between earth and heaven." The prophet asks the revealing angel, "Whither do these bear the ephah?" And the significant answer is, "To build her a house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place." What could such a vision portray, if not the final concentrating of wickedness in a great center which should reach the whole earth? Direct rebellion against God, in a new, and astounding, and organized way, began in that very land of Shinar and it will complete its cycle and come back for judgment to that same place!

Whatever dark, persecuting history the harlot woman sitting on the Beast has been guilty of; and even if, as is very probable, she represents all false worship since the Flood: doctrines which, pretending to teach worship of God, have led men into the depths of uncleanness of idolatry; this much is certain: the harlot represents the mystery of iniquity, and the Beast, manifest iniquity. The harlot does not "deny all that is called God or that is worshipped"; the Beast does this very thing.

Furthermore, the harlot does not partake of the fearful bowls of wrath poured by God upon the Beast worshippers (Revelation 16:1-21). The two principles of iniquity-are distinct and diverse, and must be kept so in our minds. All false religions tell the consciences of their devotees that they are serving a god, or gods. This iniquity, of course, is headed up by Romanism. But the fearful character of the Beast's career is that he directs the worship of the whole world to himself, in order to make them conscious Devil-worshippers (Revelation 13:1-18). They are no longer deceived, as to whom they worship: they are enlightened with darkness! Even the majority of the Jewish nation, having made their seven-year contract with Antichrist, cry confidently: "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol 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 28:15). In order for this fearful program of Satan-worship to prevail without hindrance, there must be removed from the earth three things: first, the true Church, the Bride of Christ; second, apostate Christendom, represented by the harlot, which, however much she lacks the spirit, keeps the names of Christian things; and, third, the nation of Israel. God removes the first; the Beast and his ten kings destroy the second; while Armageddon is the final, supreme Satanic effort to obliterate the third-Israel-from the earth. The Judgment of Mystic Babylon Revelation 17:1-18

OUTLINE:

I. The vision of the woman on the scarlet beast (Revelation 17:1-6). 1. It is the judgment of the harlot which is to be revealed in this chapter. 2. Her dealings with: a. The kings of the earth-"fornication." b. The earth-dwellers-making them "drunken." 3. Her position on the Roman

beast, now become fully blasphemous. 4. Her luxurious attire and her abominable cup. 5. Her mystic name: “Mystery, Babylon the Great, Mother of the harlots and of the abominations.” 6. Her blood-drunken state. II. The unfolding, or interpretation of the vision as to the woman and the Beast (Revelation 17:7-8). 1. The Beast. a. The Beast is a man (Revelation 13:18). (Though the Beast is the Roman Empire, that Empire with its iniquity full, is seen in its head, the Beast.) b. He had had a former history on earth: “He was.” c. He was not then on earth: “And is not.” d. He is to have a future history: “to come up out of the abyss” (where he was in John’s day-the jail of lost human beings in the center of the earth). e. He will go thence directly into the lake of fire: “into perdition” (Revelation 19:20). f. He will cause astonishment among the non-elect of those days, because of their knowledge that he was once on earth and disappeared and shall return: “he was, and is not, and shall come.” 2. The Woman. a. The woman is a city. b. She is Rome (see below). c. She will be “hated” by the Beast and his ten kings. d. She will be utterly destroyed by them. III. The great double interpretation (for “the mind that hath wisdom”). 1. The seven heads of the Beast represent seven mountains. a. These are the “seven hills” of literal Rome: (for prophecy at the end-time deals with the fourth world-power, Rome; and every reader knows that both pagan and Christian writers call Rome the seven-hilled city). b. In this application, the woman “sits” on those mountains: she is the Babylonian system, transferred to Rome by Attalus III of Pergamos-itself a colony from Babylonia-in B. C. 133. c. The Woman “is the great city, which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18). (The present tense “hath a kingdom” must indicate Rome: for Rome alone was ruling the earth in John’s day: “many waters” where she sits are said to be “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”) 2. The seven heads also represent seven Roman emperors. a. That these are Roman emperors is shown by the words “the one is”-that is, in John’s day. b. Five had “fallen”: (fallen probably indicating a violent death-see Govett, Apocalypse, p. 445, 446). [107]

[107] Thus the seven “heads,” or kings would have a double mark: (1) They would blasphemously arrogate deity to themselves (see 13:l); and (2) they would “fall” by violent means. The five before John’s day thus would be Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. The sixth, who reigned when John wrote was Domitian-most blasphemous-who was assassinated. c. “The other” the seventh, was not yet come in John’s day: he was to come and to “continue a little while.” (The spirit of the passage indicates that this seventh will be as really Roman as any of the others: either reviving the Roman Empire or its spirit-as Mussolini is attempting to do!) d. The Beast himself will be an eighth but will be also “of the seven.” (This involves his release from the abyss in the center of the earth, the present prison of the lost spirits; and such release is affirmed of him in Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 13:3; Revelation 14:1-20. Which of “the seven” he will be, God does not tell.) IV. The ten kings (not kingdoms) represented by the ten horns. 1. They had not received “kingdom” in John’s day. 2. They are to receive authority (exousia) along with the Beast (not till then) for “one hour” (the word hour here denotes a time of special character, or activity: as in Luke 22:53). 3. The committal to the Beast of their power and authority-by divine ruling. (Like Alexander’s and Napoleon’s generals, they come, with their leader, into sudden power, and their transfer of all to the Beast seems as speedy as it is unanimous.) 4. Their union with the Beast, the Antichrist, in the utter desolation (because of their absolute hatred) of the harlot. (This will be the end absolutely, finally, of Babylon in mystery. It is the complete destruction of the papal harlot, and of all earthly forms of worship except adoration of the Beast, and through him of Satan, openly-Revelation 13:8.) 5. Their final, fearful presumption: Armageddon-“war against the Lamb” (See

Revelation 19:19-21 for the outcome!)

What Babylon Isaiah 1:1-31. Babylon is a literal city on the Euphrates River, with a form of idolatrous worship which began almost immediately after the Flood, in the days of Nimrod, and extended throughout the whole earth. We find this first form of Babylon opposed to God's people Israel. Babylon is Satan's capital, just as Jerusalem is God's capital, and we find this first Babylon was permitted under Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem and its temple.

2. Babylon, next, is the same system in another city-Rome, and opposing the same idolatrous system to God's saints of the Church age:-a monstrous system of evil doctrine that unites the church with the world.

3. The final form of Babylon is the literal city on the Euphrates, rebuilt as Antichrist's capital of the last days, opposing Israel as God's earthly people who will have gathered back to their land (the Church of course, having been raptured), and opposing Jehovah's worship with the most powerful and enslaving form of idolatry that the world has ever known-the worship of the Beast and his image!

Let us get well fixed in our minds these three phases of Babylon the Great. And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication.

Let us first remark that the meaning of this vision, whether important or not to us, is terribly distinct in the mind of the Spirit-this great harlot! She is called "the great harlot" in Revelation 17:1; "the harlot" in Revelation 17:15 and Revelation 17:16; "the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" in Revelation 17:5; and "the woman" six times, in this chapter. We do not well if our perception be dim of an existence so supremely hateful to God. Forty times the pronouns "she," "her," "thy," and "thee," are crowded into this divinely indignant record of the judgment of the great harlot. [108]

[108] Babylon is named over 260 times in Scripture; 37 times in one prophecy, Jeremiah 50:1-46; Jeremiah 51:1-64! It is more frequently mentioned than any other city except Jerusalem.

Now it is one of the seven angels that had the bowls of wrath of chapter 16 who comes to show John this judgment; as also in striking contrast, one of these seven in Revelation 21:9 leads the Seer to the vision of the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

Constantly remember that Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 is not a history of Babylon, but the record of its judgment. We see this harlot "sitteth upon many waters," which in Revelation 17:15, is said to represent "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"-terrible mass-words of the hordes of idolatry of the last days, ending with tongues, which reminds us at once of Babel! With this monstrous harlot, the "kings of the earth" are said to have "committed fornication," and the inhabitants of the earth were drunk with the wine of her fornication. Here then is a world-wide influence from the rulers down to the lowest subject which can only be spoken of by God by this awful word "fornication."

We must, as is usual in The Revelation, go to the Old Testament to find the roots of the meanings of the terms used. God arraigns Israel in the prophets over and over for “playing the harlot,” “committing adultery,” and “whoredom.” In Jeremiah 3:2-3; Jeremiah 3:9 :

“Thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness … thou hadst a harlot’s forehead, thou refusest to be ashamed… Through the lightness of her whoredom that the land was polluted and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks.” No one who will take the trouble to read Ezekiel 16:1-63; Ezekiel 23:1-49 can fail to understand God’s plain language. In these two chapters of Ezekiel alone, whoredom is mentioned over twenty times, as describing the sin before God of those who turn His worship into shameless fellowship with demons and commerce with the world! It must be remembered that God is love; that He has always been as He is now, and is jealous toward those who, having a revelation from Him, turn from Him to that world which is controlled by His deadly enemy Satan; for “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God.”

Religious sin, therefore, is especially in view in this great harlot of Revelation 17:1-18. It is Satan’s religious system controlling men by such doctrines as will salve and quiet their consciences, while suffering them to walk in their natural lusts. This “wine” the whole world has greedily drunk, and is by it drunken! Men love their lusts, but their consciences must be appeased that they may follow their lusts unrestrainedly. This, “mystery Babylon,” by her insidious and finally shameless teachings, supplies; so that Satan’s system, promulgated originally at Babylon, finally controls the whole world![109] [109] As regards idolatry being a post-diluvian development, consider:

1. There is no scriptural record of idolatry before the Flood.

2. The presence of the cherubim “at the east of the Garden of Eden” and “the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” would beyond doubt indicate a dispensation that allowed no such hideous caricature of Jehovah as idolatry sets up.

3. Joshua, in tracing Israel’s origin, says, “Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from beyond the River” (Joshua 24:2-3).

4. Shortly after the Flood and probably in connection with the daring scheme of the Babel tower of Genesis 2:1-25, appears the earliest historical record we have of idolatry. “The discoveries of Nineveh and Babylon reveal that a secret organization of unbelievers was formed soon after the death of Nimrod (Genesis 10:1-32), at a time when open apostasy was dangerous, and that its members established their headquarters at Babylon. From this center they labored with ceaseless activity to confuse and destroy the knowledge of Jehovah in the world and to bring men under the yoke of demon gods. They soon became a powerful and influential body continuing to be a secret society, not wishing to share their power and privileges with any but those willing to pass through the ordeal of initiation, which included a baptism, after which the initiate was termed ‘twice-born’ or regenerate (Greek diphyees), and worship was originally offered to a trinity consisting of father, mother and son. But the first person was very commonly confused with the third, and at last almost entirely forgotten; so that the prominent deities were the mother and son. Of these the former was by far the most popular and has been known according to time and place as Queen of Heaven, Mother of the Gods, Mylitta, Astarte, Diana of Ephesus, Aphrodite, Venus, Isis and the Blessed

Virgin" (Petnber-"Great Prophecies"). Mr. Darby remarks: "There appear to me to have been four sources of idolatry: first, an ineffaceable consciousness of God; second, deification of ancestors; third, the stars; fourth, the principle of generation. These were interwoven, at last giving rise to corruption inconceivable, the consecration of degrading lusts."

5. The Scripture gives Babylon as the origin of idolatry which spread to "all the nations." As Jeremiah cried, Babylon "is a land of graven images, and they are mad over idols. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore, the nations are mad … all the earth is drunken" (Jeremiah 50:38; Jeremiah 51:7). I have found no other final source of idolatry in Scripture than Babylon.

How fitting to Rome, the present form of Babylon, is the double statement that the kings of the earth committed "fornication." "Rome's influence over kings is a sort of personal influence, such as that of a harlot: her power over the nations is more distant, like that of wine. Her doctrine is 'wine of fornication.' Christianity is too holy, strict, self-denying, humbling for men by nature. Rome discovers to the nations a way of enjoying the world to the full, yet with the flattering belief that they are the servants of Christ" (Govett).

If we make "mystery Babylon" mean only Roman Catholicism, we have to explain:

First: Why the same manner of language is used in the Old Testament prophets against Babylon as is used in The Revelation (compare, for example, Isaiah 21:9 and the great prophecies of Jeremiah 50:1-46; Jeremiah 51:1-64 with Revelation 14:8 and the rejoicing over her destruction as seen in Revelation 19:1-21).

Second: How the blood of all that were slain upon earth was found in her finally (Revelation 18:24). We know from our Lord's words concerning Jerusalem (which stood for self-righteousness) that upon her came cumulatively "all the righteous blood" shed upon earth from the blood of Abel: but upon final Babylon, the blood of all that had been slain.

Third: We must explain how "the blood of the prophets" (evidently referring to Old Testament prophets) as well as of other saints, was found in her. This was not so as to Rome. Even if we limit the last verse of Revelation 18:1-24 to the blood of God's people, this difficulty remains.

Fourth: It is in the nature of things impossible, or at least most improbable, that a name which marked the enemy of God's work in the world since the days of the Flood, right through the Old Testament, that of the city which destroyed Jerusalem and vaunted itself and its gods above all, should now in the New Testament be limited to a false church, which, although headed up in Rome upon the Tiber (that is, in the Papacy) never as such reached the world-wide sphere of the damning influence the Spirit of God declares Babylon to have had: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah's hand, that hath made all the earth drunken" (Jeremiah 51:7).

Fifth: We expect in the book of Revelation the heading up of all the principles both of good and evil, which have appeared in human history. If we allow Babylon to express Satan's system of evil, as especially developed from Babel onwards after the Flood, and including all those various systems of idolatry and false worship which have had their spring, or root, or direct teaching in Babylon, we find in the picture presented to us in Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 an adequate portrayal; otherwise, we must leave out vast populations that Romanism as such has never touched, but which has indeed drunk of the intoxicating idolatrous cup of Babylon.

Sixth: If we thus consider Babylon as an expression of the whole Satanic system from the earliest times since the Flood onward, we are quite prepared to understand the position of the harlot, “mystery Babylon,” in Revelation 17:1-18. For no one can deny that the nations which have influenced the history of mankind since the days of the apostles when the Church began until the present, have been those nations that have come under the influence of the harlot as represented in the papacy. Thus we can fully consent to the “seven hills” on which she sits, being the well-known hills of Rome, the fourth world-power, as so constantly described by Latin writers. But that this great harlot called “mystery Babylon” in Revelation 17:1-18, had her beginning with the papacy, we feel to be contrary to the Scripture taken as a whole and to the known historical facts.

Seventh: Of course, as illustrated in France under Clemenceau, Mexico under Calles, and Russia under Lenin and Stalin, we see the chief obstacle of the secular power, and the one chiefly hated by them, to be established Christianity as represented (or sadly misrepresented) in these countries. Every one senses, for instance, the two directly opposing powers in Rome itself, in Mussolini and the Pope. At present the papacy “rides” the Roman beast, although, as we know, to a most fearful fall, and that we believe not far distant.

Even when the Church maintained its early holy separateness from the world and the State, it was the object of the supreme hatred of the secular power, the fourth world-power. Magisterial authority is committed by God to man, but he immediately abuses it by arrogating independence of God who “ordained” him. See Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in Daniel 3:1-30, and Darius of Persia in Daniel 6:1-28. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked (literally, gilded) with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.

Note here, first the setting, then the vision, and last the effect upon the apostle.

First, we behold a wilderness. This is a literal description of the region surrounding both Babylon on the Euphrates and Rome on the Tiber: the former, marshes and swamps; the latter, the Campagna-“a marble wilderness”; in John’s day rich and inhabited, but “desolated about the time the popes began to flourish.” But it is the spiritual wilderness which we need to observe. Babylon, in whatever form, has been a desolator of God’s people and His truth.

We next notice that it is a woman that is first presented to us in this vision. Remember that we are here reading mystic terms (Revelation 17:1-6); and that the angel in Revelation 17:7 proceeds to unfold the “mystery.” Who the woman is, or what she is, is revealed in the last verse of the chapter: “The woman whom thou sawest is the great city which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth” (R. V. margin). And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he

was, and is not, and shall come. Here is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition. And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth.

Now the “great wonder,” with which John was struck at the vision of her, shows, it seems to me, that there was nothing either in Scripture (which John, being in the Spirit, would know), or in the apostle’s own experience or discernment, that would enable him to solve the mystery this woman presented. I know the angel says: “Wherefore didst thou wonder?” but it seems that this question was a mild form of reproof that the apostle had not turned at once to his angelic guide; for that guide proceeds: “I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her.”

We know that the true Church was a mystery hid in God until revealed to the apostle Paul; and doubtless John, like Peter (2 Peter 3:15-16) had studied those marvelous letters of the Gentile apostle-that “less than the least of all saints,” to whom God unfolded the heavenly character, calling, and destiny of the Church, as the Body and the Bride of Christ-to be caught up and presented to Him, “without spot or blemish or any such thing.”

Now, behold! Here was another woman, the very antithesis of the true Church, unholy, profligate, hideous, shamelessly displaying “the things of her fornication,” seated upon the beast that John must have instantly recognized from the former vision (Revelation 13:1-18), as the last great world-power, and now “full of names and blasphemy,” and also scarlet-colored! It was then the Roman beast, filling the world with blasphemous wickedness. That scarlet was one of the colors of imperial Rome, we know from Matthew 27:28. They put a scarlet robe on our Lord, in mockery of His title as King. But this woman is seen in both purple and scarlet (Christ was by Rome also arrayed in purple- Mark 15:16; Mark 15:20)! Purple was the Roman imperial color. The emperor was clothed in it: the senators wore a broad band of it, and the knights, a narrower band; so that this woman in John’s eyes would be exercising all the power of the Roman Empire, though herself not crowned, not a queen, in her own right! Thus the mystery. Who was she? On her forehead was written the word “mystery,” and “Babylon,” and also the fact that she was a “mother of harlots” and also of “abominations” (false gods) for the whole earth. Furthermore, she was drunken with blood!-and that of the saints (before Christ) and “the martyrs of Jesus” (after His coming).

Babylon, the City, and Its Final Doom Revelation 18:1-24

Outline:

1. The second angelic announcement (Revelation 18:1-3).

2. The call to God's people to flee out of Babylon (Revelation 18:4-5).

3. The final character of Babylon's sin-now become full-godless world-commerce (Revelation 18:12-17, Revelation 18:23 b).

4. The mode of Babylon's final overthrow: catastrophic-in "one hour," and direct: from God's hand (Revelation 18:8, Revelation 18:19, Revelation 18:21).

5. The "mourning" of earth's kings and merchants (Revelation 18:9-11, Revelation 18:15-19).

6. The awful perpetual curse of desolation upon Babylon (Revelation 18:2, Revelation 18:22-23).

7. The cumulative guilt of Babylon: the blood of prophets, saints and all earth's murdered (Revelation 18:24).

8. The solemn fact that her judgment was decided by the saints in heaven (Revelation 18:20).

9. The unlimited joy of heaven over this final judgment of Babylon (verse 20 and Revelation 19:1-5 -The four hallelujahs).

10. Babylon's people doomed to eternal flames (Revelation 19:3).

Before we proceed with this great chapter which reveals the sudden ending under divine wrath of the present world system, let us say a few words concerning the real meaning of the spirit of commercialism which has been seizing tighter hold every hour upon so-called civilization and will be the cause of its wreck. The Character of Commerce 1. It is not of God-especially world-commerce, but is of man and of Satan.

2. God placed His nation, Israel, in a land where commerce with other nations was very nearly impossible. Palestine had no harbors. On the East and South were deserts; at the North, mountains with only a narrow "entering in." Jehovah expressly forbade the multiplying of horses, and also of silver and gold (Deuteronomy 17:16-17).

3. North of Israel, the city of Tyre on the Mediterranean coast became the great maritime center of the earth and upon it was pronounced the terrible judgment of Ezekiel 26:1-21; Ezekiel 27:1-36; Ezekiel 28:1-26. Chapter 26, too, reveals Tyre's envy of Jerusalem as a place where the peoples of the earth should resort and her desire to turn to herself in a commercial way, that gathering of peoples whom God meant to be instructed at Jerusalem in a spiritual way (as all the ends of the earth came to hear the wisdom of Solomon).

4. Israel's commercial dealings corrupted her both in the days of Solomon and Jehoshaphat. "Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy traffickers (Tyre's): they traded for thy merchandise wheat of Minnith, and pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm" (Ezekiel 27:17).

Zechariah closes his prophecy concerning the Millennium: "In that day there shall be no more a Canaanite (literally, trafficker) in the house of Jehovah of hosts."

5. International commerce: a. Enables man to avoid as far as possible God's command to till the earth and to live by the sweat of his brow. b. Tends to unify the humanity that God has definitely

divided into nations, for the very purpose of covering the earth with the spirit of self-confidence and rebellion as before Babel (Genesis 11:1-32). c. Enables individuals, cities and nations to become unduly swollen with riches. It begets universal covetousness, which is idolatry-in that the man who has money, can be independent of God. Govett well says: “The opposition to the spirit of commerce which this Book of God shows, is very remarkable, especially as running in direct contrast to the avowed plans of rulers and peoples of our day. ‘Cherish COMMERCE,’ is one of the great admitted ends of statesmanship. But its effects upon the mind are generally productive of covetousness.”

6. The nature of commerce is very simple. You take your products (generally by ships) where you can get the highest price; fill your ship there and again sail where you get the high price, and again load your ship at a low cost with wares desirable in other countries, and so on and on. Now this is not tilling the ground and living quietly. God hates it and will destroy it utterly. What God wants, is that each man live beneath “his own vine and fig-tree,” “content with such things” as he has. “Big business” is an abomination. It will be the ruination of the world.

7. “Business” is an excuse most common in the thoughts of men for not serving God (and yet shortly they will stand before God!) Millions of men really think that “business” has a real claim upon them. [110]

[110] The correct reading of Romans 12:11 is found in the Revised Version:-“In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; (referring wholly to diligence in the spiritual life, as see context)-rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer”; etc. “Business” is not in that at all.

8. We see the wickedness of the spirit of commercialism both from the fearful power exercised by the Beast of Revelation 13:1-18, forbidding either selling or buying without “his mark” stamped upon the hand or upon the forehead, and also from Revelation 18:1-24. It is atheistic; it is self-indulgent; it is self-confident: “I sit a queen.”

9. The difficulties experienced by God’s dear saints of all days on account of “business” claims is proverbial. The spirit of commercialism, which has seized upon the human race, is fast blotting out real human ties (home, church or country). [111]

[111] “In what, indeed, does the mightiest and farthest reaching power on earth now already center? A power which looms up in all lands, far above all individual or combined powers of church, or state, or caste, or creed? What is it that today monopolizes nearly all legislation, dictates international treaties, governs the conferences of kings for the regulation of the balance of power, builds railways, cuts ship-canals, sends forth steamer lines to the ends of the earth, unwinds electric wires across continents, under the seas, and around the world, employs thousands of engineers, subsidizes the press, tells the state of the markets of the world yesterday that everyone may know how to move today, and has her living organizations in every land and city, interlinked with each other, and coming daily into closer and closer combination, so that no great government under the sun can any longer move or act against her will, or without her concurrence and consent?

“Think for a moment, for there is such a power; a power that is everywhere clamoring for a common code, a common currency, common weights and measures; and which is not likely to be

silenced or to stop till it has secured a common center on its own independent basis, whence to dictate to all countries and to exercise its own peculiar rule on all the kings and nations of the earth. That power is COMMERCE; the power of the ephah and the talent-the power borne by the winged women of Zechariah 5:1-11; the one with her hand on the sea and the other with her hand on the land-the power which even in its present dismemberment is mightier than any pope, any throne, any government, or any other one human power on the face of the globe.

“Let it go on as it has been going, and will go, in spite of everything that earth can interpose to hinder, dissolving every tie of nationality, every bond of family or kindred, every principle or right and religion which it cannot bend and render subservient to its own ends and interests; and the time must come when it will settle itself down somewhere on its own independent base, and where Judaism and heathenism, Romanism and Protestantism, Mohammedanism and Buddhism, and every distinction of nationality-English, German, French, Italian, Greek, Turk, Hindoo, Arab, Chinese, Japanese, or what not-shall be sank in one great universal fellowship and kingdom of commerce!”- (From Seiss; “On the Apocalypse” written in 1865.)

We scarcely know how far we have drifted. Our forefathers were content with their living. They had domestic ties, “family reunions,” quiet church affiliations, gladly worshipping in the same old church, generation after generation. They had deep, kind, loving patriotism. But the forgetting of God is fast falling upon earth under the soul-stifling power of universal greed. Such delusive catch words as “a higher standard of living” have poisoned the streams of the life of the world. “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have,” said Paul. “We brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content.” “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Everybody wants to be rich-which damns its tens of millions! “Get up in the world.” “Get on in the world!” What lies! What will-o’-the-wisps of Satan to be followed by folks whose feet shall shortly stumble into open graves!

10. Commercialism brings spiritual deadness and insensibility as nothing else does. Once consent in your heart that “business” has a claim upon you and your spiritual life begins to shrivel. For a man to do an honest day’s work is not to yield to the claims that “business” makes upon humanity. God told us to work, to work with our hands, to do with our might what our hands find to do, to do the humblest tasks, even those of a slave, as unto the Lord. The thing called “business” has to be discerned distinctly by you if you are to understand the hideousness into which the whole world will leap, and alas, how shortly!

“Depression” is, I have no doubt, an answer to prayer, as was the famine in Ahab’s idolatrous days an answer to Elijah’s prayers. Civilization goes mad to get rich-anything to get rich! Now this simply means anything to gain independence of God. The Lord Jesus said, “Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” And God in His mercy has let men come to realize the deceitfulness of riches. “Have your hope,” said Paul, “set on God, and not on ‘the uncertainty of riches.’” The Lord Jesus said to His saints, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures, upon the earth … but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” What He meant by the right use of money, He shows in the parable (Luke 16:1-31) of the unjust steward, whose master commended as wise, the lavishing of that master’s funds upon others, when the steward found he must give account. Then He said, “I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that,

when it shall fail (as it will), they (those you have helped) may welcome you into the eternal tabernacles" (R. V.).

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

"Another angel"-than that of Revelation 17:7; not Christ, who is not "another" angel: He is the Angel of Jehovah. (See notes on Revelation 10:1.) Christ, the Lamb in heaven, has given this angel "great authority." (Christ Himself has all authority in heaven and on earth.) Nor is this angel to be confused with our Lord's second coming in Revelation 19:11-16. This angel's "glory" marks the greatness of the occasion. The fact that this angel is additional to the one of Revelation 17:1-18, is one of the proofs that the Babylon of Revelation 18:1-24 is Babylon on the Euphrates rather than Rome (which is the mystery Babylon of Revelation 17:1-18).

"Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great." The double use of "fallen" emphasizes the fact which excellent expositors have found here-that of the double overthrow of Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 18:1-24.

"A habitation of demons, and a hold," etc. Alford calls "hold" (phulake), "a place of detention, as it were, an appointed prison." This is the evident meaning, so that the city of Babylon on the Euphrates during the Millennium will be a jail of demons. Compare Isaiah 24:21-23; which is millennial also, and the judgment upon Edom, in Isaiah 34:13-15; also millennial. (Of course these conditions give way to the last judgment-when the earth is destroyed, in Revelation 20:11-15, and all lost beings are finally sentenced.)

"Kings … and the merchants." It is the last phase of Babylon, which is seen from Genesis 11:1-32 to Revelation; being first the city on the Euphrates which practiced idolatry and opposed God's city Jerusalem; then in "mystery"-the harlot on the seven hills of Rome, continuing Babylon's ancient trinity of father, mother and son, under Christian names; and finally, after the Church is raptured (Revelation 4:1), the re-established world-capital at Babylon on the Euphrates, whose prophesied destruction like Sodom, has not yet taken place. Thus the human race would combine to set up Babylon, which becomes the center of commercial world-activity. Of Tyre, God wrote in Isaiah 23:1-18 that she was a "bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth." While the nations rush to rebuild Babylon and it becomes the Beast's capital, then at last will be the full "power of her luxury" as described in Revelation 18:3 (margin). And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her. And

the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.

“Come forth, My people, out of her.”

While these words have a real application to the believer to come forth to Jesus outside the spiritual Babylon-ecclesiasticism, Nicolaitanism and the false promises of “mystery” Babylon in its various forms; yet the particular interpretation of the words is not to the saints, who will have been raptured before this call goes forth. The call to “come forth” from this great commercial Sodom of the last days-rebuilt Babylon is evidently issued to those individuals living in or doing business in that capital of the Antichrist in the last days. In Isaiah 52:11 and Jeremiah 50:8; Jeremiah 51:6; Jeremiah 51:9; Jeremiah 51:45, we see that it will be especially Jewish saints and those attached to them that are warned; for they are bidden in Jeremiah 51:50 to “Remember Jehovah from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

Now in Revelation 18:4-20 the “voice from heaven” of Revelation 18:4 is speaking. It is most solemn: the sure word of prophecy declaring to the opened ear a scene yet future with a vividness that makes it live before us!

Merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thymine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle and sheep; and merchandise of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men. And the fruits which thy soul lusted after … and all things that were dainty and sumptuous … The merchants of these things … were made rich by her … she … was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! … So great riches … And every shipmaster, and everyone that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her. And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived.

We must remember that the Beast and his ten kings of Revelation 17:1-18 made desolate the woman that sat on the seven mountains-Romanism (Revelation 17:9, Revelation 17:16). But the overthrow of Revelation 18:1-24 is directly from God: “in one day” “in one hour,” (Revelation 18:8;

Revelation 18:10; Revelation 18:17; Revelation 18:19). This overthrow is lamented by the kings of the earth.

Russia teaches us lessons here. For although she has burned churches and martyred priests and preachers, she is desperately seeking to build up commerce, to “industrialize” a whole nation in five years, to create markets by any means whatever! Russia would be self-sufficient, but for this curse of commerce that is filling the earth. Russia could close her harbors and have abundance to supply all her real needs, if her rulers were content to live in humble quiet. As far as she is able, she has destroyed religion, as the Antichrist will do in Revelation 17:1-18. But,-she desires luxury. And thus is she joined to Babylon in spirit.

If you desire to know the last and final form of iniquity, behold the two women of Zechariah 5:1-11 bearing an ephah, covered with a talent of lead. The woman, called Wickedness, sits in the ephah. “Whither do these bear the ephah?” asks the prophet, and the angel answers: “To build her a house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place.” Now Babylon is in that land of Shinar (Genesis 10:10).

Notice in Revelation 18:3; Revelation 18:11; Revelation 18:15; Revelation 18:23, “the merchants of the earth,” also “merchandise,” (Greek “cargo”-showing these things will be carried by ships, as see Revelation 18:17). Rome has no market and the Tiber has no harbor, to speak of. Naming the articles of the cargo begins with Revelation 18:12 : “Merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone,” etc. Nearly thirty kinds are enumerated, and it is all a story of luxury upon luxury! It must be pearls; it must be fine linen; it must be silk; it must be vessels of most precious wood; it must be fragrant spices; it must be wine and olive oil; it must be fine flour; it must be slaves; it must be things that are dainty and sumptuous. This city must be “decked” in fine linen, scarlet, gold, and pearls!

Now of course Roman Catholic dignitaries are seen thus decking themselves (at great cost to the poor and even to kings). But only the “clergy” and their retinues do this. The people suffer poverty.

1. Over three years before the Babylon described in Revelation 18:1-24, the Beast and his ten kings have destroyed the harlot, the city on seven hills.

2. For over three years more, the Beast and the Man of Sin who denies all that is called God and is worshipped, will have full power on earth.

3. Rome’s motto is “semper idem.” She cannot deny the Father and Son, as Antichrist does, and exist.

Therefore, it appears necessary to believe that the Babylon of chapter 18 is not Rome, but the great commercial center, Satan’s world-capital, which has always been Babylon on the Euphrates.

It seems clear from Scripture that God will permit one man publicly to “gain the whole world and forfeit his life.” And that God will also permit man’s love for luxury and pleasure, and the money that secures it, to run full riot, and set up an amazing world center of inconceivable grandeur and riches in the old place-Babylon.

Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her. And they cast dust on their

heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.

We have noticed this, but it needs to be re-emphasized: “Mystery” Babylon was destroyed by man’s hand-by the Beast and his ten kings. Literal Babylon with its minstrels, flute-players, trumpeters, craftsmen, “marrying and giving in marriage” (Revelation 18:22-23), will be overthrown, and in an instant, swallowed up into the bowels of the earth, and with a burning like Sodom and Gomorrah. The earthquake under the seventh seal of Revelation 16:19 was seen destroying Babylon, the great. (Isaiah 13:1-22; Isaiah 18:1-7; Isaiah 19:1-25.) And then the next verse, Isaiah 13:20, has never been fulfilled: for there are inhabitants there. The Arabians do pitch their tents and the shepherds make their flocks to lie down there; but when God destroys it finally, there shall be no such thing.

01.16. Chapter 16: Marriage of the Lamb- Rev_19:1-10

Chapter 16: Marriage of the Lamb- Revelation 19:1-10 Revelation 19:1-21 is full, with two tremendous events:

1. The marriage of the Lamb celebrated in heaven; and the marriage supper in heaven.

2. The advent of the Lord in the Great Day of Wrath, as King of kings; and the slaughter on earth, and the frightful “supper” connected therewith. As the Day of Wrath at Armageddon is the most fearful, so is the marriage of the Lamb the most blessed and happy of all events that have occurred so far in creation.

Introduction-The Four Hallelujahs-(Revelation 19:1; Revelation 19:3-4; Revelation 19:6)

Hallelujah is the Hebrew expression frequently occurring in the later Psalms and meaning “praise to Jehovah.” The last five Psalms 146:1-10; Psalms 147:1-20; Psalms 148:1-14; Psalms 149:1-9; Psalms 150:1-6 (R. V.) begin and end with this wonderful word, hallelujah. Others, like Psalms 106:1-48, set forth the spirit of millennial anticipation and praise, as does the shortest- Psalms 117:1-2. Only in these four verses of Revelation 19:1-21 does this mighty praise-word occurs in the New Testament. But this is what we would expect; for there is no place today (except in the life of individual saints who rejoice in the assembly, under the movement of the Holy Spirit) for this great word of high exultation unto God.

Because the Messiah when He came to Israel, although received by the wise men with exceeding joy, and gladdening the hearts of the poor shepherds, was rejected by Israel, and crucified; victory was postponed, and hallelujah can be uttered only by faith when the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit and becomes a prophetic testimony of grace. Personal hallelujahs can be given to God, but the triumph that brings the universal hallelujah to all holy things is yet in the future! Indeed, mercy and grace were too soon forgotten, and papal bondage entered into by the Church itself. The harlot Babylon rises-the woman drunken with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:1-18). It is not the time for hallelujahs. Not until Babylon, the harlot, is completely overthrown, swallowed up in divine indignation, as we see in Revelation 17:1-18; and not until literal Babylon (Revelation 18:1-24) is completely gone, and all Babylonian things have disappeared forever, does hallelujah burst forth from all holy hearts.

Notice that the first two hallelujahs are drawn forth by Babylon’s judgment:

After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, her that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever.

Indeed, Revelation 19:4, including the third hallelujah, with the word “Amen” preceding it, may well be joined with the hallelujahs of Revelation 19:1-3, as expressing the utter consent of those most

intimately connected with the divine throne-the twenty-four elders and the four living beings. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah.

There is now a call from the throne itself, for universal jubilant praise, such as it seems has never been issued before: And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great.

Notice that this call is given to all whose warfare is over, for it is a heavenly scene. [112]

[112] It is, we believe, evident that at the moment this great call comes for praise on the part of all God's servants and those that fear Him, the small and the great, there are still on earth, in great trouble, those whose warfare is not yet accomplished. Hear Luke 18:8, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?" There will be those on earth who are really God's elect, but have not yet received faith. It will not be given until the first three verses of Isaiah 60:1-22 are fulfilled "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee… and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light." This is not until the Lord Himself is revealed in Jerusalem unto beleaguered Israel, until they "look unto him whom they have pierced." "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven," which is His pierced Person, and they shall at last, like Thomas, believe because they have seen. Moreover the whole scene of Revelation 19:1-10 is heavenly, not earthly, and it precedes the coming of the Lord with His heavenly armies to destroy His enemies.

We now come to the mightiest verse of response to God in all Scripture: And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. While all preceding hallelujahs have risen from relief at the overthrow of Babylon, this fourth hallelujah is a limitless expression of ecstasy at the reign of "the Lord our God the Almighty." In our poor feeble spiritual experiences and aspirations, it is most difficult even to imagine the delight in God heard now in heaven. A great multitude-many waters-like mighty thunders: such is the voice! The Marriage of the Lamb

Now, at last, we are coming to that inexpressible climax, that glorious event awaited by God the Father, and the Bridegroom, His Son; and the Blessed Spirit. Yes, and all holy beings, who like John (the Bridegroom's friend) can say, "this my joy therefore is made full." And so we read:

Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Let us reflect that this "marriage of the Lamb" has been the longed-for and looked-for event of age upon age. It is not necessary that this great event of blessing should have been continually referred to in Scripture to make it important. The virgin birth of our Lord is not frequently referred to, but of how vast eternal consequence! And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Certain questions arise immediately concerning this great revelation of the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper.

1. When does this event occur? Evidently directly upon the overthrow of Babylon on earth; for the celebration of that judgment-event in Revelation 19:1-5 was immediately succeeded in Revelation 19:6-7 by the mighty praise attending the reigning of the “Lord our God the Almighty,” which brings in the marriage.

2. Where is the marriage, with its attending marriage supper, celebrated? The answer can only be-in heaven; for the scene is wholly heavenly. No one can read Revelation 19:6 without coming to this conclusion.

3. What saints constitute “the bride, the wife of the Lamb”? The Church! See Ephesians 5:22-32. In Israel as a nation the high priest was expressly forbidden to marry a “divorced woman” or “a widow” (Leviticus 21:10; Leviticus 21:13-14). Israel is spoken of both as divorced (Jeremiah 3:8) and as a widow (Lamentations 1:1; Isaiah 54:4). When Jehovah returns to Israel in millennium blessings, Isaiah 62:4-5 will be fulfilled, as will Isaiah 54:4-5, etc., but it will be “Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married,” for, “as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” This is an earthly scene, and must be contrasted with the marriage of the heavenly Bride, the wife of the Lamb. In Revelation 21:10, the angel reveals the wife of the Lamb to John, thus:

“He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” We read concerning the patriarchs, that they desired a better country, that is a heavenly; therefore, “God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God,” for He prepared for them a city. Also, that Abraham “looked for the city,” with the foundations, whose architect and maker is God. And in Galatians 4:26 Paul declares concerning Church saints that “the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother.” This heavenly Jerusalem is seen in Revelation 21:24-27 to have come down to the new earth (upon a great and high mountain), with the “nations” walking amid the light thereof, and the kings of the earth bringing their glory into it-the gates never being closed, and admitting the holy inhabitants of earth freely. [113]

[113] Those who teach that Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 9:1-21, ff, goes back to the millennial order, before the last judgment and the new creation, claim that “nations” will not exist in the new earth. But these seem to forget Isaiah 65:17-18 as well as Isaiah 66:22, where the creation of the new heavens and the new earth is connected with the perpetuation of the seed and the name of Israel. There are many prophecies setting forth the eternal perpetuity of that elect nation. And if of Israel, the elect nation, then also of other nations. Also, as seen in Revelation 21:26, “And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.” We know that the formation of nations arose out of a judgment-at Babel. But the establishment of Israel as a kingdom under David arose from the judgment upon Israel’s rejection of Jehovah as their king! Our Lord’s royal title lies in the covenant with David, the king, His father. The idea that nations will cease to exist does not seem to be borne out in Scripture. (See notes on Chapter 21.) That Abraham, the patriarchs, and all who were given by God a heavenly hope, will share in the bliss of the New Jerusalem, appears scriptural. But that Abraham or any other Old Testament saint will form part of the Body of Christ, we cannot for a moment believe! The great mystery of the Church, His Body, committed to Paul in

such a sense that he called himself minister thereof (Colossians 1:24-27), a ministry so very distinct, definite and exclusive as to call for the great passage of Ephesians 5:23, cannot be merely an opening up to Old Testament saints of a calling, character and privileges which they possessed and of which they did not know! That is unthinkable. No one was “baptized” into that one Body until Pentecost. When that Body, the Church, is presented by Christ to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” it will be composed only of the saints from Pentecost to the rapture.

4. Are the marriage and the marriage supper distinct? It certainly appears so, for in Revelation 19:9, you have those that are “bidden” to the marriage supper of the Lamb. These guests most certainly do not constitute the Bride. No bride needs an invitation to her own wedding! In John 3:29, John the Baptist says, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice; this my joy therefore is made full.” Now, here is a saint concerning whom the Lord Jesus testified: “Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater.” And yet he is not of the Bride. Nevertheless, he is at the marriage supper, for he is the friend of the bridegroom-a place of singular honor! In divine, sovereign arrangement, he is not of the Bride.

5. Who will be the guests at the marriage supper? Evidently not all the saints; otherwise, why the special blessing pronounced (Revelation 19:9) upon those that are bidden to the marriage supper?

I. The Prime Importance of This Marriage Scene

1. This event is the great delight of God, to which He has looked forward from all ages. It is a fulfilment of our Lord’s words of Matthew 22:1-46, “A certain king … who made a marriage feast for his son.” The relationship of the Father and the Son is one of infinite, eternal tenderness. All marriage joys of earth were planned by God and given to mankind in love that they might understand somewhat of heaven’s feeling at this marriage; for, “love is of God.”

Let us seek to enter, if we may, into the contemplation of that delight of the Father-“from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3:14), when the time at last has come for His Son to “present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing”; for God the Father gave the Church to Christ. Read John 17:1-26 : “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me.” There is no meditation so exalting as that upon the relationship and affections of the Persons of the Godhead, one to another.

2. This marriage is the great anticipation of Christ. Paul tells us the story in Ephesians 5:1-33 -“Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself up for it.” His love for the Church is immeasurable, unchanging, and infinite. It is in the very nature of the case, peculiar love. Christ wept over Jerusalem, for there was, and is, a special tenderness of our God toward those to whom He was the Messiah, and over whom He will be King on David’s throne. He had “compassion on the multitude” as He does today. He gave Himself a ransom for all. But His love for His Bride, the Church, is, as it must be, and that, eternally, a peculiar, particular, husband’s affection, and that without measure!

3. This heavenly wedding is the great prospect of all holy beings. (We mean, of course, of all those in heaven; for this marvelous scene is wholly heavenly, as is evident.) From the time in Revelation 5:1-14, when the Lamb takes the seven-sealed book of the kingdom, His actions as well as His

Person have been the constant jubilant delight of heaven (Revelation 5:8-14; Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 11:15). But now the climax has been reached. In an earthly wedding, especially a wedding of the favorite one of the house, how all the relatives and also the servants of the household are stirred! Now Jehovah God appointed and directed the first wedding, in Genesis 2:1-25, and our Lord's first miracle at Cana of Galilee celebrated with "the best wine" another wedding. But Ephesians 5:25; Ephesians 5:31-32 proclaims that every marriage sets forth anew the relationship of Christ and the Church! It is, therefore, the height of holy joy to every heavenly being, this marriage of the Lamb!

4. To bring in this festal day in heaven, Satan's earthly system was overthrown. This marriage could not be celebrated while the harlot Babylon, the false church, who pretended infamously to be the Bride of Christ, remained unjudged. a. For the heavenly wedding must have peace and joy unmixed-all gladness, unmingled with jealousy or conflict. b. Judgment of that which pretended to be Christ's Bride was absolutely necessary for such peace and joy. c. Just as the triumph of holiness over iniquity is necessary for public peace, so indignation must give place to satisfaction of heart for such an occasion as the heavenly wedding. d. Participation in God's holiness and holy judgment must be prior and preliminary to participation in His day of love toward His Son, and to that Son's absolute delight. Therefore, we read concerning the judgment of Babylon: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her." The very beings who are now to enter into the festal joys of the marriage of the Lamb, whether they are guests or servants, are those who pronounced the judgment which God executed upon the shameless, earthly, Satanic bride-pretender. You remember that David's mighty wars had to precede Solomon's reign of peace and the Song of Songs of marriage joy.

5. Review the expressions of rapture with which all holy, heavenly beings celebrate this wedding.

First, "The voice of a great multitude saying, Hallelujah!" (Revelation 19:1). Then you have the four and twenty elders, and the four living creatures of Revelation 19:4, with "Amen, Hallelujah." Then comes the call from the throne: "Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great." Then follows the most mighty voice of heavenly acclamation in the whole Bible: "The voice of a great multitude" rises like "many waters" and "mighty thunders," saying, "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reign-eth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Through age on age, the heavenly hosts have burned with ever-increasing expectancy toward this culminating day of divine joy!

II. Identifying the Church as the Bride of Christ 1. The Church is the Bride-"The wife"-as seen in: a. Ephesians 5:23-32. This passage compels this belief. In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul writes, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." b. The scene of Revelation 19:1-21 of the marriage of the Lamb is wholly heavenly; the Bride could not be, therefore, the earthly nation Israel. c. Israel is both divorced and widowed. She will be Jehovah's restored wife in the thousand years; but not the heavenly Bride of Christ, the Song of Solomon 2:1-17. Fix in mind the difference between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper of the Lamb. One is the occasion itself, the other the celebration by others than the Bride of the occasion. In the marriage, it is the wife; in the supper, the guests, that are in view.

III. The Marriage Bliss of the Lamb and His Wife The bliss of the marriage of the Lamb is without limit. It is the Personal Delight of Him who created all things! No other love has the person-toward-person character of marital love. Parents love their children because they are their children. Brothers and sisters alike have a love of natural relationship. Friendships are based on common interests. But the love of bridegroom and bride is a delight each in the person of the other. This is why marital love is so often so wholly unexplainable! We say, “What did he see in her?” or, “Why did she choose him?” There is no answer but one-love. This love of Christ’s for His Bride is the love that is “strong as death … a very flame of Jah,” that “many waters cannot quench,” of the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon 8:6-7 - margin).

Let us dwell upon the words, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it.” He values His Bride as Himself. And upon her, He lavishes His personal affection, without limit, constantly, and for evermore! For we read in Revelation 21:1-27, after the thousand years have passed, that she is still “as a wife adorned for her husband.”

Here then is a marital love, a tenderness, an appreciation, and a delight, that will grow for ever and for ever. Oh, wonder of wonders, that such a record can be written! Christ will never change in His affections! What must the ages hold for the wife of the lamb! And the love of that Bride, the wife of the Lamb, will correspond to that of her husband-unceasing, increasing, for ever and for ever! Have you known a husband and wife whose love deepened as the years went by, whose satisfaction with each other was such as to keep them together constantly, of their own mutual will; whom neither “society” nor “business,” nor outside pleasures could separate? Let such a happy marital existence be a whisper to you of what Christ and the Church will enjoy more and yet more for evermore!

We no longer marvel at the effect upon John the Seer, as he views and tastes in the Spirit the ecstasy of this unutterable occasion. It is a sign of the overwhelming blessedness of the marriage of the Lamb and the festal supper thereafter, that this apostle, who had been on the transfiguration mountain; and had been filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and had seen the glorious Son of God, and the heavenly throne itself; and all the wonders of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials; and who had heard the thunders of the heavenly hallelujahs-that he is now at last suddenly so enraptured by the bliss of the Church’s coming marriage day that he falls to worship at the feet of the revealing angel!

IV. The Marriage Supper In Psalms 45:1-5 we have a marvelous description of Christ’s second coming as King. He is called “King of kings” in Revelation 19:1-21, and here in this Psalm, He is “the King”-“fairer than the children of men.” His triumphant advent and victory over His enemies is portrayed, and His personal majesty and beauty make a glorious and thrilling picture. God the Father is, in Revelation 19:6-7, speaking to Christ (compare Hebrews 1:8-9), “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever … God, thy God, hath anointed thee With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Here the Bridegroom’s companions are seen and then the Bridegroom’s personal presence: “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.” Then the gladness and joy of the day to the Lord Himself: “Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad. Kings’ daughters are among thy honorable women.” (This is a scene, of course, after the Lord and His Bride, the Church, have come down to earth and inaugurated the millennial reign.) “At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir.” And then this divine word to her in that glad day:

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house” (the things of the first creation are left behind forever!).

“So will the king desire thy beauty.” (“The king,” here, is Christ, the Husband.) “For he is thy lord; and reverence thou him.”

“And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift”-earthly gifts.

“The rich among the people (Israel) shall entreat thy favor”-that is, of the Queen, the Church, in the New Jerusalem, her home (Revelation 21:1-27).

“The king’s daughter within the palace is all glorious”: that is, in the New Jerusalem which will be tabernacling above the earthly Jerusalem in the 1000 years; and afterward upon the new earth.

“She shall be led unto the king upon broidered work.

“The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

“With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led:

“They shall enter into the king’s palace.” The virgins, her companions, may be represented by the five wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-46. We see them again in the Song of Solomon, where the “daughters of Jerusalem” delight in the bride. But those “daughters” are not the bride. The beloved Shulamite, espoused by King Solomon, is the type of the Church as the Bride of Christ in that coming day (Song of Solomon 3:11; Song of Solomon 6:8-9). Here we find several companies: First, the Bride; next, the “guests” at the high festival in heaven; then, the “virgins” who enter the marriage feast of Matthew 25:10; again, those ready and looking for their Lord “when He shall return from the (heavenly) marriage feast,” an evidently earthly scene. See the passage in Luke 12:35-40.

We know that some insist the five wise virgins represent the real saints, who are raptured up to the heavenly marriage feast; that the “foolish virgins” are not “known” by Christ, and so represent unsaved professors; and that this marriage feast the five wise enter (inasmuch as but one marriage feast seems to be described), may be the heavenly feast; and that the “ten virgins” parable is surely meant to instruct and warn all who profess to belong to Christ.

However, the festivities of our Lord’s coming back to earth, described in Psalms 45:1-17 as following the Great Day of Wrath, certainly constitute a celebration as well as a prolongation of marriage bliss and joy, consequent upon the marriage of the King. The earthly and Jewish character of Matthew’s gospel, together with the fact that the “ten virgins” scene is evidently connected with our Lord’s return to earth and as “Son of man” (Matthew 24:37; Matthew 24:39; Matthew 24:44, and the opening word of Matthew 25:1-46, tote-“at that time”); considered in connection with the feast and the marriage of Revelation 19:1-21, which is not directly connected with Christ’s coming, all make me believe that the “ten virgins” enter the celebration after the heavenly marriage and are thus connected with Psalms 45:1-17.

V. What Is the Bride’s “Making Herself Ready”?

We read, “It was given unto her.” The preparation for this marriage, “the supreme event for which the ages are waiting,” is an absolute bestowal of divine grace. It is not, of course, salvation, since

those who constitute the Bride were saved long before, while on earth. But it is a special granting from God to prepare herself for this great climax.

Again, to “array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” The King James Version falls utterly short of the meaning, by translating the Greek plural word dikaiomata, which means “righteous things” or “acts” as if it were dikaiosunee, “righteousness.” These bridal saints were declared righteous in Christ when first they believed. The bridal array for the wedding is something absolutely different.

Garments are woven little by little; and thus were woven the materials for her, the Bride of Christ. The Holy Spirit who indwelt the Church wrought what Paul calls in Php 1:11 “the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ”; or, as in Ephesians 2:10, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.”

Now, although for our service each one in the kingdom will “receive his own reward according to his own labor,” yet all the works wrought through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in and by the saints of the Bride will all belong alike to that holy Bride: for the whole Church is the Bride. Linen represents manifested righteousness, and this is “fine linen, bright and pure.” It has that same “exceeding white and glistering” appearance as her Lord’s raiment had on the transfiguration mount-of glory as well as purity. In other words, the Church will appear, all of it, in raiment wholly befitting Christ, her glorious Bridegroom. She herself had no righteousness; Christ Himself is her righteousness and her standing. She is one with Him. But now all those blessed Spirit-led works, those “righteous acts” of the saints while on earth, are wrought to produce an array manifestly befitting the Bride, herself, without “spot, blemish or any such thing”-in this unspeakable scene!

VI. Exactly What Is the Marriage? Is it not Christ’s presenting “the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” described so rapturously by Paul in Ephesians 5:1-33? We constantly read in Scripture (where alone we dare read here) of a man taking a wife unto himself. We get our attention, at an earthly wedding, fixed on the ceremony: forgetting that the real marriage is “this man taking unto him this woman” to be his wedded wife. The “ceremony” only proclaims and pronounces it; as the wedding feast only celebrates it. The perfect picture of Christ’s taking the Church as His Bride is seen in Genesis 24:1-67, where Abraham would “make a marriage for his son.” He sends Eliezer, his steward, to far Mesopotamia, to find and woo Rebekah by showing her the “things” of Abraham and Isaac (as the Holy Spirit shows us “the things of Christ”); and Rebekah says, “I will go.” And then, the journey over, “Isaac took Rebekah; and she became his wife; and he loved her.”

Lord’s royal title lies in the covenant with David, the king, His father. The idea that nations will cease to exist does not seem to be borne out in Scripture. (See notes on Revelation 21:1-27.)

01.17. Chapter 17: The Great Day of Wrath- Rev_19:11-21; Rev_20:1-3

Chapter 17: The Great Day of Wrath- Revelation 19:11-21; Revelation 20:1-3 I. The Coming to Earth of Christ as KING OF KINGS And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And his eyes a flame of fire, and upon his head many diadems; and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. The passage before us, which includes Revelation 19:11-21; Revelation 20:1-3, may be divided as follows:

I. The coming to earth of Christ as King of Kings, and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:11-16).

II. The gathering of the birds to the “supper of God” (Revelation 19:17-18).

III. The overthrow of Antichrist and his armies (Revelation 19:19-21).

IV. Satan bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

I never heard a sermon on the Great Day of Wrath-did you? Yet the writings of the prophets are full of that very day! The coming of the Day of Wrath is, as we have found, at the end of the long-suffering of God. For centuries of human sin God had waited. Even after He proceeds to preliminary judgments, He goes with slow steps, as we have seen in the seals, trumpets, and vials. Under these divine strokes, the earth, like Pharaoh of old, hardens itself into utter blasphemy “against God who had the power over these plagues.” Now comes the Great Day of God, The Almighty (Revelation 16:14).

We again solemnly urge every believer to study the Scriptures concerning this Great Day of Wrath. It is entirely separate and distinct from the last judgment of the Great White Throne. [114]

[114] Isaiah 2:12-21; Isaiah 8:6-10; Isaiah 24:1-23 entire; Isaiah 30:27-28, Isaiah 30:30; Isaiah 30:34 entire; Isaiah 63:1-6; Ezekiel 32:5-10; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 1:15-16; Micah 5:15; Nahum 1:2; Nahum 1:5-6; Zephaniah 1:7; Zephaniah 1:14-17; Haggai 2:6; Zechariah 14:1-5; Zechariah 14:16; Malachi 4:1-6; Malachi 1:1-14.

These are some of the passages of the prophets that look toward this terrible Day of the Lord, when He comes to tread His enemies under foot, according to the Father’s appointment. Remove from your mind the thought of mercy in “that day of vengeance of our God.” An evil and adulterous generation today hates the thought of judgment. Sin is sweet to them, therefore is the sword of Jehovah bitter. Like King Agag, its prophets and preachers simper to their scripture-ignorant

hearers: “Surely the bitterness of death is past” (1 Samuel 15:32). But the next verse says, “And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal.” The false prophets of this hour-all the shallow “advanced” college professors, the wicked well-poisoning modernist horde of lying preachers, the dead denominationalists, content to sit in cushioned pews and pay a fawning puppet to preach inanities that never reach men’s consciences: yes-all the false prophets who cry, “Peace, peace,” when God warns of the swiftly coming Day of Wrath; arid all the Satan-drugged hosts of Christendom, content to hearken to them and lie down to sleep on the edge of the volcano of destruction: let them read such Scriptures as the above! But they will not. In the present day, Jeremiah 5:30-31 is realized before our eyes: “A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means: and my people love to have it so: AND WHAT WILL YE DO IN THE END THEREOF?” The forbearance of God is at last at an end. To prolong it would be to connive at sin! Therefore, God’s holy hatred toward sin is unloosed, in all its “fierceness.” He will send His dear Son, whom men despised, with the direct commission of utter vengeance! It will be a “winepress”-the bodies of men will be crushed. It is the winepress of wrath: “Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?” It is the winepress of the fierceness of wrath-the words are terrible! And finally, it is “the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty!” Ah, how feeble are words to portray the unloosed fury of that dreadful day!

I found a great nest of hornets one summer, built upon the cottage porch. I would have been glad to observe their workings from the room within. But no, they challenged my every approach. I had to go in and out of the house by a back door, and even then they were annoying and dangerous. There was no peace; there could be none. After several particularly grievous attacks by these deadly insects, I took a fishing pole, wrapped the tip of it round and round with several yards of muslin, which I tied carefully; then waited night-fall, when the hornets would all be in their nest I soaked the cloth thoroughly with kerosene and lit it. Then I held that flaming pole beneath that hornets’ nest with relentless determination. The insects rushed out to burning and death. I left not one! This earth will have become a nest of hideous hornets against God! And God will clear them out! He will leave not one! Not one rebel will be spared (Matthew 13:41-42). And Christ will strike first at Armageddon.

Gathered about Jerusalem will be “all the nations,” in a battle line of 200 miles, from Edom to Carmel (Revelation 14:20; Isaiah 63:1-6). And how our Lord will “strike through kings,” and tread down their millions, in that day! (Psalms 110:5-6).

1. The Day of Wrath is a particular and distinct event: a. It is separated in time from the last judgment by a thousand years and a little more (Revelation 20:3; Revelation 20:7; Revelation 20:11). b. Its object is entirely distinct and different from the Day of Judgment. The latter is to pronounce final and eternal destiny; “books” are opened; inquiries made; exact, judicial sentence pronounced. But the Day of Wrath, which precedes the thousand years’ reign of Christ and His saints, is to get the earth cleared up for that thousand years’ kingdom. c. The last judgment comes on only after the present heavens and earth have passed away; but the Day of Wrath is an event on this earth; the embattled rebels being dealt with in Palestine!

2. The Day of Wrath has specific characteristics: a. It is the pent-up divine outburst of indignation, of outraged holiness, majesty, love and truth! The earth will be filled with haters of God,

blasphemers of His blessed Name, despisers of His Son. “Therefore saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.” His sword shall drink its fill (Isaiah 34:5). “I will also smite and I will cause my wrath to rest.” b. God will thus answer the prayers of all His saints for the coming of His kingdom on earth-that His will may be done here as in heaven, where everything is subject to Him. Their prayers finally bring this answer!

All things opposing the establishment of that kingdom must be swept out of the way by the besom of destruction.

Let it be understood that no “moral suasion” whatever is connected with the setting up of the kingdom of God upon this earth. It will be a putting of Christ’s enemies under His feet by the stupendous instantaneous exercise of power in wrath. The human will must be put down. The Millennium, or thousand years’ reign, which follows the Day of Wrath, will be an iron-rod rule. It will be dashing in pieces like a potter’s vessel absolutely everything opposed to the will of God on this earth. Rebellion will not be allowed to lift its head.

We must conceive of God as long-suffering, full of compassion, merciful, for wrath is His “strange” action. He postpones judgment for that reason; as we read in Isaiah 28:21 : “Jehovah will rise up … He will be wroth … that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” God is love; that is His name; but His wrath-when mercy is no longer left, when iniquity has filled up its cup-will be all the more terrible. The old proverb, “Beware of the anger of a patient man” illustrates this. c. God would have His wrath shown and His power made known. We know He will do thus forever upon the “vessels of wrath” described in Romans 9:22. Therefore, it should not surprise us that at the inauguration of the reign of His Son upon this earth, the fury and fierceness of the anger of God against the finally obdurate, hateful human rebels, who have allied themselves with God’s old enemy, Satan, to oppose His dear Son, to keep Him out of His rights, to resist His taking the throne which He purchased with His Own Blood-will burst forth with unrestrained wrath toward His enemies, until they be utterly swept off the earth or entirely subdued. d. The vast riddle of permitted evil will thus be resolved. Things will come to such a pass on this earth that only the intervention of God in wrath will satisfy the public conscience of holy beings. e. Christ and the heavenly armies are themselves the executors in this terrible day of visitation.

3. Mark the four names given to the Lamb on that day: a. “Faithful and True.” By this name He is seen as the Sitter on the white horse, coming from the open heaven. This name reminds us of His earthly life of faithfulness upon which God bases His exaltation-(Psalms 45:1-17 and Php 2:1-30). But He is coming now in righteousness, not in grace. Before, He said He came not to judge but to save the world; now, He comes as judge. This great day reveals Him “making war.” Note this: later He will judge the nations, ruling them with an iron rod, but this is the war of the great day of God. The struggle will be brief; but remember it is not sessional judgment, but battle. His eyes are now “a flame of fire”;-not merely “like a flame of fire” (as in Church days: Revelation 2:18). As over against the ten diadems of Antichrist-how briefly worn!-are “many diadems”-universal dominion-upon His head. b. The Unknown Name. It is “written,” but He alone knows it, for is He not God? c. “The Word of God.” Thus is He arrayed in the blood sprinkled garments of vengeance, according to the prophetic word. His retinue follow on white horses, in fine linen, white and pure. It

will include all the angels (Matthew 25:31) and all His saints (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Whatsoever other principalities, powers, thrones, dominions and “glories” may attend, there will be infinitely above all, “his own glory, and the glory of the Father” (Luke 9:26)! The “sharp sword” is His Word, His voice. [115]

[115] Mark the seven occurrences of the words: “voice of Jehovah” in Psalms 29:1-11, with the instantaneous might of the effect-for this Psalm is millennial-when “He shall rule them with a rod of iron.” This is “the breath of His lips” that shall slay the wicked (Isaiah 11:4). d. Finally, the royal vesture, and the thigh of might,[116] marked, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” How all earthly royalty and power collapses and withers at this sight! We shall have occasion to trace further, in looking at the Millennium and its order, the might and glory of the King of Kings!

[116] The same “mighty One of Jacob,” who comes having “King of Kings” written upon His thigh, in that Great Day of Wrath, to establish His kingdom, touched Jacob’s thigh on the night He wrestled with him (Genesis 32:1-32), taking away his carnal strength! “For by strength shall no man prevail”-“Power belongeth unto God!”

II. The Gathering of the Birds to the “Supper of God” And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in midheaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.

Flesh, flesh, flesh, flesh, flesh!-five times over! They chose to walk after the flesh spiritually and now their flesh must be devoured literally!

If you ask me how an angel could stand in the sun and speak to earth, I answer frankly, I do not know,-except that it will be done. I have often felt that men know little of astronomy, for all their vaunted discoveries. I am certain that they know little of the power of angels “the mighty in strength, that do God’s commandments.”

Now, behold the frightful feast on earth,-the birds feasting on those who despised the invitation on high to the marriage supper of the Lamb; both feasts described in this one chapter! What a lesson! The balance maintained by God in creation is a marvel. “I have created the waster to destroy,” God said. If insect or animal pests increase to the point of danger, other creatures are on hand to devour them, which in turn must themselves be devoured, if necessary for man’s preservation. When our Lord described, in Luke 17:34-35, the snatching away by the angels of those that “caused stumbling and practiced iniquity” in order that those “left” might share His kingdom (Matthew 13:41-43), the disciples inquired about this action, and the scene of it, in the words “Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body is thither will the vultures also be gathered together” (Luke 17:37 R.V. margin).

Now we know that when the Lamb in wrath treads the battle line at Armageddon, absolutely millions upon millions pour out their blood in slaughter-even to the bridles of the horses! This then, in Revelation 19:1-21, is a literal call to the birds which feed upon flesh, from all over the earth: and they come! It is a literal feast, awful though the scene may be. God’s scavengers clean the land completely. No interpretation is possible for this passage but the literal one: anything else is unbelievable, fantastic. And when we accept it as literal we see the necessity of it. God will not

allow His Son's kingdom to begin with a plague, caused by the festering carcasses of slain multitudes.

III. The Overthrow of Antichrist and His Armies And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh. The description of the great supper by the birds precedes that of the slaughter of those upon whom they feed, as the closing words of this passage show.

What an array! "The Beast, (the Antichrist) and the kings of the earth" are "gathered together"-not only the Antichrist's allied ten kings, but, deluded by the three unclean spirits of Revelation 16:13-14 "the kings of the whole world" are gathered together "unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty." We have already noted that their headquarters will be at the valley of Megiddo, called Armageddon, just southeast of Mt. Carmel in Palestine.

There is evidently on the part of these armies, a knowledge of Him against whom they are fighting. I believe that when the heaven is "opened" and the Lamb upon the white horse and His armies come forth, the scene is visible from this earth. It is a direct warfare of hell against heaven. Satan, cast with his millions of angels out of heaven in his war against Michael and his angels (Revelation 12:1-17), has brought up this false Christ with his false prophet and arrayed the millions of earth's mortals against Michael's Lord and all the hosts of heaven! What supreme folly! The dragon could not prevail even against Michael. Now he is trusting the puny arm of flesh to defy the whole host of heaven, led by the Son of God Himself! This is the incurable insanity of sin, which wars away in spite of defeat after defeat, against a holy God!

"The Beast was taken, and with him the false prophet." Against the forward march of the King of Kings there can be no struggle, such as there was when the dragon warred with Michael in Revelation 12:1-17. How the beast shall be "taken" we are not told: the King gives the order, and immediately occurs the arrest of these hellish leaders, the two men from the lost regions who had been permitted to return to earth to be the accepted leaders of a Christ-rejecting humanity.

"They two" are cast alive into the lake of fire. The word "alive" here signifies existence in a human body. It is not only a state of conscious existence; but life in a human body. (The Greek word translated here "alive" occurs in Acts 1:3; Acts 4:41; Acts 10:42 ("quick"); Acts 20:12; Acts 25:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.) Our Lord's use of the word concerning His own life after resurrection is seen in Revelation 1:18 "I am alive for evermore"; in Revelation 20:4, it is used for coming to life in resurrection, "they lived, and reigned with Christ." (These had spirit-existence before.)

Furthermore, this lake of fire into which the Beast and the false prophet are cast (first mentioned here: compare Revelation 20:10; Revelation 20:14-15; Revelation 21:8) is the same as the Gehenna of which our Lord warned the Jews in Matthew, Mark and Luke and through the apostle James [117]

[117] See Matthew 5:22; Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15; Matthew 23:33; Mark 9:43; Mark 9:45; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6. This is proved by comparing Matthew 25:41 with Revelation 20:10.

It is of immeasurable importance just now, that believers should become established concerning the nature and eternity of future punishment; also as to the distinction of Sheol (Hades) from the lake of fire; and of the literal character of the latter. [118]

[118] J. N. Darby's tract on "Eternal Punishment"; F. W. Grant's book, "Facts and Theories as to a Future State"; Sir Robert Anderson's "Human Destiny" are excellent (although Mr. Grant yields to the common absurd cry that the fire of hell may represent something "more terrible." R. A. Torrey's words on hell, in "What the Bible Teaches," are true and searching. The best thing we have ever seen on the subject is the booklet, "Life and Death" by C. J. Baker, obtainable from Pickering and Inglis, London, England; and Moody Colportage Association, Chicago.

Elliott says, "The resurrection spoken of (here in Revelation 20:4) corresponds in every case to the death out of which it was a revival."

Bengel says, "The first resurrection is a corporeal one. Therefore, the dead 'became alive' in that part in which they were dead or mortal, consequently in their body." The fearful fact that these two men in human bodies (Mark 9:43-48) are found in the lake of fire after the thousand years (Revelation 20:10) and are to be tormented ceaselessly there forever, should sober all our thoughts. When sin becomes absolute, it will bring absolute punishment, and that eternal.

Note that the "rest" of this vast horde of millions gathered against Jerusalem are slain directly by Christ: "With the breath of his lips shall He slay the wicked" (Isaiah 11:4 -a kingdom passage). And now, as the closing scene of the present order, behold the millions upon millions of flesh-eating birds clearing away the carcasses of the rebels against God and against Christ! One vulture or two feeding on some fallen creature is a hideous sight to our eyes. What, then, will be this awful line of corpses, of two hundred miles, covered with countless hosts of scavengers! Reflect anew on what sin brings! This scene will come to pass!

IV. Satan Bound for a Thousand Years And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time. This imprisonment of the great enemy is the closing scene connected with the Day of Wrath; and, we may say, the opening scene of the coming age-the Millennium.

1. How completely God has removed the enormous power of this fallen head of the cherubim (Ezekiel 28:14) is seen in the fact that "an angel" chains him-not even Michael, the archangel, is needed, but simply "an angel." What humiliation! The host of fallen angels, together with the demons and the world of men, during the preceding three and one-half years, had bowed to Satan; now "an angel" lays hold on him and fastens upon him a great chain! Again, as in Revelation 12:9 -four names are designated: "the dragon"-that is, his hideous, murderous character before God; "the old serpent"-the ancient deceiver of angels first, and later of men; "the Devil"-the slanderer (diabolos), the accuser of the saints; and "Satan"-the great adversary of God,

His Son and all His people.

2. He is bound for a thousand years, sentenced for this definite period-which, of course, will be the Millennium: we must remember that his presence and influence upon the earth will not in any sense be felt during that one thousand years! Praise God!

3. He is cast into the abyss; that is, the pit in the heart of the earth. Compare Matthew 12:40 with Romans 10:7; also with our notes on Revelation 9:1-2. Afterwards he will be cast into the lake of fire, which is outside this earth entirely, when the present heaven and earth shall have passed away. The “shaft” to the abyss spoken of in Revelation 9:1 is sealed. He is shut within it-shut in his prison; giving relief to earth, release from all his deceits!

4. The fact that he must be loosed “for a little time after the one thousand years” should give us no surprise-for God would give the human race a final chance after Christ’s reign, to choose! One thousand years with Christ and His saints over them in peace; then the decision: will they have this Man to rule over them? or will they choose the great enemy again? We shall see.

01.18. Chapter 18: Satan Bound, The Millennium- Rev_20:4-10

Chapter 18: Satan Bound, The Millennium- Revelation 20:4-10 The Thousand Years' Reign And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

I. What the Thousand Years' Reign Is? The thousand years' reign is the direct administration of divine government on earth for one thousand years by our Lord and His saints. Its earthly center will be Jerusalem and the nation Israel, though Christ and His saints will rule in heavenly resurrection bodies in the New Jerusalem and will take the place now occupied by angels (Hebrews 2:5-8). Satan, as we have seen, will be in the abyss during the thousand years; and his "host of the high ones on high" will be "prisoners gathered in the pit, and shut up in the prison" during that time (Isaiah 24:21-23).

Just as the affairs of the world at present are directly, though unconsciously, controlled by Satan and his host (under the permission of God, but interfered with from time to time by holy angels sent of God, as in Daniel 10:1-21), so Christ and His saints will rule during the thou- sand years; generally, doubtless, invisible to the eyes of men whom they control. Yet the glory of the Lord will be seen by all flesh (Isaiah 40:5) and most wondrously and constantly over the temple at Jerusalem (Isaiah 4:5).

II. Object of the Thousand Years' Reign 1. Looked at from, God the Father's side: a. It will be the public earthly honoring of His Son just where men dishonored Him on this earth and at Jerusalem. It will be part of the literal fulfilling of such passages as Php 2:6-11 : Christ became "obedient even unto death … wherefore also God highly exalted him … that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow." b. It will be the carrying out of God's promises to His Son, and the prophecies concerning Him, to "give unto him the throne of his father David"-in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32).

"Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations 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." "Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. Jehovah will send forth the sceptre of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 110:1-7). It will be God's setting His King (Christ) upon His holy hill of Zion, in restored Jerusalem. c. It is the final divine trial of sinful man on this earth before the earth is destroyed. The trial of man began in Eden; it continued from the fall to the flood; it proceeded at the Babel dispersion; it was continued publicly, though on a limited platform, in Israel under the law; upon Israel's breakdown, power was given to the Gentiles, from Nebuchadnezzar on. Gentile rule having been abolished at Christ's second coming, Satan and his host being

imprisoned, the trial of humanity continues for a thousand years, the question being, Does man desire God's righteous rule? God would have all eternity know that the human race, whose head was Adam the First, not only did not in themselves achieve a righteous and benevolent rule or government of themselves, but did not desire such a rule, when executed in all honor and glory under Christ the Last Adam's direction!

Men claim that they are seeking, evermore, a "perfect form of government"; but that they are not at all seeking such a government, but that they actually hate it, will be evidenced by their instant revolt to Satan's banner when he is loosed for a "little season" after the Millennium. For we shall find the hordes of mankind rushing up to overthrow the righteous and benevolent reign of Christ at Jerusalem! The deepest sentiment of the natural heart is enmity against God; and this fact God will have brought out so thoroughly that there will never be a question again concerning the wisdom of taking governmental affairs out of unregenerate man's hands, and placing them absolutely in Christ's, who shares it with His saints. d. It will be God's answer (so far as is possible before the new earth) of the prayers of His saints: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The Millennium will, of course, be a mixed state of things, in that, although curtailed greatly, both sin and death will be on earth (Isaiah 65:20).

2. Looked at from Christ's side: a. He receives, after long patience, the kingdom of this world which He has been constantly "expecting," there at God's right hand (Hebrews 10:12-13). And He will reign in that righteousness which He has loved (Psalms 45:6-7). b. At last He will be able to confer upon the meek of the earth the place and inheritance He ever loved to promise them! They shall "inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalms 37:11; Matthew 5:5). c. He will share, with that infinite generosity and gladness to which His infinitely gracious heart moves Him, all His kingly honors with His saints!

3. Looked at from the saints' side: a. The Millennium brings the three classes of saints, (named in Paragraph III following) and also earthly Israel, into a state of indescribable blessedness! That iniquity is at last put down; righteousness enthroned, and a beloved Redeemer reigning-this fills the cup of joy for Christ's own! b. The very physical changes made in the earth-the razing of the mountains, the elevation of the valleys, the changes in Palestine (Zechariah 14:9-10), the blossoming of the desert (Isaiah 35:17); the specially built "highway," and the way, called the "way of holiness," traveled only by earth's redeemed (Isaiah 35:8-10), all these reveal a little of the loving care God will have taken for the comforts and joys of His earthly saints at that blessed time!

4. Looked at from the side of the nations, the peoples of the earth: a. It will be a thousand years under an iron-rod scepter. Unregenerate man, having proved wholly unfit for "liberty," will find it forever removed from him. b. Yet there will be peace at last among the nations-enforced certainly, but real. The one who rode into Jerusalem at the triumphal entry "shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:9-11). This "Ruler," born in Bethlehem, shall be "great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace" (Micah 5:2-5). This "child born," this "Son given"-"the government shall be upon his shoulder … his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government, and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom…. The zeal of Jehovah of host will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). c. All nations will be compelled to go up from year to year to worship the King,

Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. Most of the people of the earth will be yet unregenerated: for, time after time, in the book of Psalms, we read that because of the greatness of His power, His enemies shall yield “feigned obedience” (Hebrew, lie) unto Him. The prophetic-portions of the book of Psalms will then be fulfilled: for the Psalms are millennial, and primarily concern Israel and their Messiah-King. For example, see the King coming (Psalms 45:1-17) with His Bride and His mighty ones; the remnant of Israel trusting through all the upheavals of mountains, islands, and seas of the tribulation time until the King comes to make “wars to cease” (Psalms 46:1-11); the jubilation of Israel over the arrival of the “great King over all the earth” to whom “the princes of the peoples are gathered together to be the people of the God of Abraham” (Psalms 47:1-9); and the glorious establishment of the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem delighted in by Israel, and wondered at by the nations (Psalms 48:1-14). (Compare Isaiah 2:2-4.) 5. Looked at from the side of “creation”: a. The creation was “subjected to vanity, not of its own will,” but through Adam’s sin, which involved even the ground in a curse (Genesis 3:1-24). It was God who thus subjected it, looking forward to the day “the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:20-22). b. At the “revealing of the sons of God,” at Christ’s coming back to earth, this deliverance will be effected. The whole land of Israel, from the Euphrates to the Nile, will be completely delivered: “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah” (Isaiah 65:25). Indeed, the following passage seems to indicate that all the earth will be delivered: “for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). What a marvelous prospect! Habakkuk 2:14 tells us that it will be “the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah” that will thus fill the earth. Man, with his littleness, will at last be nothing; “Jehovah alone will be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:12-22)-a passage that should be read often in these bragging days of puny man!

6. The Millennium will be the time predicted by our Lord in Matthew 5:18 : “Till heaven and earth pass away, (which they do at the end of the 1000 years) one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things are accomplished.” All those infinitely wise, just, and kind provisions set forth in the ordinances, statutes, precepts, and judgments of the law given by Moses, will be put into effect. Israel, then an “all righteous” nation (Isaiah 60:21), will have the law in their hearts-loving it, and in their minds-remembering it.

III. The Order of the Thousand Years

1. Christ will be here in person-King over all the earth. He will sit “a priest upon his throne” (Zechariah 6:13). This is the fulfilment of the Melchizedek priesthood. Howbeit, it must be remembered that our Lord has a glorified body, while the saved remnant of Israel, and also, as I see it, the faithful Israelites raised when our Lord returns, will all have flesh and blood bodies-as earthly people.

2. While Christ Himself, as Israel’s Messiah, will thus be King over all the earth, and be seen “in his beauty” at Jerusalem in the millennial temple (Isaiah 33:17; Isaiah 33:22), yet it will be on the Sabbaths (after the “six working days”) and on special feast days that He will thus be seen by Israel (Ezekiel 43:7; Ezekiel 44:2; Ezekiel 46:1-3): but David himself will be the prince whom God will raise up from the dead for this high honor (Ezekiel 37:24-25; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Jeremiah 30:9;

Hosea 3:5). We must not confuse in our minds this situation. We must believe the plain words of God. David is not the Son of David. Christ, as Son of David, will be King; and David, His father after the flesh, will be prince, during the Millennium. See Ezekiel 46:4-12 -the special worship and walk of the prince.

3. The Church will reign with Christ in glorified bodies like His (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). The Church, evidently, is the first class of the three mentioned in Revelation 20:4 : “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.” There is no account of resurrection; for they were caught up at the end of chapter 3 of Revelation. (We do not believe that they are the twenty-four elders who are seen only in connection with the heavenly throne and the four living ones.) It will be remembered that the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones “judging” the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-29). They will, it seems, in a beautiful way, be the connecting link between the heavenly Church and the earthly Israel! The Church, in heavenly bodies (real bodies, of course, like Christ’s), will not interfere with the earthly order of Israel any more than God’s angels interfered with the Davidic kingdom in former days. Judgment, and not the mere execution of it, will belong to-be “given to”-the Church.

4. The second class seen in Revelation 20:4, is, “the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God.” These are, evidently, the martyrs under the fifth seal of Revelation 6:9. They are not the Church. They are, we believe, the martyrs coming after the rapture of the Church and before the class last noticed. Also, the word “beheaded” indicates the revival of the Roman Empire method of execution. These martyrs now receive their resurrection bodies, for the words “they live,”[119] must refer to bodily resurrection and to that only.

[119] Alford truly says, “If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned-where certain souls lived, at first, and the ‘rest of the dead’ lived only at the end of a specified period, after that first-the ‘first resurrection’ may be understood to mean a ‘spiritual’ rising with Christ, while the second means a literal rising from the grave, then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second,-but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which, with the whole primitive church, I do maintain.”

Stuart says, “‘They lived’ means they revived, came to life, returned to a life like the former one, vie., a return to a union of soul and body.”

5. The third class who reign with Christ are “such as worshipped not the beast,” which plainly identifies them as saints from The Great Tribulation time. They either pass through those awful three and one-half years, or are martyred. They receive resurrection bodies now to reign with Christ the thousand years.

Thus we are prepared for the great unfolding of Revelation 20:5 : “The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished.” “The rest of the dead” are the lost, whose spirits are imprisoned in Hades, in the earth’s center, till after the thousand years.

IV. The First Resurrection

1. We have been constantly told by our Lord and His apostles, as well as in Daniel 12:1-13, that there will be two resurrections of absolutely different character-one “of the just,” and the other “of

the unjust." Unto this glorious consummation-this "out-resurrection from among the dead"-Paul's whole spirit was eagerly, striving. And it should be the daily, hourly anticipation of every Christian heart (Php 3:8-11).

2. Those partaking in the first resurrection are called "blessed"-which denotes their state of grace from God; and also "holy"-which sets forth their separate character and walk when on earth. Over such, the second death is declared to have no authority (exousia). The believer is not subject to judgment in the sense of endangering his eternity (John 5:24; John 3:18). Their reign partakes of the Melchizedek character of Christ's throne. The expression "of God and of Christ" is remarkable. Perhaps light is shed upon it by Revelation 1:6 : "He (Christ) made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father." It is the business of priests to carry on for others "the things pertaining to God" (Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 5:1). This opens a wonderful subject! And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over 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. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Here we see the Devil loosed after the thousand years of imprisonment, and immediately rushing back to his old task of deluding earth's inhabitants to that "war" against God, to which the "enmity against God" of the "mind of the flesh" was ever prone, but for which, during the thousand years, leadership was lacking.

"Over the breadth of the earth" the Satan-led hosts come against "the camp of the saints" (the Church above Jerusalem) and the beloved city-Jerusalem itself.

Now at last, the patience of God being exhausted, and the malignity of man fully demonstrated, fire from God descends and devours earth's wicked hosts: thus ending forever the sinning human race!

Then we see the execution of the long prophesied doom of the damned. Antichrist and his lieutenant will have been in this fearful literal lake of fire and brimstone alive (i.e. in a human body) for 1,000 years (Revelation 19:20). They are seen, yet in torment. Now the Devil, the great deceiver, is cast into this same literal lake, into that "eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels," of which our Lord warned in Matthew 25:41.

It is, therefore, most fitting, indeed necessary, that this revelation of the appalling doom of Satan and his two chief human agents should immediately precede the account of the casting into that same lake of fire of those responsible creatures who reject their God-of all choosing sin as their portion.

01.19. Chapter 19: The Great White Throne Judgment- Rev_20:11-15

Chapter 19: The Great White Throne Judgment- Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

1. The great white throne is not dispensational or governmental in any sense, but a final, personal, eternal assize. This is evident from the fact that the whole present creation completely disappears before the Sitter upon this throne! It is also abundantly confirmed by the silence of those judged. They are not actors in any sense. Finally, the sentence from this throne is eternal.

Let us distinguish therefore the Great White Throne judgment from all those dealings with His enemies which God has heretofore had; as for instance, at Armageddon. Hitherto God's enemies, though vanquished, have been permitted the opportunity to oppose Him, even after such an iron-rod order as the Millennium. Eternal, final action has not been taken against those who remained unregenerate upon earth.

2. The Great White Throne judgment is not what we upon earth call a trial. Not one of the judged is asked a single question, for the facts are all in! And the "works," (upon which judgment must be based always) are all written in the "books." Thoughts also are known-even "the secrets of men," all have been recorded.

3. Only one inquiry is made-Is the name in "the book of life"? Judgment indeed proceeds: the "dead" are judged "out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works": for there are degrees of guilt. But The Determining Question In Every Case Will Be, Is The Name In "The Book Of Life?" We cannot emphasize too strongly that this judgment is Not At All A Trial; but a Great Public MANIFESTATION of Facts Settled Beforehand, and Recorded.

Let us now proceed to examine this brief but truly stupendous account of the last judgment. A Great White Throne.

Distinguish this from all other aspects of the divine throne; whether of Revelation 4:1-11 and Daniel 7:1-28, or of Isaiah 6:1-13, Ezekiel 1:1-28, 1 Kings 22:19, or Exodus 24:9-11.

Weigh each word: Great,-it is the Infinite before whom the finite must stand; White,-it is the unveiled, undimmed blaze of the divine holiness and purity and justice; Throne,-it is majesty unlimited, in which inheres utter right to dispose of the destiny of creatures. Before such a throne, creatures cannot stand; but they shall stand-even the lost!

Him that sat upon it.

We must, in view of John 5:22; John 5:27 believe that Christ, the Son, to whom all judgment and the execution thereof has been committed, is the Sitter on this awful throne. But we cannot avoid the feeling that all the Persons of the Godhead are there! It is God as He is, in infinite, holy and eternal majesty; although unto Christ, because He is the Son of man, the actual judging and execution of judgment has been committed by the Father. The simplicity of the description makes the scene indescribably awful. Eternity is involved therein! The thought is appalling-to face the unapproachable LIGHT of God's presence-UNFORGIVEN! From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

It is no place here for impotent unbelief in its tearfulness to begin to plead that these plain words indicate merely a purging of the earth by fire. Peter declares, "The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Our Lord plainly says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." Paul declares, "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." And again, "Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only but also the heaven. And this word, "Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace." The "kingdom" referred to, does not include the old material earth and the heavens, which pass away, but our new bodies like Christ's, and such dispensation of all things new which God shall create after the old has forever passed away! To hold on to this old earth when God says it will "flee away" and "no place be found for it," is to become first cousin of the pagan who holds the eternity of matter in the past, and also is of one piece with the legality that professes to be justified by faith but must hold on to Moses as "a rule of life." The Reformation theology will not consent that our history was ended at Calvary, thus freeing us from the "bond that was against us" forever. In like manner this same theology is afraid to face eternity with no earth to stand upon and no heavens to look to, but only the throne of God left! It is thus unprepared for "the all things new"-even the "all" of the material as well as the spiritual existence of the new creation of Revelation 21:1-27. The Lord Jesus came and "stood in the midst, the doors being shut," and said, "See my hands and my feet … handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having… . Have ye here anything to eat?" Only faith looks with joy (though mixed with astonishment) on such a scene. Only faith can receive such words as, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away." It is unbelief which says that the earth remains, although "its characteristics are changed by fire." And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne.

These, we believe, are all unsaved people:

1. In Revelation 20:6, we find (by implication) that the second death has authority (R. V. margin) over those not in the first resurrection: which would surely put them in jeopardy.

2. Our Lord definitely declares (John 5:24) that those hearing His words and believing Him that sent Him, have eternal life, and are not coming into judgment, but have passed out of death into life. "He that believeth on him, is not judged" (John 3:18).

3. With regard to eternal destiny, only two resurrections are known in Scripture. "The resurrection of life; and the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29, Acts 24:15, Daniel 12:2). That these "dead"

have received their bodies when they stand before the Great White Throne is evident from Revelation 20:5. For we know, from other Scriptures, that their spirits were existing in Hades all this time. And the words, “they lived” can then be applied to them only as to their bodies; just as the same words are spoken of the martyrs of Revelation 20:4, “They lived, and reigned with Christ.” We know that certain of these martyrs’ souls were seen under the altar at the opening of the fifth seal of Revelation 6:9-11 where they not only were conscious, but knew what was going on the earth; but had not yet received their bodies. And books were opened.

If judgment of any creature is to proceed, it must be according to what he has done-his “works.” The works of those judged are evidently fully recorded. God will have a record even of the thoughts of every creature, whether its nature is clear to us or not-it will extend to the utmost particulars. At least, it will be in accord with the memory of the creature. It is a well-attested fact that every action and thought is recorded in the memory of man, however unable he may be to “recollect” a matter at will. In that day, God judges “the secrets of men,” and men will know those secrets to be theirs, their very own (Romans 2:16). And another book was opened, which is the book of life. The question arises, “What book is this?” Is it the “Lamb’s book of life” of Revelation 21:27; Revelation 13:8 and Revelation 17:8? The answer is that only those who belong to Christ, given by the Father to Him, are saved. Only such are in that book!

Christ is seen in charge of this book in Revelation 3:5. If there are false professors who have “escaped the defilements of the world through the acquaintanceship (epignosis) of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” who having known “the way of righteousness, turn back”; or rocky-ground hearers who “receive the word with joy” but have “no root,” who “for awhile believe, and, in time of temptation fall away”; who “taste (but do not drink), the heavenly gift” (eternal life), and then “fall away”; then the thought of being blotted out of the “book of life,” (seen also in Exodus 32:32-33, Psalms 69:28), should not be in any wise a stumbling-block. Judas Iscariot was “numbered” among the twelve apostles, but “he fell away and went to his own place.” In Psalms 69:25-28, which Peter quotes in Acts 1:20 as referring to Judas, (and which the context shows includes those wicked in Israel who joined then in hating Christ): “Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous.” In these awful words we see that though Christ “gave himself a ransom for all,” and “tasted death for every man,”-thus giving to the whole race of mankind a potential place in the book of life: yet this fact does not constitute them “written with the righteous” eternally. In fact there is both the “blotting certain out” from connection with “the book of life,” and the refusal to write them with “the righteous.” They had refused Him who is “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world”: so that they lose that potential ransom-benefit all men had; and will never be “written unto life.” (See Isaiah 4:3 and Daniel 12:1.) It seems plain that “the Lamb’s book of life” contains only elect names,-“Those found written in grace’s book.”

There is the mystery of the sin of man which chooses to apostatize, but there is also the mystery of the grace of God which preserves the elect.

God does not want any true believer to lack assurance of eternal safety. Christ said: “I give my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish.” But let us insist on that other mark of Christ’s sheep: “They follow me.” If we are going on in our own way, then what right have we to assurance? Remember the “seal” of the “foundation of God,” in 2 Timothy 2:19 : “The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from

unrighteousness." And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them.

Now Death holds the bodies and Hades the spirits of the lost of the human race. Those drowned at sea are not different from those dying in any other manner. Death holds their bodies and Hades their spirits if they are unsaved. Therefore, the dead who are in the sea appear not to be human dead. Satan, whose doom is described in Revelation 20:10, was not a man, but was the anointed one of the cherubim (Ezekiel 28:1-26). In the following passage from the prophet, we find two classes of beings and also two distinct points of time: "In that day, (at Christ's coming to earth) Jehovah will punish the host of the ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited" (Isaiah 24:21-22). This passage seems to teach plainly that Satan's host will be judged at the great white throne judgment-after the "many days" of the Millennium. Part of his host is the demons, who seem to be the disembodied spirits of a former creation. It has been believed by many excellent students of God's Word that the sea is connected with Satan's host. (See Pember's "Earth's Earliest Ages.") And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is a literal fulfilment of the prophecy in Hosea 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of Sheol: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O Sheol, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Death is personified because it has a personal character. We have elsewhere remarked that Death is more than mere dissolution, more than the separation of spirit and body. Because Death in Revelation 20:14 is said to be "cast into the lake of fire," it does not for a moment permit us to consider this awful lake as unreal. This monster, this first Death, is, together with that horrible jail, Hades, cast as things hateful to God into a place of eternal wrath. It is a guarantee to all holy beings that sin will never be allowed to invade God's new creation. (This passage is difficult. I know I have not sounded its depths. I would be thankful for further light upon it.) Of one thing I am certain: It is that this lake of fire and brimstone does not and cannot lose in the least, its terrific literality, from this or from any other passage!

They were judged everyone (Greek, ekastos, each) according to their works. To translate this "every man" is to interpret, not translate. God said "each": which may apply to any, and must apply to every being who stands before that awful throne that day, whether man, angel or demon. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. The very brevity of this verse is one of the elements of its awfulness. The finality and eternity of this unspeakable doom-how they should be preached and cried aloud these days! It is not love, or faithfulness, to avoid them because they are such terrible facts. God described creation itself (Genesis 1:1) in seven Hebrew words. Here is described in ten Greek words, a doom that will never end!

For, inasmuch as this is the "fire … prepared for the devil and his angels," we need only to refer to Revelation 20:10 to see the state of those who will be cast into that lake of fire:

1. They are "tormented." This is consciousness and anguish.

2. It is "day and night"; that is God's description of ceaselessness.

3. It is "unto the ages of the ages," God's technical term (from Galatians 1:5 on), for unendingness, whether of God's own existence or the blessed reign and glorified state of His saints (Revelation

22:5); or the punishment of the wicked. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. Let us mark certain facts here:

1. It is not the absence of good works in the book that dooms a person. It is the absence of his name. Only names, not works, are in that book!

2. It is not the fact of evil works. Many of earth's greatest sinners have their names in the Book of Life.

3. All whose names do not appear in the Book are cast into the lake of fire.

4. All names there found in that day, will have been written before that day. There is no record of anyone's name being written into the Book of Life upon that day, but rather the opposite: "If any was not found written." How overwhelmingly solemn is this!

01.20. Chapter 20: The New Creation- Rev_21:1-8

Chapter 20: The New Creation- Revelation 21:1-8 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Three great passages, Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10-13 and the present Revelation passage, deal with this stupendous subject, the new creation. The definite and repeated statements that the old earth and heaven “flee away,” “pass away with a great noise,” and are “burned up”; together with the statement that “there was found no place for them,” compel the conclusion that those who argue that these words indicate only a “cleansing by fire” and not actual eternal dissolution and disappearance, shrink from the searching realities of this subject. The word “create” is a solemn word to modify or trifle with! We know that create in Genesis 1:1 cannot mean anything but the calling into existence of that which did not before have being (Hebrews 11:3). And certainly Revelation 21:1 is just as new a beginning![120]

[120] The searching words of Govett need to be weighed here: “Many will not accept the Scripture doctrine of utter destruction of the old globe. What the reason is, is perhaps hard to say, but most will with earnestness contend that the fire will only purge the world, not destroy it. Perhaps this is owing to the felt connection between the entire destruction of man’s abode and the eternal suffering of the wicked. With some it arises from fancied scientific reasons: ‘matter cannot be annihilated.’ True, man cannot annihilate it, but cannot God? Did He not bring it into existence out of nothing? Can He not hurl it again into nothingness? This answer often brings out into view the fact that many do not believe in creation; they believe that God did not make all things out of nought. He only ‘framed them out of pre-existent matter.’ Such are indeed consistent: but they are opposed to the glory of God and to the testimony of His Word. Moreover, the apostle argues that the prophecy in Haggai foretells the final shaking of heaven and earth preparatory to their entire removal; in order that the new creation may supersede them (Hebrews 12:26-28).

“If any further proof were needed, the words of the passage in Revelation 20:11 are evidently designed to furnish it. The result of the passing away of the heaven and earth is that, ‘there was found no place for them.’ How this can consist with their atoms being remolded and constituting the place in which the redeemer shall live, would puzzle the acutest to discover.” The words, “Behold, I make all things new” must be taken literally. It is not that things are “changed” or

“purified.” The very laws of material being must be included in the new creation. Our Lord entered and stood in the midst, “the doors being shut,” and said, “Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having.” And our bodies are to be like unto His. In Isaiah 65:17 God says, “I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” In the more than one hundred and twenty Bible occurrences of the word “create” or its cognates, I can find no hint of any meaning except origination of things. There is no thought of a former creation, changed or cleansed.

Furthermore, this Revelation 21:1 plainly discriminates the two creations, in that one must pass away before the other appears. The matter thus lay also in the mind of our blessed Lord who said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.” To one of the simplicity of a child, all these Scriptures convey nothing else than the complete disappearance of a former creation and the appearing by the Word of God of a material creation absolutely new. Even the resurrection of the body does not prove the eternal existence of matter already created. We read, “That which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and … thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain … but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him.” The former grain was gone and dead. The germ of life (a profound and undying mystery!) sprang up.

It is certain that the redeemed will retain and possess forever the memory of that former sinful state in the first Adam out of which God in grace redeemed them; but that is no argument for the perpetuation of the old Adam-rather the opposite! For this is the great mystery of the cross: that there God secured the transference righteously of His saints from that Adam in which they were born into the Last Adam and the new creation. Their guilt was put away, and they being identified with Christ, died with Him and thus were brought to an end as to their history in Adam the first.

Then God, having raised up Christ as the “first born from the dead,” “made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with him.”

Now before this history, we are called “separate from Christ, having no hope,” etc. But God now says concerning us we are “God’s workmanship, CREATED in Christ Jesus”! That which is now true of us as spirits (for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit) will, when Christ comes, become true of us as to our bodies. The fact that our Lord passed through doors, though in a body of “flesh and bones,” reveals that He was in that realm where all things are new, even the laws of existence and substance, as well as of action.

We dwell on these things because this hanging on to the old creation, admitting only that it is to be “cleansed by fire”; this claiming that “pass away” does not mean disappear, but merely be “changed,” and that God’s statement that the “earth and the works that are therein” will be burned up does not carry its simple and full meaning, but means only the clearing off the earth of its present order, the marks of sin, etc.,-all this we cannot but associate with the desperate effort of the legalists to hold on to Moses. They will, for instance, acknowledge justification by faith; but they must have the law as the “rule of life.” In other words, they will not consent to Calvary’s being the end of their history; with only Christ to stand in and to glory in forever. Like Agag, they come whining, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” But we cannot but feel the power of the words, “I create new heavens and a new earth”!

Creation unto new creation becomes thus the phrase that spans the Bible. The first creation was the sphere and scene of what God calls “the first things.” Sin, beginning in heaven and with the highest of the creatures, challenging the will of the Creator as the creature’s highest good, came in to mar, ruin, and wreck the first creation. Now comes at last, based upon Christ and His work, a wholly new creation which will never pass away, and in which the apostle Peter announces that “righteousness will be at home” (2 Peter 3:13, Greek). Even the temptation to evil will be eternally absent, for every opportunity of rebellion against the rule of the Most High will have been thwarted, every such rebellion having been proved by experiment disastrous to the creature, as well as dishonoring to the Creator. The Two Final Classes

He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

While those who chose darkness and evil deeds are indeed seen in this final state, it is as eternally separated from holy beings, and under divine indignation (Revelation 21:8). There is no longer any danger of invasion, either from former evil, or from temptation or trial in any sense whatever to God’s holy ones. Not only is evil no longer triumphant, as at present, and in the days of Antichrist, and even, though checked, during the thousand years’ reign; but there is complete, deep, final rest from it! And will not that be a glad day!

And, be it noted, the only two classes seen in this final eternal order are those who overcome, and those cast into the lake of fire. The “overcomers,” thus, are shown to be all God’s true children. For all had the divine gift of faith, all were begotten of God. So we read in 1 John 5:4 : “Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.”

01.21. Chapter 21: The New Jerusalem- Rev_21:9-27; Rev_22:1-5

Chapter 21: The New Jerusalem- Revelation 21:9-27; Revelation 22:1-5 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal.

1. It is a literal city, the materials, dimensions, appearance, appointments, inhabitants, divine glory and indwelling, and eternity of which are all distinctly declared.

2. It descends from God out of heaven. It is that better country and heavenly for which Abraham and the patriarchs looked. It is that place prepared for God’s saints. “He hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:16).

3. It will be peculiarly the home of the Church, the Lamb’s wife (Ephesians 5:27-32); others will be there, and many will have access (Revelation 21:24-26); but the Church will be as the wife in the home.

4. It will be vast indeed: a cube of at least fifteen hundred miles each way (Revelation 21:16). Much, indeed all, of our conception of that city must be in the realm of faith-along with that of our father Abraham, who “looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose architect and maker is God.”

5. It will be lighted directly by the presence and effulgence of God. This is thrice stated: a. In Revelation 21:11, the city has “the glory of God” with a light (or luminary) in consequence “like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone clear as crystal”;-this is its effulgence-its appearance from without. b. Revelation 21:23 -“no need of sun, neither of the moon … for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.” We are here within the city, walking “in the light of God,” constantly conscious that Christ is the channel of all blessing to us. That the Lamb is the lamp is the secret and the source of the unspeakable blessedness of those who walk there! What a sense of redeemed ness; of being beloved even as Christ, and of fathomless depths of eternal security! c. Revelation 22:5 -“night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages.” Note

three elements here:

1. No more dependence on creature or mediate light. 2. The immediate light constantly from God, Himself. 3. Their “reigning” thus forever! That “reigning in life,” which began when they first believed (Romans 5:17) is now at last consummated; and is eternally perpetuated. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb’s book of life. And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6. It will be a new city-corresponding with a new heaven and a new earth. Many have taught that during the thousand years it will be suspended over the earth. Many hold also that Revelation 21:8 is the end of the progress of the Book; while Revelation 21:9 on through Revelation 22:5 turns us back to millennial times. They compare this passage with Revelation 17:18, which describes in greater detail the character and overthrow of Babylon the great, although that overthrow really occurred in the preceding Revelation 16:19.

Those who hold that Revelation 21:1-8 describes the eternal state while Revelation 21:9-27; Revelation 22:1-5 reverts to millennial times, because we read in Revelation 21:24-26 that “the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof” the kings of the earth bringing “the honor of the nations into it”-seem to overlook several important points: a. In Revelation 21:3, where we read that the tabernacle of God is at last “with men,” we also read that “they shall be his peoples” (Greek laoi). It is amazing to find discerning men apparently almost willfully translating the plural laoi, as if it were loos. Alford reads, “‘they shall be his people’: plural, because as in Revelation 21:24, many nations shall now partake in the blessed fulfillment of the promise.” But for this very reason he should have translated laoi, “peoples,” faithfully, that is, literally: “peoples,” not “people” Seiss, even in his “revised text,” reads, “God shall tabernacle with the men, or mankind (?) and they shall be his people” etc. The Revised Version, which so many affect to despise, translates truly and plainly,

“They shall be his peoples,” and thus prepares us to avoid the impossible assumption that Revelation 21:9 to Revelation 22:5 is a passage that reverts to millennial scenes. b. We know positively that at least one nation and one seed, ISRAEL, will belong upon the new earth. In Isaiah 66:22 we read, “As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain.” This is eternity for national Israel, and no escaping it! Because Isaiah 65:17-18, which belongs to the new creation, has been confused with the millennial Revelation 21:20-25 men have rushed to the conclusion that all that Isaiah says concerning the new creation is millennial. But God says Israel’s “seed and name” shall remain, in the new heavens and earth, that is, in that new order beginning in Revelation 21:1. But in this new order, we are distinctly told “death shall be no more,” whereas, in Isaiah 65:20, “the child shall die a hundred years old.”

Now, Israel is God’s elect nation-elect not for the past, or even through the millennial age, but forever. Yet, if Israel be the elect nation, the existence of other nations is presupposed! You reply, “Were not nations the result of God’s judgment at Babel?” They were, doubtless. But God, when He acts in grace, is evermore bringing good out of man’s evil! When Adam sinned, Christ, as the Seed of the woman, was first announced. When Israel asked for a king, God, after Saul’s rejection, brought in David, in whom He lodged the royal Messianic counsels for all time to come. When Israel crucified their Messiah-the highest act of sin-God brought forth “abundance of grace” through Him who “tasted death for every man.” At Pentecost, salvation was announced to every nation in its own tongue. Grace came to the nations without destroying or changing national existence, or even national individuality. The prophet Zephaniah (Zephaniah 3:9) indeed tells us of a coming day, when, saith Jehovah, “I will turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent.” The word “language” here is in Hebrew lip, as it is in Genesis 11:1. But that national existence will not cease, is shown clearly by Zephaniah 3:20 of the same chapter: “At that time will I bring you (Israel) in, and at that time will I gather you; for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples (plural!) of the earth.” c. Finally, the language of Revelation 22:1-5, and especially of Revelation 21:4-5, is just as eternal in its character as anything at the beginning of chapter 21. “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads … and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages.” Why should such statements be connected with a passage that is meant merely to go back and describe millennial conditions? That would be incongruous. Furthermore, it is not in keeping, we feel, for the Scripture to go back after the last judgment has been held, and the new creation has come in, to times before that last judgment and new creation!

7. The New Jerusalem is the capital city of God-the place of the divine presence and government of the universe. “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein” (Revelation 22:3). No other or further throne than this is described in the Word of God. As we have seen, various phases and aspects of the divine majesty have heretofore been exhibited in Scripture. Now it is “forever and ever.” Note that it is “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Christ, who delivered up the kingdom to God, yet shares that throne, as the One who redeemed these now blessed creatures unto God. The Redeemer abides in view of His people as the sacrifice and priest. In each view of the city, the Lamb is named. Seven times does the word occur in connection with the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9; Revelation 21:14; Revelation 21:22-23; Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:1-3).

God’s Eternal Plan Was to Be “With Men” His “delight was with the sons of men” (Proverbs 8:31). Man was made in God’s “image” and “likeness.” Doubtless we will never know all that these terms mean! God was manifest in the flesh in Christ, the Son of man. Jesus, though crowned with glory and honor, remains man forever.

What the “delight” of God will be in this new earth “with men,” and what their capacity for knowing God, and progressing in that blessed and only real knowledge, can be measured only by eternity, and the infinity of God Himself; which is to say, it is utterly without limit! Marvelous and yet reasonable fruit of “the redemption that is in “Christ Jesus,” who “suffered for sins … that he might bring us to God.” Note the words “with men,” “with them,” “with them”-three times in one verse (Revelation 21:3). Pause now, and consider this long and well.

It is astonishing, and yet should not be so, that there is no mention after Revelation 21:1-27, of those blessed beings previously seen as accompanying the throne of God: cherubim, seraphim, living ones, elders: it is now simply “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Not that those others are not there. They are, and are in ecstatic, eternal delight that God is revealed at last as they could not as mere creatures ever know him: as the blessed One who is LOVE. Those beings knew His eternity, His power, His holiness, and His Glory; and celebrated these attributes constantly-as in Revelation 4:8-11 and Isaiah 6:1-13. But now God’s heart goes fully out. He has, through infinite sacrifice, “brought many sons unto glory,” to be “conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Not only to these, the “church of the firstborn,” but to the various peoples of this new earth, His love is now, without limit, extended; and will be extended forever and ever. And in this will all holy beings find endless joy.

“LOVE IS OF GOD.” We can scarcely write here for awe and wonder! How should her Creator say to the Bride: “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride; Thou hast ravished my heart with one look from thine eyes.” “Turn away thine eyes from me, For they have overcome me.”

Oh, how little do we know our God! How small is our widest thought of Him! Do we not see this great Bible He has given us going right forward against all obstacles, over all mountains, through all valleys, yea, to Gethsemane and Calvary-to come to this sweet, eternal consummation, that God may be WITH MEN, THEIR GOD? That He may wipe every tear from their eyes that He may banish into the far forgotten past, mourning, crying, and pain; and say, “Behold, I make all things new”? For GOD IS LOVE!

Let this thought overwhelm us as we turn to the closing chapters of The Revelation, that while God’s lovingkindness is “over all his works,” it is never said in Scripture that God LOVED any but man! John, who writes this closing book of God’s blessed Word, cries, “We know and have believed the love which God hath in our case. God is love” (1 John 4:16). Let us, too, know it and believe it; and thus enter by faith this glorious new creation scene; bending low under this weight of glory, though yet we tread this earth. Let us know this love that passeth knowledge, and, breathing the fragrant air of the city of God, walk daily through its gates of pearl and walk by faith its golden streets, “giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Note about This Heavenly Jerusalem I. It is a Literal City. II. Its Object and Destiny. III. Its Relation to the New Earth. IV. The Blessedness of Its Dwellers.

We do well to return again and again to Revelation 21:1-27; Revelation 22:1-21, for it is the end of the pilgrim path. The more distinct the vision to the pilgrim of the beauty and glory of the city to which he journeys, the less the immediate environments of his journey attract him.

I. It is a Literal City

1. Because of the literalness of its description. If gold does not mean gold, nor pearls-pearls, nor precious stones-stones, nor exact measurements-real dimensions, then the Bible gives nothing accurate nor reliable. There is no one on earth who can assure your heart concerning the meaning of these “symbols”-if they are symbols! Nowhere in God’s Word, for instance, is there any account of the “symbolism” of precious stones. Twelve such stones are found in the high priest’s “four-square” breastplate (Exodus 28:15-21): sardius, topaz, carbuncle, emerald, sapphire, diamond, jacinth, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, jasper-“enclosed in gold in their settings. And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve... like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes.” No one doubts that these were literal stones, nor do we doubt that God has a special reason for assigning to each tribe a peculiar stone. Some time it may be revealed what these stones mean, and whether they have any connection with the foundations of the New Jerusalem; but to deny that they are literal stones in The Revelation, and to admit them as literal in Exodus, is not only absurd, but unbelieving. [121]

[121] There have been many interesting, though not always profitable, investigations and surmises concerning these precious stones. Perhaps the most instructive remark I have found is made by J. N. Darby (Synopsis, in loc): “The precious stones, or varied display of God’s nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezekiel 28:1-26; m grace in the high priest’s breastplate) now shone in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city.”

2. A second reason to consider the city a literal one, is, that child-like faith in reading the account always regards it as such. As the little girl asked her mother concerning the preacher who said that our Lord’s words in John 14:1-31, “I will come again,” did not mean that He would come back in person: “Mamma, if Jesus did not mean what He said, why didn’t He say what He meant?”

3. Abraham and the patriarchs “looked for a city”- not a state of mind! The sublime faith of Abraham led him to leave a city in the most remarkable civilization known on earth, and become a stranger and pilgrim, caring only for a cave in which to bury his dead; “For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose architect and maker is God”! Abraham will be satisfied with nothing short of a place, such as he looked for. And God will not disappoint him!

4. In all other parts of the Bible, simple faith in God’s statements is asked from man; why not then in Revelation 21:1-27, of all places, here at the end of God’s book? “Wherefore do questionings arise in your heart?” the Lord asked, when He presented Himself in a risen body in the upper room. If reasonings and doubts of the reality and literal-ness of His body were excluded, then, when the human mind would naturally be astonished; how much less now can questionings and doubts be admitted as to the literalness of the marvelous city of Revelation 21:1-27, which is to be the eternal home of our Lord’s risen body, and that of His saints in glorified bodies like unto His!

5. If the New Jerusalem is not to be taken literally, we can not claim that the millennial Jerusalem of Ezekiel 40:1-49; Ezekiel 41:1-26; Ezekiel 42:1-20; Ezekiel 43:1-27; Ezekiel 44:1-31; Ezekiel

45:1-25; Ezekiel 46:1-24; Ezekiel 47:1-23; Ezekiel 48:1-35 and Zechariah 14:1-21 can be literal. But to deny these is wholly to abandon faith in the accuracy of God's Word!

6. In this book of The Revelation, the former Jerusalem is literal (Revelation 11:8); and also Babylon the Great (Revelation 18:10). Indeed both Jerusalem (the "great city"), and Babylon, were the objects of the last fearful earthquake of Revelation 16:19. Just as the old earth which disappeared was literal, and the new earth which takes its place is literal and substantial, so also must the New Jerusalem be.

7. The unfolding of divine things in the Bible is precisely contrary to the idea that in order to have "spirituality," material things must be left behind.

God was revealed to the patriarchs' faith without a definite place of abode or habitation. Then, in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and fire accompanied His visible dwelling-place, and both the tabernacle and the temple were so filled with His glorious presence, that, for the moment, the priests themselves, "could not stand to minister"! Also we are told that Jehovah chose Jerusalem and Mt. Zion therein, because He loved it (Psalms 87:2; Psalms 78:68; Psalms 132:13-14).

Then, so far from the progress of God's revealing Himself to man taking on more and more ethereality, the contrary is seen, for God "was manifested in the flesh" when Christ came! Immanuel is, God with us: i.e., God present here, in the Person of that babe of Bethlehem! This of course is what the Devil hates. "Many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 1:7).

Even in the thousand years, the children of Israel are told: "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation … Jehovah will be with us in majesty … thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold a land of far distances." How beautiful these things to simple faith, and what a denial of the vagaries of those deluded souls who connect sin with matter as a necessity! The only logical "spiritualizers" that I know of are the Christian Scientists-which are neither Christian, nor scientific! The old Manichaean heresy governs millions who call themselves Christian, though it is a Satanic lie, and pagan, and utterly anti-Biblical. The Bible leads on to a literal and blessed home of the redeemed, possessed of bodies like Christ's body-real and holy, incorruptible, immortal!

8. It is therefore wicked and harmful to permit ourselves to drift into that weak apprehension of future realities expressed in many hymns, and much loose preaching and speaking of these days. What right have we to thoughts of "going to heaven," merely, concerning those who "fall asleep"? God says they have departed to "be with Christ" (Php 1:23), or "to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8)[122]

[122] Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:4, that the Christian's hope is not to be unclothed, that is, disembodied, but "clothed upon, that what is mortal" (mortal and immortal always being spoken of the body) "may be swallowed up of life." He is simply willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord (R.V.). It might, indeed did, become Paul's lot. But it is not the proper Christian hope, which is the redemption of the body at Christ's coming.

It is sad to find, from a devoted pen like Cowper's:

“Then in a nobler, sweeter song I’ll sing they power to save. When this poor lisping stam’ring tongue Lies silent in the grave!”

How much better to sing:

“When this poor lisping stam’ring tongue Hath triumphed o’er the grave!” But it is even more distressful to hear real Christians using blinded, demoralized, worldly expressions concerning a believer’s falling asleep: such as “he passed on,” “he is gone into the unknown,” etc.

Now while we may not be certain that the New Jerusalem is yet opened to the saints (for that event, perhaps, is reserved for Christ’s second coming, and for His saints in redeemed bodies), yet surely we should have that City constantly before us as a reality; and remember that those that have gone to be with Christ are simply swelling the great expectant throng, whose eager hope looks forward to that blessed day of glory and joy when they shall enter in through the gates into that ineffably blessed City!

Meanwhile, the saints are “with Christ.” Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:1-21, “was caught up into Paradise (to the third heaven) and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

Evidently he was given to taste the infinite joy of what is coming.

What a company is gathering yonder!

Some believe that the marriage of the Lamb will mark the Bride’s entrance into that city. At all events, remember that it is a literal city to which you are going. There cannot be anything else meant![123]

[123] Alford well remarks: “As in our common discourse, so here with the evangelist, the name of the material city stands for the community formed by its inhabitants. But it does not follow, in his case, any more than in ours, that both material city and inhabitants have not a veritable existence. Nor can we say that this glorious description applies only to them” (and not to the literal city).

II. Its Object and Destiny

It is the eternal dwelling place, “habitation,” of God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although only “God and the Lamb” are named, yet we know from the Scriptures, and from this very book of Revelation, that the blessed Spirit administers eternally that glorious state of which the Father is the Author and the Son the Source. In other parts of Scripture, as we have noted before, various aspects of God’s throne are displayed: in connection sometimes with the expression of His character, or being, as the Holy One; sometimes with the execution of His government; sometimes with the form of His perpetual worship-as in the progressive perpetual tenses of Revelation 4:9-10. But God’s home is never spoken of until the New Jerusalem comes on the scene. Heretofore, it had been written: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). To Israel in the wilderness, through Moses, Jehovah had indeed said, “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them,” and it was done. Yet he dwelt in thick darkness, and judgments had to be executed from time to time upon that unbelieving and willful generation: so that finally, as we read in Ezekiel 8:6 (and in all the prophets) they drove Him away from His sanctuary-as they did afterwards His Son when He sent Him to them. But now all is over. Redemption has been

accomplished-the thing dearest to God's heart-that which for all eternity reveals Him as Infinite. God is love, and yet absolutely righteous; the Lamb slain and now risen and abiding in that city, becomes throughout the new creation, the eternal proof and utterance of all God is!

It will also be the capital city of the new creation, for we read, "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein." Nor is any other center of the divine manifestation and government hinted at in this closing book of the things that are revealed. We are indeed told three times in The Revelation, that the New Jerusalem "cometh down out of heaven from my God" (Revelation 3:12; Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:10). But this describes its double character from God-divine in its origin, and also heavenly. "It might have been of God and earthly; or heavenly and angelic. It was neither: It was divine in origin, and heavenly in nature and character." (Darby.) This perhaps is the full meaning of the words: "from God." On the other hand, there remains this question: Is there to be a manifestation of the glory of God, and a seat of His government belonging to heaven, while this New Jerusalem, located upon the new earth, governs only the affairs of the new earth?

Several considerations lead us toward the conclusion that the New Jerusalem is God's one eternal resting place.

1. Immediately we see the new heaven and new earth and the New Jerusalem descending to the new earth (Revelation 21:1-2), we are told, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men"-the former heaven and earth having disappeared. The object of the new heaven and earth is to bring about this-that God shall eternally have His home in this capital city of the new creation!

2. No other eternal habitation of God is seen than this of the New Creation's capital! Always before, God was in heaven and man upon earth. Now that this city has come down, created by God for His dwelling, we cannot conceive of His real presence and worship being elsewhere!

3. This heavenly city has the glory of God (Revelation 21:11; Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5). It is the home of Him who "dwelleth in light unapproachable." It is not that this city has glory given to it; it has God's glory: for He is there! The glory is the effulgence of His Being!

4. It also has the throne of God, and that "service" of Revelation 22:3, properly called priestly service, or spiritual worship-(latreia: Hebrews 9:1; Romans 12:1; Php 3:3; Revelation 7:15).

5. "They shall see his face" Here at last God, who is Love, reveals Himself to the saints of that blessed city directly. There is no temple, no form, no distance. This, therefore, must be the place of God's rest forever!

6. We need only to remember that the dwellers in the New Jerusalem "shall reign unto the ages of the ages" (Revelation 22:5). This could not be written of others than the inhabitants of the capital of the new creation!

III. Its Relation to the New Earth In the thousand years' reign of Christ and His saints upon the old earth (Revelation 20:46), Christ and His heavenly saints formed a "camp" above the old Jerusalem (Revelation 20:9), and Gog and Magog, the hosts of earth, were led by Satan into its final rebellion against the reign of Christ and His glorified saints in the "camp" above Jerusalem, and the earthly Jerusalem itself, "the beloved city." It seems wrong to assume that the New Jerusalem has come down so that the nations "walk amidst the light thereof," as in the new earth (Revelation 21:24). For, although Christ and His glorified saints will have taken over the control of affairs, such as

angels now exercise (Hebrews 2:5-8 R. V. margin), yet it is to the earthly Jerusalem and the nation of Israel that God will directly subject the nations of the earth in the Millennium (Isaiah 60:1-22; Isaiah 61:4-9; but especially Isaiah 4:5-6). This is the glory of Jehovah revealed upon the earthly Jerusalem, and to it, during the Millennium. The effect of this unveiling of the divine glory in the thousand years is seen in Micah (Micah 7:16-17): “The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might… They shall lick the dust like a serpent; like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their close places; they shall come with fear unto Jehovah our God, and shall be afraid because of thee.” Psalms 72:9 declares: “His enemies shall lick the dust”! “Kings, kings, kings,” are men mentioned in the next two verses; while kings will lick the dust of Israel’s feet, according to Isaiah 49:23. It is a day of iron-rod rule; of compelled subjection. The very atmosphere is different from that of Revelation 21:1-27; when, down to the new earth, wherein righteousness is at home-(2 Peter 3:13 Greek) this New Jerusalem will come from God to be planted upon her eternal foundations, and to become the glad center of attraction unto the kings and nations of those happy days. [124]

[124] It has been well remarked by Govett: “That the eternal standing of the city is in question, I gather from Revelation 22:3 : ‘There shall be no more curse.’ Now at the close of the Millennium comes the most fearful sin, and wrath of God, with the second death. Again, entrance into the heavenly city would not be possible during the Millennium; for then the city is only suspended over the earth. It does not come down upon it. To meet this difficulty, the holders of the opposite view translate Revelation 21:24-26, ‘bring their glory unto it,’ not into it. But this translation is unfounded, for, whenever a verb of motion capable of signifying penetration, or entrance into, a penetrable subject, such as a river, house, etc., is followed by the preposition eis, ‘into’-there entrance is affirmed.”

It has impressed me more and more that the New Jerusalem will not be in sight of the old earth during the Millennium, which will be a highly judicial time-a time of military rule, the holding of a position already conquered. At the Millennium’s beginning, peace and prosperity on earth will be conditioned on complete subjection. Consequently the heavenly saints constitute a “camp,” evidently above the earthly Jerusalem. Upon that earthly city and upon redeemed Israel, the glory of God will be seen, Israel’s twelve tribes being “judged” by the twelve apostles (Luke 22:28-30) including Matthias (Acts 1:21-26). When the thousand years, and the last judgment are over, and the new heaven and the new earth have succeeded the old, then, and not until then, does the New Jerusalem come down to the new earth.

IV. The Blessedness of Its Dwellers Of the blessedness of those who dwell in that eternal city of infinite beauty and delight, who shall speak! It is enough to repeat: “They shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads.” Of even the inhabitants of the new earth, though not of the new city, it is written: “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, they shall be His peoples, and God himself shall be with them … their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, anymore: the first things are passed away.” But to see His face, and to be so wholly His in likeness that His Name shall be on our foreheads-what a destiny! It is even more eagerly to be anticipated, than the reigning eternally!

“The Jerusalem That Is Above”

Jerusalem the golden, With milk and honey blest, Beneath thy contemplation Sink heart and voice oppress:

I know not, O I know not What social joys are there;

What radiancy of glory, What light beyond compare! For thee, O dear dear country, Mine eyes their vigils keep; For very love, beholding Thy happy name, they weep: The mention of thy glory Is unction to the breast, And medicine in sickness, And love, and life, and rest.

O one, O only mansion!

O Paradise of joy, When tears are ever banished, And smiles have no alloy! The cross is all thy splendor, The Crucified thy praise; His laud and benediction Thy ransomed people raise.

O sweet and blessed country, The home of God's elect!

O sweet and blessed country That eager hearts expect!

Jesus, in mercy bring us To that dear land of rest, Who art, with God the Father And Spirit, ever blest.

Bernard of Cluny-12th century.

Lo! what a glorious sight appears To our admiring eyes! The former seas have passed away, The former earth and skies. The God of glory down to men Removes His blest abode;

He dwells with men; His people they, And He His people's God!

Isaac Watts-1674-1748.

Jerusalem, my happy home, Name ever dear to me, When shall my labours have an end In joy and peace, and thee? When shall these eyes thy heaven-built walls And pearly gates behold, Thy bulwarks with salvation, strong, And streets of shining gold!

Joseph Bromehead-1748-1826. For ever with the Lord!

Amen, so let it be:

Life from the dead is in that word;

'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent, Absent from Him I roam, Yet nightly pitch my moving tent A day's march nearer home. My Father's house on high, Home of my soul, how near! At times, to faith's foreseeing eye, Thy gates of pearl appear!

Ah! then my spirit faints To reach the land I love, The bright inheritance of saints, Jerusalem above!

James Montgomery-1771-1854.

01.22. Chapter 22: Closing Messages- Rev_22:6-21

Chapter 22: Closing Messages- Revelation 22:6-21

We are now come to the closing words of this great book of prophecy, The Revelation; and, inasmuch as God ordered the arrangement of the books, they are also the closing words of the Bible.

We shall find exactly what we would expect to find: (1) The Lord giving His seal to the inspiration, authority, and absolute verbal accuracy of all things written in this book. (2) A solemn warning, therefore, against tampering in any way with its contents, either by addition or subtraction. (3) The bringing to the front finally, as was done in the closing books of the Old Testament (Zechariah 14:1-21; Malachi 3:1-18; Malachi 4:1-6), of that great event which is the chief subject of prophecy-the Lord's own personal return to earth. And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book. The speaker here is Christ Himself (Compare Revelation 22:10, Revelation 22:16, Revelation 22:18, and Revelation 22:20). In whatever manner the revealing angel is used to convey the utterances (as in Revelation 19:9-10, etc.), the author is the Lord, as is evident in the words "I come quickly"-thrice repeated in this passage-(Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:20). Furthermore, the words "sent his angel" is not "has sent," as a reporting angel would speak accrediting himself, but the historical tense as of the sender, Christ, Himself accrediting the agent.

Perhaps no book of the Bible has been more neglected, despised, added to and subtracted from, than this same book of The Revelation. Therefore, both the faithfulness and truth of the Author are again and again announced, whether by saints (Revelation 15:3), or heavenly beings (Revelation 16:7) or by angels (Revelation 19:9; Revelation 22:9). But, also, in an even more emphatic way, the very words of this great book are over and over sealed as "faithful and true": by God (Revelation 21:5), by the Holy Spirit (Revelation 1:10, ff) and here in the closing chapter no less than five times by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:10, Revelation 22:16, Revelation 22:18, Revelation 22:20).

We naturally and necessarily connect the close of this great book with its beginning (Revelation 22:6 and Revelation 1:1): "the things which must shortly come to pass." Also, we are bowed with awe at the title and actions of Deity in our blessed Lord. For in Revelation 1:1 it is Christ who "sent and signified by His angel"; in Revelation 22:6 it is "The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel"; and He sets a final seal: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches" (Revelation 22:16). Therefore, the Lord Jesus, the Eternal Word, was the direct Inspirer of the prophets! As He says also in Revelation 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," whereas in Revelation 1:8 we read, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." In this verse, as we have elsewhere noted, is gathered up all the revelations of God in

the Old Testament: Adonai, Elohim, Jehovah, the Almighty. And “without robbery,” nay with the calm of Deity, our Lord declares Himself to be all these, in this final chapter of the Bible! Blessed is the man who in his heart of hearts, like Thomas, cries: “My Lord and my God!”

Note now the first of the three phrases-“I come quickly” of this final chapter. How absolutely all things have been committed unto our Lord by the Father, and with what quiet assurance He announces His own personal coming as the climax of the thousand pages of the Old Testament and the three hundred pages of the New. We are overwhelmed as we behold! Ah, what blindness is theirs who know not the second coming of Christ-those to whom it means nothing. To God and Heaven it means everything! The word is startling: “Behold!” It occurs about two hundred times in the Greek Testament, and always announces what is striking and surprising (Matthew 1:20-23; Matthew 3:16; Matthew 21:5).125

[125] The best help in the study of the Bible is the “Englishman’s Greek Concordance,” one volume (of the New Testament); and the “Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance,” two volumes (of the Old Testament), published by S. Bagster & Sons, London. These volumes, although now somewhat expensive, are indispensable to one determined to find the real meaning of Scripture. EACH ORIGINAL WORD WITH ALL ITS OCCURRENCES may be seen at a glance with a full line from each verse quoted.

Beginning at Revelation 1:7, “Behold” (idou) occurs in the Apocalypse 30 times, and at least seven of these are in calling attention to our Lord’s coming, or in preparation therefore.

“Quickly.” To the Lord, one day is as a thousand years. Therefore, to Him, His absence has not yet been two days long! We must learn to look at time as our Lord does; and in proportion as we surrender to His complete Lordship, we will be enabled to do this, and His coming will be to us an imminent thing. We will be saying with Paul, “We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord.” “Quickly” (tachu) occurs seven times in The Revelation, and all but once (Revelation 11:14) refers to Christ’s actions. It means the next thing on the program. We cannot believe that those who would have the Church looking for the Antichrist and the Tribulation rather than for Christ Himself, are fulfilling His command to watch-the command given to ALL (Mark 13:37).

We do not need to remark, of course, that the vain promises, however honestly made by the great ones of the earth, whether in Russia, Italy, Germany or America, can in any wise modify God’s specific word in 1 Corinthians 2:6 : “The rulers of this age … are coming to nought.” We are down in the end-time, the feet of the great image of Daniel 2:1-49. We are looking for the Lord from heaven to catch us up in the clouds, and, after the Great Tribulation, to descend with all of the heavenly hosts; and like the stone cut without (human) hands from the mountain, to strike and utterly destroy Gentile world-power. “Behold, I come quickly” is the Christian’s watch-word; let the “slogans” of the uprising world-movements be what they may.

Now we note in Revelation 22:7 a blessing pronounced upon him that “keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.” The word “book” signifies The Revelation, and is used seven times in this last section (Revelation 22:7-10, Revelation 22:18 [twice], and Revelation 22:19 [twice]). All readily admit that The Revelation is a book; also that it is a book of prophecy. But alas, how few keep (meaning, “to guard as a treasure”) the words! “To tamper with the words of the prophecy of the book is to bring oneself under the divine lash” (Revelation 22:18-19), just as to treasure them

brings a special divine blessing for you. And I, John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God. For the second time (Revelation 19:9-10) John is overwhelmed. It is, we feel, in view of all that has preceded, and especially of the blessed announcement of the near coming of his Lord that the Seer, overwhelmed, falls down to worship the revealing angel. Alas, our poor hearts turn perpetually to adore something short of God-the creature rather than the Creator. The fidelity and humility of the angel abase and shame us. Though higher than man, he is a "fellow-servant" (sundoulos)-a word that wholly excludes independence, in which man glories. Note also how the angel remembers "the prophets," those faithful servants of God, and also that the angels themselves are "keepers of the words" of this book of The Revelation. Doubtless Michael and his angels derive their very courage for the terrific conflict of Revelation 12:1-17 from the revelation of certain victory given through John the beloved. How wonderful are the ways of God! Let us lay close to our hearts the angel's words: "Worship God." These words will search us out. Unless we are walking with God, other gods are holding our affections. The very glory of divine revelations may tend to turn our weak hearts away from adoration of the divine Person, Himself (Compare Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7). And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still (or yet further); and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still; and he that is holy let him be made holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

We have here: (1) The Revelation is an unsealed, open book. (2) The fact that its clear and awful revelations will not change those who choose wickedness is not to hinder its teaching; it will bless the godly. (3) The second announcement of "I come quickly." (4) The second (and overwhelming) imprimatur of the Author of this book. (5) The blessedness of those that "washed their robes" in the blood of the Lamb (see Revelation 7:14), thus having the right to the tree and to the city. [126] (6) The six great classes of those eternally excluded from the city (compare the eight classes cast into the lake of fire in Revelation 21:8).

[126] The reading "do his commandments" is now generally agreed to be a false reading, and it would constitute a false ground of any divine favor, which is based on the work of Christ.

1. Briefly, let us examine-The Revelation unsealed. Daniel was told to seal up his prophecy: "O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4; Daniel 12:9). But inasmuch as we are now in "the last time," "the last hour" (1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 2:18) and "the ends of the ages" have come upon us (1 Corinthians 10:11), God gave this book of The Revelation to our Lord Jesus Christ for us, as John has told us in Revelation 1:1-2. This very reason of the nearness, the next-ness, the at-hand-ness, of its time is given by our Lord for letting this mighty book remain unsealed-that is, open to all who will believe it and are willing to search the Old Testament Scriptures-"the

Scriptures of the prophets"-to gain the understanding of its scenes and language. What a rebuke to the negligence, the neglect, the sneering, ignorant arrogance, shown by most of Christendom toward The Revelation! Our Lord Jesus may declare it an open, unsealed, understandable book; men say it is filled with "unintelligible language" and "mystic symbols." Christ says: "Blessed is he that readeth"; men say: "Let it alone, you cannot understand it." Some day all these will give an account of their insolent, insulting attitude toward this holy, open book of plain prophecy, given by God to Christ for us, and distinctly left unsealed. And "the time is at hand" with which its mighty language deals! This word "at hand" (Greek eggus) is used thirty times in the New Testament. It is illustrated in Matthew 24:32-33 (translated "nigh," "near"). Paul, looking for Christ, uses it in Php 4:5 "The Lord is at hand."

2. Revelation 22:11 is generally regarded as a mere sentence of finality on the state in which any soul is discovered at the Lord's coming. But if we look carefully at its connection with the preceding verse, it would seem to be suggested by the words "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book." The terms "do righteousness still" and "be made filthy still" seem to have the same significance of a life-choice, which you find in Romans 2:12 -"as many as sinned." The tense is the aorist, not the perfect; and indicates the choice of the man's life, his whole life, viewed as a whole, so that we find in Revelation 22:11 those who have made the final choice of unrighteousness and are living in it. The word "unjust" (R. V. "unrighteous") is made into a verb: "Let him keep-on-doing-unrighteousness" (for he has chosen it). Likewise, the one who has chosen righteousness, "let him keep on practicing (poieo) righteousness." Paul, indeed, plainly declares: "We (indwelt by Christ) are a sweet savor (fragrance) of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing; to the one a savor (fragrance) from death unto (deeper) death; to the other, a savor (fragrance) from life unto life" (unto higher life). The fact is, that The Revelation of Christ and His Gospel damns rejecters the more deeply (John 15:22-24). Just so the unfolding of the terrible visitations, plagues and judgments of the book of Revelation moves most men to deeper rejection and hatred of God's truth. Witness the growing denial of eternal punishment in literal fire and brimstone, so undeniably asserted in The Revelation, but so desperately rejected by "modern" thought.

3. Our Lord connects the second, "Behold, I come quickly (Revelation 22:12) with that individual reward He retains in His own hand to bestow personally: "My reward is with me" No saint of either Old or New Testament has been rewarded finally yet. And the Lord will not commit even to Michael or Gabriel the giving of the reward for the least service rendered to Him! Precious thought! Be "always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

4. We have already noticed the first voice of Deity in Revelation 22:6 and have called attention also to the second in Revelation 22:13 : "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." The fact of the absolute deity of our Lord Jesus Christ could not be more strongly affirmed. Everything stands or falls with this doctrine. Christ is "God before and after all; and filling duration."

5. In the simple words pronouncing "blessed" those who avail themselves, through faith, of the infinite, cleansing power of the blood of Christ, how much is wrapped up! Notice, it is not the declaration of the Judge in justifying the ungodly who believe, that is in question here (that is

Romans); but it is the cleansing effect of the shed blood of Christ, fitting the believer's person to come to the tree of life and to enter the very home of God, the New Jerusalem. Faith, true faith, involves not only a righteous standing, but the removal of all defilement from the person of the believer: both justification and cleansing. Christ said: "Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you"; or, as Paul writes in Colossians 1:12 : "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." To the weakest and humblest believer both of these things belong. The right (exousia) to the tree of life and to the city thus forever and ever rests on faith in the blood of Christ. How simple, yet how glorious!

6. Now as to those excluded: "the dogs"-unclean (as Isaiah 66:3; Matthew 7:6); cruel (Psalms 22:16; Psalms 22:20; Jeremiah 15:3); utterly profane (Deuteronomy 23:18); sin-loving (2 Peter 2:22); to be guarded against by saints (Php 3:2); "the sorcerers"-direct dealers with the Devil and demons; "the fornicators"-those who have chosen this uncleanness; "the murderers"-those who chose hatred-violence and slaughter-(so far, sins against man). Now "the idolators"-those serving and worshipping the creature, thus hiding away from the Creator; "and everyone that loveth and practiceth (poieo) a lie"-those shutting out the truth of God, who hide in the darkness that they may love and do falsehood: who refuse to be made sincere before God.

What a list! Here, it is exclusion from the city where the blessedness will be. In 21:8, it was their judicial consignment to the lake of fire as banished from God, whose "tabernacle" was now "with men."

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

How blessedly comforting that our Lord takes His personal name here at the close of the book! "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." As He lay in the lowly manger of Bethlehem, that name was given to Him. God, the Father, will see to it that at that Name every knee shall bow (Php 2:10). But here He uses it in all the loving tenderness of old. In His announcing Himself as both the root and offspring of David, both His deity and His birth at Bethlehem are in view. He is both David's Lord and his son. And we are distinctly told by Paul that He was "born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3); we are to remember Him the Risen One as such (2 Timothy 2:8): "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel." It is part of the Pauline revelation (for the twelve imparted nothing to Paul). Nevertheless, although His royal throne and kingdom come through David and are connected with Israel on earth, we have a nearer and more blessed revelation: "I am the bright, the morning star." Our Lord is coming, indeed, as the Sun of Righteousness to rise upon the darkness of this world and reign in the millennial kingdom. But it is yet "this darkness"; although "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Yes, the day is not here- but lo, the harbinger of the day, the Morning Star! It shines in the night, but it prophesies the coming sunrise. "The assembly (ecclesia-the Church) sees Him in the now far spent night as the Morning Star, recognizes Him, while watching for Him, according to His own Word, in His bright heavenly character-a character which does not wake a sleeping world, but is the delight and joy of those who watch. When the sun arises, He will not be thus known: the earth will never so know Him, bright as the (coming) day may be" (Darby). If you have never seen the morning star, I beg you get up long before day some morning, gaze upon it, and be taught what our blessed Lord means or should mean to every real saint! And the Spirit and the bride say,

Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely. The blessed Holy Spirit, during our Lord's absence, having in care all the spiritual needs of all the saints, knowing all the counsels of God-and how they are connected with our Lord's appearing-continually utters, "Come." He breathes, "Come" toward Him who is awaiting the Father's moment, there at God's right hand. Also, the Bride, because she is the Bride-all the Church, all the Body of Christ, not part of it-says instinctively and from her heart, "Come," to her Bridegroom on high.

There is also the exhortation to every uninstructed hearer, who may read or hear read this great book of The Revelation with its mighty consummation in Christ's second coming-he is exhorted to join the Spirit and the Bride in inviting Him back: "Let him that heareth, say, Come." And then, if any one is athirst, it is the same old tender welcome of Matthew 11:1-30 : "Let him come."

And, as if that were not wide or free enough, there is this joyful final word from the Lord's own lips, "HE THAT WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." It is as if the Lord had said to His beloved John, "Preach the glad tidings at the very close-the water of life, the tree of life, the eternal home of God, the New Jerusalem-offer them all things freely" The Greek word "freely" is our dear old Greek word "dorean" (Romans 3:24; John 15:25)-"gratuitously," "without a cause in us why it should be given. We are all invited to take this infinite, infinite boon-"the water of life." Oh! May not unbelief shut any reader or hearer out from the FREE GIFT of God, which is ETERNAL LIFE!

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

Here is the most solemn warning in the whole Bible against tampering with the words of God. If judgment came upon the wicked king Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:1-32) because he cut out with his pen-knife and burnt the predictions of evil uttered by Jeremiah against Jerusalem, how much more awful will be the doom of those who add to or take from a book given by God to the Lord Jesus, who Himself, as it were, with His pierced royal hands, stamps it over and over, with the great seal of high heaven! And especially when that One to whom all" judgment has been committed, warns us not to trifle with even its words! An old Puritan preacher used to say, "There are just two things I desire to know: The first, Does God speak?-the second, What does God say?"

Let anyone who considers detracting from the meaning of the words of The Revelation, or refusing to believe that these things written therein will literally come to pass, and that shortly, reflect carefully upon the words, "God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city." Fearful thought!

Notice these phrases-all in this last chapter: "The words of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7); "The words of this book" (Revelation 22:9); "The words of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:10); "The words of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:18); "The words of the book of this prophecy" Revelation 22:19); "Written in this book" (Revelation 22:19). Beware lest the jealousy of God burn like fire-for he has exalted his Word above all his Name (Psalms 138:2). And then mark also: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify" (Revelation 22:16); "I testify unto every

man that heareth" (Revelation 22:18); "He who testifieth these things saith" (Revelation 22:20). Our Lord not only jealously guards the Words, but also announces Himself as the Witness to the Words:

He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus. This is now the third announcement by our Lord of His speedy return. The first (Revelation 22:7) was connected with our guarding as our treasure this book of The Revelation. The second (Revelation 22:12) was connected with the reward He personally is bringing to His servants. But this third and last announcement is the simple one of the fact. This renders it supremely important. It makes the second coming of Jesus Christ to this earth from heaven the great event of the future!

Christ's death on the cross was the foundation, making possible the fulfillment of all the counsels of God.

Again, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the next most important fact. For His coming, His descent, made effectual to us the salvation purchased at Calvary, and keeps back ("hinders") the manifestation of the iniquity of earth, and Satan's man of sin, until the Church, the Body of Christ is caught away. But all now awaits this transcendent event: His "coming again"-and "quickly"! The word "behold" (idou) has given way to the Greek word of absolute affirmation (nai); "actually"-"for a fact"-"surely"-"certainly"-"I am coming, quickly."

John, the beloved, replies for the whole Church, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus." No unwillingness to have God's will done on earth as in heaven possessed the heart of the apostle; no plans of his own, however earnest, held back the eager call of his heart to the Lord to come; no concern for those yet unsaved who might be near and dear, or for whom his soul was burdened, could for an instant invade the inner sanctuary of his soul where he awaited his Lord from heaven! And so should it be with us! In Revelation 1:7 God had spoken the first prophetic word of this book of The Revelation: "Behold, He cometh with the clouds," and, "Even so, Amen!" was the Spirit's seal to this striking testimony, and now, at the close, John in glad inspiration, cries aloud to the Lord Jesus to come! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen. As you know, the Old Testament ends with the word "curse," for it is the warning given an earth whose future hangs upon that of Israel-upon the conversion of the remnant and upon the receiving of the preaching of Elijah (evidently one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1-19), just before Christ should return. The law could make no absolute promise, and so God's Word by Malachi ends, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." But now Christ has come and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And, although the book of The Revelation has had to uncover the fearful rebellion of the earth, and the necessary and dire judgments of God; yet upon those who have believed, to His saints, the benediction of divine favor rests. Just as Christ lifted up His hands and blessed them over against Bethany, at His ascension, so all His saints are now-under His pierced, uplifted hands of blessing. Amen!

01.23. Appendix 1

Appendix 1 Hymns of Christ's singers through the night of the dark ages: For They Saw The Morning Star!

3rd Century-Clement of Alexandria: "Shepherd of Tender Youth" (earliest Christian hymn).

4th Century-Ambrose of Milan:

"The dawn is sprinkling in the east Its golden shower, as day flows in;

Fast mount the pointed shafts of light;

Farewell to darkness and to sin."

5th Century-Claudianus Mamertus:

"Sing, my tongue, the Savior's triumph!"

Anatolius of Constantinople:

(a) "Fierce was the wild billow," (b) "The day is past and over."

6th Century-Gregory the Great:

"O Christ, our King, Creator, Lord!"

St. Hilary of Aries:

"Thou art the world's true Morning Star!"

Venantius Fortunatus:

"The royal banners forward go!"

7th Century-Andrew of Crete:

"Christian, dost thou see them?"

8th Century-Stephen of St. Sabas:

"Art thou weary?"

9th Century-Rabanus Maurass:

"Come, O Creator, Spirit Blest!"

Joseph of the Studium:

"Jesus, Lord of life eternal"; also, "Safe home, safe home."

Theodistus of the Studium:

“Jesus, Name all names above!”

10th Century-Metrophanes of Smyrna:

“O Unity of three-fold light.”

11th Century-Hermanus Contractus:

“Come, Holy Ghost, in Love!”

Peter Damiani:

“There not waxing moon, nor waning, Sun nor stars in courses bright; For the Lamb, to that glad city Shines an everlasting light.”

12th Century-Unknown Author:

“The strife is o’er, the battle done;

He closed the yawning gates of hell; The bars from Heaven’s high portals fell;

Let hymns of praise His triumps tell! Hallelujah!”

Adam of St. Victor:

“Earth blooms afresh in glorious dyes; In Christ’s arising all things rise; A solemn joy o’er nature lies;

Alleluia;”

Bernard of Cluny:

“Jerusalem, the Golden.”

Unknown Author:

“Fairest Lord Jesus” (The Crusader’s Hymn).

13th Century-Thomas of Celano: (Dies irae, dies ilia!) “May I find grace, O Lord, with Thee? So the thief upon the tree;

Hope, too, Thou hast breathed in me”

14th Century-Unknown Author:

“Jesus is the Name we treasure.”

Jacobus de Benedictus: (Stabat Mater) Mechtilde of Helffde:

“If the world were mine and all its store And were it of crystal gold; Could I reign on its throne forevermore, From the ancient days of old, An empress noble and fair as day, O gladly might it be;- That I might cast it all away:

Christ, only Christ for me!”

“For Christ, my Lord, my spirit longs, For Christ, my Saviour dear: The joy and sweetness of my songs The whilst I wander here.” As the great truths of grace began to be recovered more fully, the “Song of the Lord” burst more and more fully forth; until the Reformers took down the Church’s harps from the willows of the “Babylonian Captivity” of over a thousand years.

01.24. Appendix 2

Appendix 2

“Elders” are mentioned twelve times in The Revelation. That they are individuals and not a symbolic company, is evident, it seems to me, for several reasons:

1. The Revelation is an unsealed book. When symbols or signs are shown they are plainly said to be such: e.g., Revelation 12:1-3.

2. If the twenty-four elders are representative or symbolic, then the four living creatures must be also; but we all believe that four means four when applied to the living creatures; just as to the cherubim in Ezekiel 1:1-28.

3. The language used concerning the elders compels our belief that they are individuals. “One of the elders saith unto me” (Revelation 5:5). “One of the elders answered” (Revelation 7:13). “The twenty-four elders sit before God upon their thrones” (Revelation 11:16).

4. Any one who takes the first mention of these elders (Revelation 4:4) as anything other than twenty-four individuals, must have thorough proof for it, and that scriptural and not conjectural. “I saw four and twenty elders sitting” is a very definite statement indeed! We have found no Bible proof they are other than twenty-four individuals.

5. We know from 1 Chronicles 24:7-19 that the orders of the priests of Aaron’s house were divided into twenty-four courses. In the following chapter, moreover, those who “prophesied” with harps, psalteries and symbols according to their service by the hands of the king were also twenty-four (1 Chronicles 25:9-30). Furthermore, the military forces under King David were marshalled “of every course twenty and four thousand.” These changed month by month-twenty-four thousand monthly (1 Chronicles 27:1-15). Even before this (1 Chronicles 23:4) we find twenty-four thousand of the Levites who were “to oversee the work of the house of Jehovah” (although in this case the twenty-four thousand were chosen out of thirty-eight thousand-verse 3).

Darby says, “The number 24 represents twice 12. One might perhaps see here the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles-the saints in the two dispensations.” (Coll. Writ. Proph. Vol. 11, page 22.) This is better than to make them “represent” the Church; but it leaves them symbolic rather than actual elders.

We can only assume, not prove, that “the elders” are of our race at all. The cherubim are not; nor the seraphim nor the “chief princes” (Daniel 10:13). Because the term “elders” is so often mentioned (over 200 times) in Scripture, both in connection with Israel and the Church, many are willing to assume that the elders are human beings. But the elders do not testify of their own salvation at all: although they celebrate that of others, as in Revelation 5:8-9 (R. V.).

Inasmuch as God had “elders” over His people Israel, and “elders” were also to be appointed in each Church, (Titus 1:5); and inasmuch as twenty-four seems God’s governmental order, we do

not see why it may not be that there are “elders” over God’s creation; that they were created so; and they are twenty-four in number; and that just as the four zoa express in heading up, the four genera of God’s creation,-beast, cattle, man and eagle (Revelation 4:7; Genesis 1:20; Genesis 1:24; Genesis 1:26), so these “elders” were created and associated by God with His government. When Christ, with His Bride, the Church, comes to reign in power, in Revelation 19:1-21, we hear no more of these twenty-four elders: for God then subjects all to the Man: Psalms 8:1-9 is fulfilled. The elders, as all other heavenly beings, have their place, but under Christ and the Church.

01.25. Appendix 3

Appendix 3 Idolatry: Especially the Worship of a Man by His Fellows.

1. Definition: Idolatry is man's placing a visible object of worship before his eyes to protect him from God, thus silencing his conscience that he may indulge his lusts. God's "invisible things are clearly seen" by all His responsible creatures. In idolatry, man deliberately "changes the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man," and of lower creatures-even to "creeping things" (Romans 1:23). Idolatry is man's deliberate, determined putting away from the thoughts of the concept of the holy God, and choosing and "changing" therefore a concept that will not judge his sin, and the setting up an "image" of that concept, a "likeness," as an outward object with which the bodily senses may be occupied. This effectually excludes God.

2. History: Idolatry was unknown before the flood. The cherubim were placed at the gate of Eden, with "the flame of a sword." Thus was man kept from the tree of life, that he might not live forever in his sinful state; and thus, perhaps, was he restrained from that hideous insult to God which idolatry ever is, just as in Israel's case, "Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work … that he had wrought for Israel" (Joshua 24:31). Not until after the apostasy that preceded the flood (and which the flood judged) do we find record of man's being permitted to throw off all knowledge by means of idolatry. Probably the earliest idolatry spoken of in Scripture is in the same chapter (Joshua 24:2; Joshua 24:14). From "beyond the river" (Euphrates)-that is, from Mesopotamia, more particularly from Babel (later Babylon), and still more definitely from the daring acts of Nimrod, the "mighty destroyer" whose wife, Semiramis, (one of the most able and wicked women of the human race) was, upon her death deified as "queen of heaven," do we trace the beginnings of idolatry, which eventuates in Satan-worship by means of "the image of the Beast," seen in Revelation 13:1-18. From Babylon, idolatry extended to every land, for Babylon became "a land of graven images … mad over idols." "Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jeremiah 50:38; Jeremiah 51:7). Idolatry spread thence to every nation, and God was blotted out from man's knowledge. Read Isaiah 44:12-20. God's sad and awful irony concerning the idolator! And see the obscene stories and idols of every "mythology," to show that it has always been as in Exodus 32:1-35 and Numbers 25:1-18.

3. Why man gladly makes a god of a fellow-man (as in Revelation 13:1-18): a. He can see, a man, and "the invisible things of God" (of whom he is afraid) are thus escaped. Especially is this escape from God easy if the man worshipped be possessed of overwhelming power, dazzling greatness, or mysterious wisdom. b. Man has to do with the infinite-he must: "God hath put eternity in man's heart"; "his everlasting power and divinity" are clearly seen. Man wishes himself God. He hearkened to Satan's "ye shall be as gods, knowing," in Eden. Men therefore, in their weakness, are avidly ready to accept the claims of some other man in power and position, and with daring enough to assert himself a god. It is what every natural heart would like to be! c. To worship man,

thus gratifies and satisfies man's pride. Men unknowingly worship their imagined selves when they worship a fellow-man. d. Conscience is thus escaped, for the blaspheming self-deifier relieves his mind and heart as to God; not, of course, in the way of priesthood (for God is hated and banished, and the desire is to escape Him!) but in the way of presumption, for if our man-god defies God and is suffered, other men also can cast fear away-not independently, but leaning on their idol!

Thus is attained the first great end of idolatry-release from "the glory of the invisible God": that glory being now exchanged for the "likeness" of the god man has chosen. This "likeness" is held in the idolater's mind; he forms his "images" after that "likeness."[127]

[127] This is the claim of all idolaters, that they "do not worship the idol, but the concept behind the idol." Paul tells us they "sacrifice to demons, and not to God" (1 Corinthians 10:1-33). And the awful hideousness of the idols they make reveals the true character of the demons they worship!

It should be remembered, however, that even the deepest idolaters, who have "refused to have God in their knowledge," yet "know the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death" (See Romans 1:28-32). The state of the heathen is wilful and guilty. Do not lose sight of this for one moment! The terrible calamities, for example, upon China, and the horrible degredation of India-what is it but the "indignation" of Jehovah, the true God, the living God, an everlasting King, pouring out upon idolaters His wrath (See, carefully, Jeremiah 10:1-10). It is like a flash of divine jealousy-it is that. See the eleventh verse of this chapter, the one Aramaic (or earth-language) in a whole Hebrew book: "Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens." e. Those who thus deify man are set free to practice all "human" lusts. The "wheel of nature" may revolve without restraint. And this is the second great end of idolatry. The awful course of Romans 1:21-31 is repeated in all idolatry. The moment Israel could look on a calf, and say, "These be thy gods, O Israel," they were set free to "rise up and play"-which means obscenities that cannot be written! God being thus blotted from the mind by "the likeness of an image," lusts were let loose. The unholiest doings of the human race this moment are connected with religion without God.

4. It should be noted, solemnly, that God "gives up" idolaters to their idols. "They that make them shall be like unto them." See Psalms 115:1-18 -a great lesson! The "covetous man, who is an idolater," also: the "likeness" he holds in his mind is treasure; the "image," gold coin, stocks, bonds. He becomes like a coin-metallic, hard, cruel, harsh. The "likeness" held in the Romish mind is the (imagined) "queen of heaven"; the "image," pictures and statues of "the Virgin"; these Romanists also become like unto their Babylonian "goddess." To say the very least, their inner hearts are feminized, and lose the sense of the all-holy God; to say the most, they become so vile that they are the scandal of history. But ah, what will Revelation 13:1-18 bring forth, when men take Satan's Christ so deep into their hearts that "they worship the dragon" because he gives his authority unto their darling, the Man of Sin!

5. The story of the Gentile powers shows:

A. That authority in the hands of unregenerate man leads constantly to the assumption of divine prerogatives. For neither the conscience's fear of God, nor regard for the welfare of man, can stem the flood of nature's pride let loose by irresponsible power, when vested in man.

B. That self-deification is able to destroy all good qualities. See Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:1-30, or Darius in chapter 6 as examples of that constant exaltation of self to divine honors by Gentile kings, with which every reader of history is familiar; notably, in the Roman emperors, from Julius Caesar on. What streams of martyr-blood have flowed from refusal to offer incense to the Emperor! (Read “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs”-a book every Christian parent should early read to his children.)

C. That the spirit of self-deification can only eventuate, as in Revelation 13:1-18, in the open Antichrist of the last days. And you must be prepared, by Scripture study, for this, for it is already stealing on the world!

If you doubt this, see Lenin in Russia,-already held a god! Or Mussolini’s daring and growing claims in Italy, and Hitler’s in Germany. Or, sad to admit, the rush to grasp power, exalt self, and compel subjection at any cost of abandoned promises, and political, moral and domestic safeguards-when the opportunity is given, in the United States of America!

01.26. Appendix 4: Bullingerism

Appendix 4: Bullingerism This teaching has been so fully answered, both in England and America, and its deadly dangers so fully worked out, that a discussion of it is practically unnecessary here. See, for example, the brief, but able and clear tract by Mr. W. Hoste of England: Bullingerism (Light and Liberty Publishing Company, Fort Dodge, Iowa). He also combatted Dr. Bullinger in England when he was yet alive. Also the various comments made by the Editor D. M. Panton in the magazine The Dawn (C. J. Thynne & Company, London); and those by Dr. James M. Gray in The Moody Monthly (Chicago). The recent righteously firm and unanswerable booklet Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth (Loizeaux Bros., New York) by Dr. H. A. Ironside, is not being answered by Bullinger votaries,-except by petitio principii,-begging the question that their rejection of water baptism is correct, the final teaching of Paul; and that those who disagree with them are ignorant or cowards. They do not answer the arguments made against them; instead they accuse their objectors.

Consider, regarding Bullingerism:

1. It subjects Scripture to rigid rules of outline and interpretation invented by the human mind. It does lean upon “its own understanding,” rather than upon the Holy Spirit.

2. It assumes, with unbelievable pride, that it knows “truth,” of which the whole Church has been ignorant since Paul. In other times, when men really recovered truth, as at the Reformation, or in Wesley’s or in Darby’s day, a mighty work of the Holy Spirit accompanied the Word, which resulted in the conversion of thousands, and the real edification in love of God’s Saints. Bullingerism causes divisions; ministers “questionings” and defeats unity. I have watched it for thirty-six years deceive, puff up, release from prayer and burden for souls, make men once zealous to reach the lost compass sea and land to make one proselyte to “no water-baptism,” “only prison epistles,” “Gospels not for us,” etc., etc.

3. Bullingerism is probably the most subtle of all the doctrines that lead, eventually, to that great denial of eternal judgment, which is sweeping the world. The “soul-sleep” that Bullinger taught “lets down the bars”; being direct trifling with God’s plainest of words regarding the disposition He makes of both the saved and the lost at death: that the believer “departs to be with Christ,” being “absent from the body he is present with the Lord”; and that the lost proceed, as did the rich man of Luke 16:1-31, at once to Hades. Bullinger says: “Hades,-we might call it Gravedom. There is not a place where the rendering grave would not be appropriate” (for Hades). Now Matthew 16:18 at once proves this utterly false! Church saints’ bodies have been buried in graves constantly; but Hades, the region at the earth’s center (Matthew 12:40; Acts 2:27, R.V.), since our Lord’s resurrection, has not admitted one saint into its gates: “The Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (the Church). I am persuaded that all Bullingerites are candidates for some form of denial of eternal punishment. There are those of California who teach that even Satan will be restored: making God, in Revelation 20:10, a liar! “Buy the truth and sell it not!” The more a man knows who teaches vital error, the more dangerous he is. Especially is he dangerous if he holds

some,-even a great deal, of truth; for, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” When I was in England first, in 1899, it was my great blessing to be closely associated with the best Christians there. Mr. Bullinger was at that time writing very busily. But all those devoted Christians said, “He seems to be a brainy man, but we do not trust him.” How well his fruits have proved their discernment!

It is my firm belief that one of three paths will be followed by all Bullinger followers: a. They will be delivered from it by divine grace; or, b. They will become so occupied with endless discussions about “dispensational” distinctions and divisions, that they will become fruitless for God, either at home or abroad; or, c. They will go on to the logical conclusion of setting aside this Scripture and that, in accordance with their “dispensational” claims, to the position of the Knoch (Concordant) faction of California: who have even printed their (per)version of the Scriptures, to gainsay the Words of God concerning eternal punishment.

Imagine Martin Luther being told that his beloved Galatians and Romans (by which, under God, he shook Europe), “Those are not ‘Church Epistles,’-they do not belong to us.” I should not care personally to be the “dispensationalist” to tell Luther that! Or Rutherford-imagine telling him that the Church is not the Bride of Christ! (Have you read his Letters?) Or content John Bunyan with words and questions such as these? Or tell Whitefield, weeping over 20,000 souls in his mighty sermon on “Ye must be born again,” that John’s Gospel, where he got his message, is “not for us”? God gave him thousands of souls by that message, and no peddler of “soul-sleep” teaching could stand before him!

George Whitefield read through Matthew Henry’s Commentary twice-on his knees! What this shallow age needs is a long, steady acquaintance with such as Matthew Henry,[128]and the Puritans, and Spurgeon, and Darby’s “Collected Writings”-and even with John Calvin’s 51 volumes of commentaries! But they, conceiving themselves dispensationally “beyond” these really great men of God,-will they read these works?

[128] Matthew Henry was godly, as were the Puritans; though both are servants of a legal theology, alas!

We trow not. They will, instead, be more and more occupied with the “air-tight-compartments” of the clever and heady Companion Bible,-because it makes people think they are advancing, in their Scripture “dividing,” and dispensational distinctions, in divine things,-whether the Holy Ghost unifies in love God’s saints or not; and whether revival showers come or not!

Chapter 30

01.27. Appendix 5: Why The Church Will Not Be In The Great Tribulation

Appendix 5: Why The Church Will Not Be In The Great Tribulation

We mean by The Church, the Body of Christ, which includes all “born-again” people from Pentecost to Christ’s second coming. “Ye are the body of Christ… In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, … and were all made to drink of one Spirit. Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might present the church to himself, a glorious church … one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling.” (1 Corinthians 12:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:25; Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 4:4.) Note, that we do not mean by “The Church” the religious profession the world knows by that name; but the true Body of Christ only, which will be also His Bride.

We mean by The Great Tribulation that “time of trouble” on earth spoken of by Daniel, Jeremiah, and other prophets, and our Lord, and the Apostles, as so terrible in character that “there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be” (Mark 13:19). Its duration will be brief,-3½ years, or 42 months (shortened somewhat “for the elect’s sake”); and it will immediately precede the Lord’s return to earth to set up His kingdom on earth, as “Son of man” (Matthew 24:29; Matthew 13:41-43).

1. We know that the most of the Church cannot go through The Tribulation; for the vast majority of it, during the nearly two thousand years has already gone to be with Christ, to return with Him at His second coming. I wish we might let that sink deep into our hearts! Why should a small number at the end be subjected to a test and trial that the rest, even “carnal” saints, have entirely escaped? (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).

2. We do not deny, but rather continually affirm, that the Church is always subject to suffering-indeed, that for Christ’s sake we are killed all the day of grace long, accounted as “sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:1-39). Such instances, for example, as the Boxer martyrdom in 1900 and the Russian situation prove that the Church is always subject to suffering; in fact, that is the program for it: as witness the early martyrs!

3. It is only from divine wrath, not human, that we affirm the Church of God to be absolutely and forever delivered, and that not only from the “great day of wrath” at Christ’s second coming (Revelation 19:1-21) and from the eternal wrath at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:1-15); but we also affirm that the Church has no share in the woes that come directly from God’s indignation, which occur upon the Lamb’s taking the sealed book in heaven (Revelation 5:1). Now why do we affirm that? Because the Church is under grace, under eternal favor. I mean God’s elect, those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, believing the truth. Those in Christ HAVE their redemption, the forgiveness of all their trespasses. They have been made meet already to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. They have not been appointed unto wrath in any sense. They are not of the world; they have

been made alive together with Christ, and raised up with Him and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies, with an eternal outlook of kindness from His hand in Christ Jesus. All wrath for them from God was forever over at the cross when Christ cried, “It is finished!”

Now these are the facts about the Body of Christ-not perfected saints only, but all the saints. There is no exception. God will not and cannot turn from His acceptance of those in His Son. Wrath has passed over forever for the Church. They have been fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. They shall be so conformed so that Christ may be “the first-born among many brethren.” This is the plain declaration of the God of all grace. This was a sovereign act of His own, not contingent upon their response to it; but, on the contrary, God Himself undertaking to work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and to perfect that which concerned them. It was of the carnal Corinthian Christians that Paul said they should be confirmed unto the end, that they should be unreprovable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me emphasize the fact that Paul calls them babes in Christ, saying, “Ye are yet carnal.” But Paul says God is going to confirm them unto the day of Jesus Christ. Paul addresses this epistle to “all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place.” Therefore, it covers this whole age, and it covers “carnal” Christians![129]

[129] If it be argued that some of God’s own are on earth during the wrath-days of The Great Tribulation, and therefore why not the Church-saints? the answer is, that it is perfectly evident to a thoughtful reader of prophecy regarding Israel, and especially the Psalms, that there will be souls who seek Jehovah, (and that in times of great trouble) to whom the finished work of Calvary is not yet revealed. Their consciences are not yet purged; the sense of sin and even of divine wrath-the wrath upon Israel oppresses them: the “fountain for sin and uncleanness” having not been nationally opened to Israel (Zechariah 12:11-14; Zechariah 13:1). Yet the saints of the Church cannot be meant here, for the blood of Christ is declared to have so cleansed,-not only from guilt, but from “dead works,” the conscience of the believer that he serves gladly and freely the Living God (Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 13:15). The Psalms present the consciousness, not of an Ephesian Christian, but of a godly Israelite longing for his Messiah’s (second) coming as Deliverer and King.

4. We find also that Paul was sent by Christ to reveal not only the Church’s heavenly calling, and destiny, but also to reveal that Gospel which belongs to this day of salvation, the essence of the message of which is that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself at the cross, not reckoning to them their trespasses; and hath committed to His saints of this “day of salvation,” the “ministry of reconciliation” in such a sense that the word of reconciliation has been “placed in us.” That is the meaning of the Greek word-God has placed in us the word of reconciliation, the business of telling others regarding reconciliation. Unto us this word belongs. “We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beg you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.” That is the attitude of the Apostle Paul, and of the saints of God of this age, the whole age long! Nor is there any hint that it has ever changed. It cannot change. The saints, as sinners, having found Christ, can do nothing but proclaim Christ to others. So that no matter how much we may be moved to arouse men by warnings of eternal judgment, we must ever return to the message of the cross; of the grace of God. The Church has no other commission, and the Church is God’s house and the pillar and stay of the truth in this age. So long as she is on earth we do not find any Scripture, any warrant for the idea that God will have two witnessing bodies with different messages on earth at the same time, one of present grace and

one of present judgment! Let us keep this carefully in mind.

5. We find in Scripture that God may reveal to His servants, as to Enoch, judgments in which they will personally have no part. See the Apostle Jude, wherein Enoch prophesies of the Lord's second coming in wrath upon the ungodly. But Enoch was translated, and never saw that wrath. Though he knew about it, he did not see it. It was revealed to Enoch that he should be translated. Enoch becomes, therefore, a type of the Church which is to be translated from judgment, even as Noah was a type of the Israelitish remnant that will go through the judgment and come out into the new kingdom on earth when the Lord Jesus returns. We need not be surprised, therefore, that the Lord has told His Church, by the Apostle John especially, of the end-horrors which they will not themselves enter, nor even see, except from above. The principles of evil are on now-"the mystery of lawlessness," many antichrists: but not the manifestation, "the Anti-Christ": that is restrained.

6. You remember the passage: "We that are left unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep." This great Thessalonian revelation proves at once two blessed things: first, that the proper Christian expectation is to be alive when Christ comes: "We that are alive," says Paul by the Spirit. Second, that so far from there being any time of wrath in store for believers alive when Christ comes, there will be such a naturally expected advantage from being left unto the coming of the Lord that a special revelation was necessary to assure the Church that those fallen asleep would not be behind, but should really rise first! Now if a portion of the Church is to share the fearful horrors of The Great Tribulation, the only cry of any intelligent saint should be, "How much better to die in the Lord and escape all this!" But God has as surely put the hope of the rapture of translation into the breast of His instructed saints, as He put it into Enoch's breast. "We will together be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." The Spirit moved Paul to write that. That is the hope which we ought all to share. "We shall all be changed in a moment," in "the twinkling of an eye" we shall be caught up. Now this is the hope, and this is written into the hearts of the saints.

7. C. I. Scofield very aptly calls attention to Christ's new promise given in John 14:1-31, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Now will you notice that this promise has absolutely nothing to do with the Son of man's work of setting up a kingdom on earth! It is a new announcement. It is the anticipatory announcement of the heavenly prospects of the Church of God. It is our Lord's first intimation to His saints of this special phase of His coming. Our Lord, on the Mount of Olives, you remember, had given them a view of the dispensation with special reference to His coming to earth in judgment (Matthew 24:1-51 and Mark 13:1-37). Our Lord there looks on the disciples as Jews (which they primarily were), and those passages must be read in the light of that fact. [130] For instance, in Matthew 24:1-51 the Lord Jesus says concerning The Great Tribulation, "There shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be." And in connection with that, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath," because a Jew could only journey so far on the sabbath day by their custom (Acts 1:12) without breaking the law; and I want to remind you the Jews will not then be under grace. They will not yet know grace in that awful tribulation time that is coming. They will be in spirit under the solemn sabbath restrictions, as in Maccabean days. But Paul said to the Colossians, "Let no one judge you in respect of a sabbath day, which was a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. You are not under the law, but grace." The folks who talk

about the Church going through The Tribulation do not realize Church truth; they do not realize the absoluteness of God's grace. I say that kindly, but I say it with much emphasis. I cannot teach anything else, and be true to the Gospel of the Grace of God! The constant use of such words as "look for his appearing," "wait for God's Son," "love his appearing," in the Epistles shows how the Spirit kept this hope alive in the hearts of God's saints. It was the expectation of the actual appearing of the Lord Jesus, "I go, I will come, I will receive you unto myself!"

[130] "The whole effect of Christ's coming, with regard to the Jews, to Matthew 24:31, then to all his servants till His coming, to Matthew 25:30; then to the nations preparatory to His kingdom, Matthew 5:31-46." (Darby)

8. Now the Thessalonian saints were in danger, like those of today, of getting their eyes off the real hope of Christ's personal and imminent return, the hope of translation into the air, and upon conditions round about them. So Paul writes his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, upholding their faith which he established in his First Epistle. Let us quote this most important passage. "Now we beseech you brethren, in behalf of (the preposition here in the Greek means "in behalf of" not merely "concerning"-it is a plea for); the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him." (He wrote them about it in the First Epistle. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Now he would exhort them to hold fast what he wrote them in the First Epistle.) "To the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind" (the mind that he got them in by writing the First Epistle- 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 -where he said, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words"). Now note 2 Thessalonians 2:2 "Be not quickly shaken from your mind" (into which my First Epistle brought you) "nor yet be troubled, either by spirit (either your own "feelings," or else an evil spirit, as in a false prophet) "or by word" (any wrong preaching or instruction) "or by epistle" (purporting to come from me) "as (teaching) that the day of the Lord is present."

Now it is not "the day of Christ" as in the old version. The Revised Version reads day of the Lord. But "is present" follows: as 1 Corinthians 3:22; Romans 8:38. That is, the great and terrible day when the Lord comes down (Revelation 19:1-21) with the armies of heaven to execute vengeance and set up His kingdom and tread His enemies under His feet. "Don't believe," says Paul, "the day of the Lord is now present." "Let no man beguile you in any wise"- (they will try it; they are trying it now). "For that day will in no wise be" (that day of the Lord) "except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed" -Antichrist. [131] against another. He pleads for the day of Christ-when we are caught up to meet Him: "Don't let anybody move you away from that hope!" Watch for it! "We that are alive," "we that are alive," "we that are alive!" That is God's inspiration-it is the Holy Ghost who puts that into your heart, believer! We that are alive, that are left-we shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye. That is the hope of the Church. Paul pleads for that.

[131] There is a great deal of controversy over what is meant by "the falling away." The Greek phrase (apostasia) is an expression used just once in Scripture. In my judgment Church days are not meant here. In these days I know there is a great deal of falling away from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-16); and Paul writes in his last epistle, 2 Timothy 3:1-17 : "The days will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine." But that is not what the Spirit of God meant by "the apostasy." The

falling away is, I am perfectly convinced, described in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 and Revelation 13:1-18. It is the whole world falling clear away from God to worship the Devil,-all except the elect, who were written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. It will be the elect of that day, not the Church. For the Church has nothing to do with earth things, having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world! God will always have His witnesses, His saints. There is coming an awful apostasy, a falling away of the human race to the god of this age. They shall worship the dragon because he will give his power to the wild-beast-Satan's burlesque of the resurrection. There is the reversal of everything that is divine. Satan has the place of God, and the Beast is Satan's Christ; and the False Prophet becomes an awful parody of the Holy Spirit. Now that is coming! And that, I think, is what God means by "the apostasy." Everything else is preliminary, is not the real apostasy.

It is described by the Spirit as "our gathering together unto him," the rapture or translation into the air with which they had been told to "comfort one another." And he warns against their expecting to see the day of the Lord while on earth. Now look at that. Don't you watch for the day of the Lord. The apostasy is coming, but "we that are alive" are looking for Christ's coming for us. A temple of God has to be built by the returned Jewish nation, as we find elsewhere, and a great falling away from God to Satan, and the man of sin has to sit there, setting himself forth as God, before the day of the Lord, the great and terrible day, could take place. But their hope, the Church's hope, was being caught up to be with Christ. They were not to look for the other, the day of the Lord, although they were informed of it, as Enoch was informed of the wickedness that was coming. He looked for translation; and by faith Enoch was translated!

9. We find that The Great Tribulation is not once mentioned by Paul in his epistles which govern the churches (Romans to Philemon) nor in Hebrews; nor are the saints warned of it. The last days are indeed spoken of; perilous times were plainly in Paul's view, and the turning aside to Satan from the truth planted by him. But this brings us to emphasize again that the days of The Great Tribulation are quite another thing from a departure from the gospel of grace, or even from the inspiration of the Bible, as in modernism. If there had been the remotest possibility that the Church would see those wrath-outpourings, Paul would have warned them of it. But he speaks in exactly the opposite way. See his words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:32, "chastened of the Lord that they might not be condemned with the world."

10. The 70th week of Daniel, lasting seven years, has two halves, in neither of which the Church can be on earth. There is no other place The Tribulation can come but in the 70th week of Daniel 9:27. Careful students of the Scripture -are agreed about that. In this prophecy of Daniel we read that in the middle of that week, when three and one-half years are up, he (that is, that "prince," that last prince of the Roman Empire) "will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." He will stop the Jewish worship like Antiochus Epiphanes, his famous prototype of the time of the Greek reign of the Seleu-cidae, in the second Century before Christ (Daniel 11:29-30; Daniel 1:1-21 Maccabees). This Antichrist, this last prince, however, will come and place himself there in the Jewish temple that they are going to build. Antiochus Epiphanes, in his rage because Rome turned him back from conquering Egypt, came to Jerusalem and "did his pleasure." He sacrificed a sow and strewed its broth in the Holy of Holies of their temple. Now this last Roman "prince" will do worse than defile. He will set himself forth there as God: and this is the thing that will make Israel desolate-"the abomination that maketh desolate." The word "abomination" in Scripture is God's

word for a pagan god, or for a demon that is worshipped. There was the “abomination” Ashtoreth, of the Sidonians; and Chemosh, the “abomination” of the Moabites, and Molech, the “abomination” of Ammon. God calls these various heathen gods abominations. Now there is an abomination-thing to sit “where he ought not.” When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet,” (Matthew 24:1-51) sitting in a place he ought not, then let the remnant (of Israel) flee: Let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house. For God will have given matters over to the enemy for the “hour,” as He did in Gethsemane (Luke 22:53). There is coming this 70th week of Daniel, in the middle of which it was prophesied by Daniel and by our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Antichrist would thus take charge of things. Now I said that neither in the first half of this week of seven years, nor in the last half could the Church be here. Why? In Revelation 11:1-19 we see the first half of this 70th week. You will remember from your study of The Revelation that we come to Jewish things in Revelation 11:1-19. John has to “prophesy again,” and the scene is Jerusalem of the last days: “Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.” This refers to the last half of the seven years. The next verse refers to the first half, “And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” Now 1260 days are three and one-half years exactly. Well, you say, it may be the same time as the other in the preceding verse. Come to Revelation 13:1-18 and read of the last emperor, the Wild-Beast, the Antichrist. You will find he “prospers and does his pleasure” for forty-two months, but it is during the second, not the first half of the seven years. I cannot believe that his way is open, until the “two witnesses” are out of the way. He does not fully get his “hour,” with his ten kings, until then (Revelation 17:12).

During the first half, Revelation 11:1-19, God’s “two witnesses,” clothed in sackcloth and operating at Jerusalem, preclude the possibility of the Church’s presence and testimony on earth. How? First, the whole earth becomes subject to a testimony which is not the gospel, not “the ministry of reconciliation”; and subject to two persons who are not of the Church. Here we have two witnesses that are of God, of course, but not preaching the gospel, nor grace, as does the Church. “And they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” This is Old Testament ground. Let us quote their description and see.

These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. And if man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire.

I said that the whole earth becomes subject, under these two witnesses, to a testimony which is not the gospel. You cannot change the gospel ministry-it is “God so loved the world,” “whosoever will.” You cannot change that; you cannot mix it up. If the Church is here she must preach the gospel and that only. She must preach the gospel of grace. For the Church to leave the gospel of grace, salvation to poor sinners, and turn to anything else is to desert her commission. Any preacher who leaves this and turns for example to prophecy only, or to any other “specialty,” dries up. The Church of God has a commission to go forth to every part of the earth, preaching the

gospel to every creature. You cannot change that commission. Just because you find certain “saints” in the tribulation-time, do not imagine they must be the Church of God. That is to have the same kind of a veil about you that some folks have about the law of Moses. Because, for instance, God gave the Jews a seventh day sabbath such people must turn the first day of the week into a Jewish sabbath! But we cannot change the true interpretation of Scripture. We will not listen to those who would plunge the Church of God into a place where it cannot be scripturally! The whole earth, I repeat, becomes subject to a testimony which is not the gospel, and to two persons who are not of the Church. The present days of “no difference” between Jew and Gentile in God’s sight, are past at that time, for the testimony has reverted to Jerusalem and the prophets are of the Old Testament. And they deal with a nation which does not even know Jehovah their God, but speak of Him as the “God of heaven” (Revelation 11:13). They do not even know Jehovah any more. And they (these prophets) are clothed in sackcloth-a wholly Jewish, Old Testament attitude. Personally, I believe Elijah is one of them. The Lord Jesus said, as also Malachi, that Elijah would return to Israel before the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:11).

Further, they “smite the earth with every plague as often as they shall desire.” Here we have grace ended and judgment beginning. The attention of the whole earth is wholly taken up by these “two witnesses,” and consequently there is no place nor time for the Church or for a grace testimony. Really, Church saints present there would hinder God. God wants the whole earth then to listen to these witnesses at Jerusalem. Try to imagine how it will be! All the telegraph wires and radios fairly humming with news about these two terrible prophets that cannot be killed-no man can destroy them. They send out fire from their mouths upon any one who wants to kill them, and such persons shall die. They have (so the news will go) smitten this nation, that nation, from afar off, with plagues, shutting up the heaven that it does not rain, turning the water into blood. I’d like to know how you would have got along with the gospel down in Egypt when Moses was swinging out his rod over the Nile and turning it into blood, or when the frogs were hopping out. No place for the gospel there! God was doing something else down in old Egypt, and as God dealt with Egypt so God is going to deal with this whole world. And for people to say the Church is there is sad blindness. It’s a lack of discernment of the purposes of God, of His grace, or of the position of the Church of God. God does not mix things. If God has “two witnesses” there clothed in sackcloth, and the whole world subject to them, and they smiting the earth with every plague as often as they desire, where is there place for “Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely?” That is over-something else is on. God is laying the foundation at Jerusalem in “the remnant” of fear of Jehovah again. We must remember that God has a deep and solemn work to do in the Jewish nation, ere He can take Israel’s side against the nations (as He will do when He comes to earth: see Zechariah 12:14). This nation Israel has lost the fear of God and given itself up to covetousness and to idolatry. Now God is going to take Israel’s part as He did in Egypt against Pharaoh. Terrible plagues are about to fall on the whole earth; but judgment is beginning with God’s people Israel. The “sinners in Zion will be afraid” at that time!

You remember that these two prophets of God are killed by the Wild-Beast, and through three and one-half days their bodies lie there unburied “in the street of the great city,” and all nations come to celebrate this awful thing! The Lord’s “two witnesses” are slain at “Jerusalem that killeth the prophets.” And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And

they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth (Revelation 11:1-19). Where are the churches? They are not there! The people are occupied with something entirely different. “And they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.” The whole earth was in their hands for judging and tormenting. Where is the ministry of reconciliation in that day? Where are the ambassadors that were formerly pleading in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God? That day is gone! People with discernment see that. God is doing something else then: judgment is on. And Israel and the nations are involved in it-not the Church! And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Praise God, heaven can take folks up that the earth cannot stand! “And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them”-the whole earth at public enmity with God! The Church of God has gone away. Evil is now unrestrained. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons; and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

No, as I said, Israel of that day do not yet know Him as “Jehovah their God.” The Jewish nation does not know Him today. “They gave glory to the God of heaven.” That is His name outside of Jerusalem, in Persia or in Babylon. See Daniel and Nehemiah 11:1-36. Now let us look at another passage describing the second, or last half of Daniel’s 70th “week.” Turn to Isaiah 60:2 : “Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples.” Now the expression “gross darkness” is God’s term for judicial blindness. Darkness, in a certain way, covers the earth now; even in “Christendom.” Not “gross darkness,” however, as in this verse. See Jeremiah 13:15, where God describes vividly this expression “gross darkness”: “Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud; for Jehovah hath spoken.” Jeremiah is pleading with the nation of Israel who are sinning away their day of grace. “Give glory to Jehovah your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the mountains of twilight. And, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” “Gross darkness,” therefore, in the Hebrew, is God’s description of a state of things when there is no light left. Judicially God has withdrawn the light. “Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples.” It will be a spiritual darkness like the physical darkness of the ninth plague in Egypt; “thick darkness that may be felt” (Exodus 10:21). People forget that. They think the Church will be there; but that is because of their thoughtlessness. And I want to tell you something about those who say that. They very soon begin to minify God’s great future purposes about Israel. They begin to grow blind to the power and vision of the Old Testament concerning the coming kingdom; and they lose sight of the Church’s distinct and separate calling-distinct from Israel and all earthly things. God will still deal with Israel. God says if the order of the heavens can be changed, then His purposes concerning Israel “from being a nation before him forever” can be changed. God says He is going to make a covenant with them in the future and you have to believe that. And Israel means Israel, and Jerusalem means Jerusalem. When God’s light “ariseth” after that “gross darkness” it will be on His earthly people. (Read Zechariah 12:10-14; Zechariah 13:1.) In Isaiah 60:1 we read: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee:” This is a prophetic message about Jerusalem,

beyond The Great Tribulation, when the Lord Jesus comes back. The glory of Jehovah will rise upon Israel: “For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon thee (Jerusalem) and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Those that have read prophecy with the Spirit of God, know of what I am speaking. Oh, the awful darkness that is coming! People forget that; they think The Tribulation is just the wilful career of the last Roman emperor. Alas, far more, it’s God-given judicial blindness! “Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples.” There is no way of escaping this. The Church is gone, or gross darkness would not, could not, be written of the world! As long as the Church of God is here you cannot write those words “gross darkness covers the peoples.” God said to Lot, “Haste thee, for I cannot do anything till thou be removed.” Nothing in the way of judgment. Abraham said to Jehovah, “Wilt thou slay the righteous with the wicked? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Earth will be given up to believe the lie (for the definite article is before it) (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17). There is no place for the “ministry of reconciliation” then whatsoever! The earth turns to Devil-worship and knows it. Our Lord said, “When the Son of man cometh” (as Son of man, note, by which name He is coming back to reign on earth) “shall he find faith on the earth?” And you cannot answer that by any other answer than “No.” You say, do you mean to teach that there will be no one on earth when He comes back as the Son of man, who has faith? I mean exactly that. Israel, the remnant of Israel-God must pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication ere they “look unto him whom they pierced.” They must see Christ. They must look on Him. “They shall see the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” Christ has said, “When the Son of man comes (as the Son of man) will he find faith?” No. He will find those that are going to have faith, but they have to see first like Thomas. What an awful state, and what a terrible thing for people to be teaching that the Church is going to be here when God says there will not be faith.

12. We know certain things have to take place at Christ’s coming. There is the rapture, the translation of the saints, the judgment-seat of Christ when each saint comes before the Lord to have his works examined and to be rewarded. And afterwards comes the presentation of the Church to Himself, “a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle.” Then comes the marriage in heaven of Revelation 19:1-21. That all takes time. And yet these folks would have us believe that that is all just an instant’s work at the second coming! But from the time He comes for the Church in the air, has them all judged there for their works, gives them their rewards, and then presents them to Himself in that wonderful day of the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:1-21), until He comes on down with them and the armies of heaven, God gives us no dates whatsoever. But Scripture shows there will be at least seven years between His coming for His Church and His coming with them. Because, as we saw in Revelation 11:1-19, the two witnesses fill the first half, and the Wild-Beast the latter half of the closing seven years of “Gentile times”; and in neither half are the Church and the Gospel of Grace possible![132]

[132] The Lord says in Matthew 24:29 that “immediately” after the tribulation the sun should be darkened, and He would come in glory. But at the close of the 1260 days of the “two witnesses,” other things entirely happen!

13. Now, again, let me ask a few questions. Why should a heavenly company, already made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, be asked to “await their Lord from heaven,” unless His imminent coming be really their hope?

Again, what spiritual result is secured by giving up the hope of the imminent return of the Lord? Are those who give up this doctrine the more stable and steadfast for it? Are they more filled with the Spirit? Does the doctrine of the Church going through the tribulation give joy? God's word says, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." A dear friend of mine said publicly to me many years ago that he had abandoned the hope of the imminent coming of the Lord. I went to see him the next day and talked earnestly for hours with him. I finally said, "Mr.-, how did you come to give this hope up?" He told me that he had promised a friend to re-examine the Scriptures in the light of certain arguments against Christ's imminent coming for the whole Church. "I read the New Testament from the viewpoint of those arguments" he said, "and one day I got down on my knees in my own parlor, weeping bitter tears, and gave up a hope that had been very dear to me." I said, "Mr-, do you expect me to give it up because you did? God gave me this same vivid hope years ago, and it was more wonderful than the experience of my conversion by far, and I cannot give it up." A friend told me recently that when she believed in a partial rapture she actually hoped to die, so as to "depart and be with Christ," and be safe. Legalism is at the bottom of all this post-tribulation talk.

Again-is zeal for souls increased by giving up the imminent hope of the Lord's coming? In a trip around the world I found the most earnest missionaries were expecting Christ vividly, and not looking to go through the tribulation. The most earnest seekers of souls I know are those that believe that Christ may come for His Church at any time.

Again-why do the post-tribulationists keep claiming that men who held Christ's imminent coming while on earth, made some statement to them, "just before death," declaring the opposite?

Robert Cameron, of Watchword and Truth, whose later life was largely a proselyting campaign for post-tribulationism, used to claim that Dr. Brookes, of St. Louis, had given up this hope "before he died, in an interview with him!" But both the last books and the later associates of Dr. Brookes deny this. Others claimed that Prof. W. G. Moorehead gave it up, etc., etc. Someone told me that R. A. Torrey weakened. I challenged him. He could produce no proof whatever! Mrs. Torrey, when told that a Canadian magazine had claimed that her husband had given up the hope of Christ's imminent coming for the whole Church, was much distressed, and wrote the editor to publish her denial of such a false report. (Which request that journal has never granted. Why?) A certain church paper published a letter from a western woman saying, "Poor old Blackstone, who wrote 'Jesus Is Coming!'-he has got to be over ninety and he is still holding on to the same old ideas." Well, praise the Lord! She claimed that Dr. Scofield, "if he could only come back would be one of the first to revise all his ideas." When alive, did Dr. Scofield have to resort to a woman to prove Scripture to him? Nor could he be so faithless to the vision God had given him as to "revise his ideas."

Again-why do people claim to be teaching the truth when they are dividing the saints? The post-tribulation- ists are propagandists that are not publishing the glad tidings of Christ's second coming. They are seeking to turn away those who have received these tidings as the great hope of their life, to their theory concerning it.

Again-who have been the teachers and preachers of Christ's imminent coming? We have such men as John Darby, who was probably the greatest interpreter of Scripture since Paul, with such early Brethren as C. H. Mackintosh, J. G. Bellett, Wm. Kelly, and the rest, a marvelous coterie.

Then you have C. H. Spurgeon. It is idle to claim that he was not looking for Christ's coming. He split no hairs such as the post-tribulationists do, but boldly and constantly proclaimed the second coming of Christ as an actual and a daily possibility. D. L. Moody was a wonderful witness to any truth God revealed to him; and his sermon on "The Second Coming of Christ" is a classic. He was looking for the Lord's coming. George C. Needham, beloved Irishman; Wm. E. Black-stone, whose life has been to look for his Lord; James H. Brookes, a mighty warrior, now with the Lord; A. B. Simpson, of whom Moody said, "Everything he says reaches my heart." All these were looking for Christ's appearing. It was the hope of their lives. H. M. Parsons, of Toronto, now with Christ; and Dr. Weston, yet in Toronto, faithful witnesses alike. Grand old I. M. Haldeman, of New York, as well as J. Wilbur Chapman, now with Christ. A. T. Pierson, of wonderful penetration in the meaning of Scripture; A. J. Gordon; George E. Guille-lately among us, now with Christ, devoted, gentle, sane, yet a contender for Christ's imminent coming; our Brother Ironside, whose praise is among the real churches of Christ; Lewis Sperry Chafer at Dallas; A. C. Gaebelein, of New York, Editor of Our Hope, perhaps the most persistent, faithful witness for over fifty years to the imminent return of our Lord for all His saints, that the Church has had in America. To these names should be added that of James M. Gray, late President of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago and Editor of the Moody Institute Monthly. In the pages of the latter, Dr. Gray has often borne witness to the teaching of Holy Scripture that the translation of the Church which is the body of Christ shall precede the tribulation. See particularly the issue of August, 1931, page 583. See also his books, Prophecy and the Lord's Return, My Faith in Jesus Christ, The Teaching and Preaching That Counts, and chapter 10 of Bible Problems Explained.

Then there are the godly (and there are many) among the Holiness people, and also the Pentecostal people, those who seek to live a life of prayer and praise continually. Where do you find such saints aligned? They are all looking for the blessed hope; and they believe it can be in their day or they would not be looking for it. Where can the post-tribulationists find such witnesses as these? It has cost very much along every line of sacrifice for these witnesses to hold fast the imminent hope of Christ's coming, and along with it the infinitely precious doctrines of grace (for the two go always together).

Then there are a host of faithful witnesses to Christ's imminent coming, in Great Britain, Scandinavia, the mission fields, and Australasia.

Mr. George H. Pember of England (now with Christ) was one of the most honest men in writing that I have ever read, as well as a very able man, author of several books. But Mr. Pember was forced by the logic of his position to claim that the Body of Christ was not the whole Church at all, but just certain surrendered folks! And that arouses the query in our minds, What people have been surrendered enough to be in the Body of Christ? And, who is going to settle it? As we have said, the Corinthians were the Body of Christ, and they were carnal Christians. Mr. Pember gives a little over half a page of one large book to the whole subject of divine sovereign election, and claims that it does not concern salvation at all! Well, brethren, you cannot be rid of Spurgeon, Darby, Edwards, Calvin, Luther, Augustine, or Paul, as easily as that!

14. The final and unanswerable argument that the Church cannot be in The Great Tribulation is revealed in our Lord's own outline of The Revelation: Revelation 1:19. Here we have: First, "The things which thou sawest," (the vision of Christ among the churches in Revelation 1:1-20).

Second, “The things which are,” (the letters to the seven churches with their plain outline of the Church’s history in Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22). Third, “The things which shall come to pass after these things,” (the rest of Revelation, from Revelation 4:1-11, onward). In both the King James and Revised Versions an utterly inadequate translation is given of the last phrase of this divine outline. The Greek expression is meta tauta. “Meta” is a Greek preposition meaning “after”; “tauta” is a neuter plural pronoun meaning “these,” or “these things.” To translate this phrase “meta tauta” by the adverb “hereafter” is not to translate it at all! That is shown in Revelation 4:1, where this remarkable phrase meta tauta both opens and closes the verse-a remarkable thing![133]

[133] Liddell and Scott say meta with the accusative of place signifies “after, or next after;” and of Time, “after, next to;” and of Rank, “next to, next after.” Winer (the dean of Greek grammarians, says meta with the accusative signifies after in regard to time, and is the opposite to pro, “before.”

Thayer wholly agrees: “Meta with the accusative denotes sequence, i.e. the order in which one thing follows another; a. in order of Place-after, behind; b. in order of Time-after.” Thus among some thirty instances of the phrase meta-tauta which he adduces, see examples in Luke 17:8; Acts 7:7; John 5:1; and then all the occurrences in The Rev :1:19; Revelation 4:1 (2); Revelation 7:9; Revelation 9:12; Revelation 15:5; Revelation 18:1; Revelation 19:1; Revelation 20:3.

Let us read this verse:

“After these things (meta tauta) I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass after these things” (meta tauta),-that is, after Church things. a. No one would dream of translating meta tauta at the beginning of this remarkable verse by “hereafter.” It would make no manner of sense. We must translate it, “after these things I saw.” b. But the use by the Spirit of God of this same phrase at the end of this verse compels us to believe that the things set forth after Revelation 4:1 happened just as really after the things of the preceding chapter as the vision of Revelation 4:1 happened after those of Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22. The messages to the seven churches have been formally and fully closed at the end of Revelation 3:1-22 and what follows these Church things is given from Revelation 4:1-11, onward.

Indeed, as all commentators have recognized, we have in Revelation 1:19, a three-fold division answering to the past, present, and future; and, as Govett remarks, “The last division of the Book begins on the completion of the first two, and not till then.” But we find The Great Tribulation not in the first three chapters, but beginning in Revelation 13:1. Now the Lord said this would occur after the things of Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22.

We repeat finally that a weak grasp of the real character and scope of divine grace; failure or refusal to accept Paul as the revelator to the Church of God; and consequently dimness of view of the character, security and coming glory of the whole Church, and a lingering legalism that does not perceive that our Lord in the sermon on the mount was speaking as the Great Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:1-22, backing up Moses, and speaking to Israel, just as really as Moses on Sinai did, and not to the Church of God at all, which was yet future (Matthew 16:1-28):-I say, all these elements enter into the deadly untruth that the saints of the Church are subject, any of them, to the

wrath-time of The Tribulation.

Let the members of the Body of Christ remember that they are one with their Head, that judgment is past and only glory is beyond. That, however much men may distress them (for “in the world ye shall have tribulation,”) The Great Tribulation, the “time of temptation that is to come upon the whole world” shall not touch them! “Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial that is to come upon the whole earth to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Let us beware of confusing the Bema, or “judgment-seat of Christ” after the Church is caught up, with divine judgment for guilt, as such. Christ bare our sins on the cross, with their entire guilt, and put it all away forever. “To them that wait for him (all His Church) he will appear a second time, APART FROM SIN, unto SALVATION.” Remember, “They that are CHRIST’S, at His Coming.”

15. Another proof the Church cannot be on the earth during the last half of Daniel’s 70th week-the Great Tribulation, is seen in the character of our warfare. “We wrestle against the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). But Satan and his whole host are cast altogether out of heaven, in Revelation 12:1-17,-before the beginning of the Great Tribulation! Then warfare in the “heavenly places” will be closed. The Church of necessity will have been removed from the warrior scene. Then earthly conflict,-“the time of Jacob’s trouble,” will begin (Jeremiah 30:7).

It must be most carefully noted that that warfare, which Church-saints carry on now in “the heavenlies” against Satan and his host, is transferred to Michael and his angels, in Revelation 12:1-17! And the result of the expulsion of Satan and his angels from heaven is announced in the words: “Neither was their place found any more in heaven…he was cast down to earth, and his angels were cast down with him”

Note now the facts that make it impossible that the Church should be on earth after Satan is cast down:

1. The “Great voice in heaven” of Revelation 12:10 proclaims a new state of things, essentially opposite to the present time: the salvation, power and kingdom of God COMES: with the authority of His Christ in execution, as not before. While the Church was on earth “wrestling” with the “principalities and powers in the heavenlies,” she suffered with Christ, but Christ now speaks with a “Get thee hence, Satan!” that banishes him utterly from all heavenly position whatever!

2. The accusations before God of Satan are thus ended. That peculiar position of “Accuser,” which is so fully shown in our Lord’s words to Peter: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan obtained you (plural, all of them!) to sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee (so in danger from self-confidence) that thy faith fail not,”- is now over. When Satan is “cast down,” all his accusing work is past, thank God! while the saints, whom he “accused before God,” are found in the heavens, from which he has been cast out.

3. The “heavens” are called to “rejoice” (Revelation 12:12)- and those who “are tabernacling in them.” (Compare “the camp of the saints” (Revelation 20:9). These are evidently, it seems to us, the Church saints, and all the saints who have “overcome Satan” because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony,-loving not their lives even to the death.”

4. The object of Satan's rage when cast down is,-not the Church, but "the Woman that brought forth the Man-Child,"-that is, Israel, which, after the Rapture, represents God on earth. The Church, being heavenly in calling and destiny, has disappeared from the scene! Otherwise she, being "the fulness" of Christ Himself, because His very Body (Ephesians 2:22-22) would be more the object of Satan's attack than Israel: because Satan is more jealous of her! But she is above,-in the heavenlies, where Satan's place is no more found![134]

[134] If it be objected that we ourselves are now on earth, and yet carry on a warfare "in the heavenlies," and that therefore Satan can carry on such a conflict, even after being "cast down to earth"; the answer is simple: the saints are in Christ, they share His risen life, and their walk and warfare is by the indwelling Spirit "sent down from heaven,"-so that they are constantly and actually connected with heaven, in a Risen Christ!

Satan has no such connection,-no connection whatever with heaven, when once he is castout of it. He is as much an "earthly" power as any earthly monarch. Having, indeed, still a spirit's ability to "walk up and down the Earth (Job 1:1-22), and terrible power and energy,-yet he is no longer capable of heavenly warfare. This is evident at once in his impotence in Revelation 19:19-21; Revelation 20:1-3; where his false Christ and his armies gather "to make war" against Him that sits on the white horse, but make no war at all! They are at once "taken," and cast into the lake of fire, with no power of battle at all! And Satan himself makes no fight with angelic power, as before in heaven, but is "bound," and "cast into the abyss!" (Revelation 20:1-3).

Chapter 31

02.00. Romans, Verse by Verse

Romans

Verse-by-Verse by William R. Newell

02.000. Copyright Info

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02.01. Chapter 1A

CHAPTER 1A Apostolic Introduction. Romans 1:1-7.

Personal Greetings, and Expressions of Desire to See and to Preach to Saints in Rome. Romans 1:8-15.

Great Theme of the Epistle: The Gospel the Power of God,--Because of the By-Faith-Righteousness Revealed Therein. Romans 1:16-17. The World's Danger: God's Wrath Revealed Against Human Sin. Romans 1:18-20. The awful Course of Man's Sin, and Man's Present State, Related and Described. Romans 1:21-32.

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto God's good news, 2 which He before promised through His prophets in (the) holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son: who was born of David's seed according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead,--Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations for His name's sake; 6 among whom are ye also,--called as Jesus Christ's: 7 to all those who are in Romebeloved of God, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:1 : PAUL--We see Paul's name standing alone here--no Silas, Timothy or other brother with him. For Paul is himself Christ's apostle unto the Gentiles, the declarer, as here in Romans, of the gospel for this dispensation. Also, in revealing the heavenly character, calling, and destiny of the Church as the Body and Bride of Christ, and as God's House, as in Ephesians, Paul stands alone. When essential doctrines and directions are being laid down, no one is associated with the apostle in the authority given to him,

We dare not glory in a man, not even in Paul, whose life and ministry are by far the most remarkable of those of any human being. [1] Yet our Lord Jesus said: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth him that sent Me" (John 13:20). And Paul was especially sent to us Gentiles. At the first council of the Church, recorded in Acts 15:1-41, "They who were of repute" (in the church in Jerusalem), said Paul, "saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:7).

[1] Paul, being really the least, is the greatest of men! The Lord Jesus said, "Among those born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." But He added immediately, "Yet he that is lesser in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11). Paul names himself "less than the least of all saints," speaking in the Spirit. When John the Baptist speaks of the place he had, it was, as "the friend of the Bridegroom"; but Paul, of his work, as that of espousing and presenting the saints as a chaste virgin to Christ"! We cannot conceive of a higher honor, than that given to this very least of Christ's bondservants,-- to present His Church to Him; as we believe it will be given Paul to do, at the Marriage of the Lamb! (Revelation 19:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:2)

Throughout church history, to depart from Paul has been heresy. To receive Paul's gospel and hold it fast, is salvation,--"By which (gospel) ye are saved, if ye hold fast the very word I preached unto you" (1 Corinthians 15:1; 1 Corinthians 15:2 margin), A bondservant of Jesus Christ--Paul was bondservant before he was apostle. Saul of Tarsus' first words, as he lay in the dust in the Damascus road, blinded by the glory of Christ's presence, were, "Who art thou, Lord?" And when there came the voice, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest," his next words were, "What shall I do, Lord?"--instant, utter surrender! It is deeply instructive to mark that although our Lord said, "No longer do I call you bondservants, but friends"; yet, successively, Paul, James, Peter, Jude and John (Revelation 1:1), name themselves bondservants (Greek; douloi),--and that with great delight! It is the "service of perfect freedom"--deepest of all devotions, that of realized redemption and perfected love. [2]

[2] It would be well also here, regarding Paul, to apply Mark 10:43; Mark 10:44 : "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister." The Greek word for "minister" here is the one we translate elsewhere "deacon" (diakonos); but Mark 10:44 goes further and deeper: "And whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all." Here the Greek word is the one always used for a slave under bondage--doulos. And so we find Paul saying to the Corinthians: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants far Jesus' sake . . . Though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all (verb form of doulos: literally, I became bondslave to all), that I might gain the more . . . I will most gladly spend and be spent out for your souls." (2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 9:19; 2 Corinthians 12:15, Gr.). No other apostle calls himself "slave of all": Paul got the first place, by our Lord's own word,--not that any who choose to be slaves of all for Christ's sake may not he associated with Paul! Rut he is "less than the least," even yet! No wonder, then, that we find Paul speaking with an authority from the Lord such as no other apostle uses. Moses (who had authority in Israel) was "meek above all the men an the face of the earth." The Lord Jesus Himself is seen, when the Kingdom is handed over to Him, as a Lamb that had been slain (Revelation 5:6) is ever "meek and lowly in heart." Thus Paul says, "I am nothing . . . I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." (Here, by the way, was sovereign grace! Christ's choosing His greatest enemy to be His greatest apostle!)

Paul next names himself a called apostle, or "apostle by calling." Three times in these first seven verses the word "called" occurs, and three times more in the Epistle this great word is written: (Romans 8:28, Romans 8:30). Compare Paul's three other uses of the word: 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:24; and Jude's: Jude 1:1; and the one other occurrence: Revelation 17:14. "Called" means designated and set apart by an action of God to some special sphere and manner of being and of consequent activity. In the sixth verse of our chapter, the saints are described in the words "called as Jesus Christ's." They were given to Him by the Father (John 17), and connected with Him before their earth-history: "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world"; and in the seventh verse we read that they are "called as saints," or "saints by calling," which does not at all mean that they were invited to become saints--a Romish doctrine! But that they were saints by divine sovereign calling; holy ones, having been washed in Christ's blood; and having been created in Christ Jesus. It was their mode of being; even as the holy angels did not become angels by a process of holiness, but were created into the angelic sphere and manner of being. Such is the meaning of the word "called" with Paul. [3]

[3] The verb to call (kaleo), is used in this way of Divine sovereign action about forty times; and the cognate noun (klesis), eleven times: always in the sense of Romans 11:29 : "The gifts and calling of God are not repented of."

Separated unto God’s good news--This expression is explained further in Galatians 1:15 : "God separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the nations." In like manner were born Moses, who Stephen says was "fair unto God," --that is, manifestly marked out to be used by God (Acts 7:20, R. V., margin); and John the Baptist, of whom Gabriel said, that he would be "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb . . . to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for Him." Likewise were Jacob, Samson, Samuel, and Jeremiah separated even before birth to an appointed calling. The sovereignty of God is thus seen at the very beginning of this great Epistle. And how well Paul carried out his separation to this high calling, the gospel, the good news about Christ! Yet there are those today, even today, who in ignorance and pride affect to despise the words of this great apostle,--as Peter [4] warns, "to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

[4] In the book of Acts, Peter and John, together with others of the twelve, and Philip and Stephen, give witness to our Lord’s physical resurrection, and proclaim remission of sins to the Jews and proselytes. Then God, through Peter, (to whom the Lord had given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven") opens the door of faith to Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48). Paul, saved outside Jewish bounds, saw the glorified Christ, and heard His voice (Acts 9:1-43). He is sent forth by the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:1-52), with the gospel which belongs to this dispensation, wholly apart from the Law of Moses: witnessing first in synagogues, and afterwards, at Ephesus, (Acts 19:1-41), bringing believers out into separation from rebellious Judaism. Finally, at Rome (Acts 28:1-31), through the awful passage of Isaiah Six, he declares the Jews to be judicially hardened, and "this salvation of God sent to the Gentiles," Since that day, Jews are invited to believe,--not as Jews, but as sinners!

Now as to this "good news of God," we see in our passage two great facts:

First, that it is God’s good news. Mark this well! It was God who loved the world; it was God who sent His Son. Note our Lord’s continual insistence on this in the gospel of John (19 times!). Christ said constantly "I am not come of Myself, but My Father sent Me." It is absolutely necessary that we keep fast in mind, as we read in Romans the awful facts about ourselves, that it is God who is leading us up to His own good news for bad sinners!

Second, (Romans 1:2), that the good news was promised through His prophets in holy Scriptures--These are the Old Testament Scriptures, [5] with promises, types, and direct prophecies of good news to come, both to Israel and to the nations, concerning His Son. We shall find in Romans 3:21 that there is revealed "a righteousness of God" which had been "witnessed by the law and the prophets": witnessed by the law, in that it provided sacrifices and a way of forgiveness for those who failed in its observance; and witnessed by the prophets directly in such passages as these: "By the knowledge of Himself shall my righteous Servant [Christ] make many righteous" (Isaiah 53:11); and, "This is His name whereby He shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6; Jeremiah 33:16); and again, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

[5] "Compare "holy Scriptures" (graphais hagiais) here, with "sacred writings" (hiera grammata) of 2 Timothy 3:15, and with the words, "every Scripture is God-breathed" (pisa graphe theopneustos) of the following verse (2 Timothy 3:16). We should, in 2 Timothy 3:16, supply the substantive verb, "is," after "Scripture"; and the words "and is" after the word "God," with the resultant reading: "Every Scripture is inspired of God and is also profitable," etc. The reading in both the English and American Revisions here is a poor attempt at literalness which avoids the evident meaning of the Holy Spirit, and is, furthermore, not a possible translation in view of the Spirit's constant use of the word graphe in the New Testament as referring only to the Word of God. To say, "Every graphe inspired of God," etc., is to insinuate that there may be a graphe uninspired; whereas graphe is God's technical word for Scripture, for God's inspired Word, used 51 times in the New Testament as a noun denoting always inspired writings. Its first occurrence is Matthew 21:42; its last, 2 Peter 3:16. Other illustrations are Matthew 26:54; Matthew 26:56; John 10:35; and 2 Timothy 3:16. We may note also, as to "holy writings," that Paul, if addressing Jews, would have said the holy writings, for they had them; but he is writing to Gentiles, therefore omits the article.

Romans 1:3-4 : Concerning His Son--Specifically (a) that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (b) that He was buried, (c) that He hath been raised the third day according to the Scriptures, (d) that He appeared to various witnesses. The good news Paul preached is therefore scientifically specific, and must be held in our minds in its accuracy, as it lay in that of the apostle. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

These great facts concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are the beginning of the gospel; as Paul says: "I delivered unto you (these) first of all." [6]

[6] Let us beware, however, of misapplying 1 Corinthians 2:2 : "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Paul goes on in 1 Corinthians 2:6, there, to say: "We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown"; and in 1 Corinthians 3:1 : "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk." "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is the gospel for the sinner and babes in Christ; Christ Jesus and Him glorified is the gospel for instructing and perfecting believers (1 Corinthians 2:6-13). The gospel is all about Christ. Apart from Him, there is no news from heaven but that of coming woe! Read that passage in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 : "I make known unto you the gospel which I preached unto you: that Christ died, Christ was buried; Christ hath been raised; Christ was seen." It is all about the Son of God! This is the record of Paul's first preaching, after "the heavenly vision": "Straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Who was born of David's seed according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead--We have here two things: first, Christ as a Man "according to the flesh"; and as such fulfilling the promises as to "the seed of David"; second, Christ as Son of God, declared so to be with power by His resurrection,--and that "according to the Spirit of holiness," even that holiness in which He had existed and had walked on earth all His life. [7] Christ, the Holy One of God had, "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God," at the cross (Hebrews 9:14). God the Father then acted in power and glory, and raised Him (Romans 6:4, Ephesians 1:19; Ephesians 1:20 Christ was thus irresistibly, eternally "declared to be the Son of God"! Always when prophesying His death, Christ included His rising again the third day as the proof of all. In his last Epistle (2 Timothy 2:8) Paul connects these same two facts about our Lord: "Remember Jesus

Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel." [8]

[7] "That same energy of the Holy Ghost which had displayed itself in Jesus when He walked in holiness here below, was demonstrated in resurrection; and not merely in His own rising from the dead, but in raising the dead at any time, though most signally and triumphantly displayed in His own resurrection."--W. Kelly. I have never seen a fully satisfactory explanation of the words (literally) "marked out as the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of dead (ones)." The account of our Lord's death in Matthew 27:51-54 remarkably corroborates the truth of this great verse. The rent veil, the earthquake, the rent rocks, and the opened tombs: "And many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after His resurrection (for He was the First-fruits) they entered into the holy city, and appeared unto man)." And the awed testimony of "the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God." And as Luke adds: "Certainly this was a righteous man!"

[8] "Christ was to be born as Seed of the woman, Seed of Abraham, and Seed of David: as the Seed of the woman to bruise Satan; as the Seed of Abraham, to bring in salvation to the whole household of faith (Galatians 3:16); and Christ was to be the Seed of David, in the actual fulfilment to Israel of all Messianic promises: for He was born into the "house and family" of David. In fact, He is named in the New Testament as Son of David a dozen times. It is from the sixteenth Psalm, concerning David, that Peter quotes in Acts 2:25-36; and Paul calls Christ David's Seed, quoting from the same Psalm in his first recorded sermon (Acts 13:16-41); although he addresses those Jews in Antioch as "children of the stock of Abraham." Christ was the Seed of the woman; He was also the Seed of Abraham; but He was born into this world of a virgin of the family of David (her betrothed husband being also of that fami1y), so that they both went to enroll themselves in the city of David, Bethlehem (Luke 2:4; Luke 2:5). "There is strong reason to believe that Mary, as well as Joseph, was a descendant of David. This was the persistent tradition of the early Church." --James Orr. "I do not doubt that Luke's is Mary's genealogy."--Darby.

Jesus Christ our Lord--Ten times in Romans Paul uses this title, or, "Our Lord Jesus Christ," that full name beloved by the apostles and all instructed saints from Pentecost onward: for "God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). Jesus, His personal name (Matthew 1:21) as Savior; Christ, God's Anointed One to do all things for us; Lord, His high place over us all for whom His work was done; and as, truly, Lord of all things in heaven and earth (Acts 10:36).

Romans 1:5 : Through whom we received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the nations for His name's sake--Personal grace must come before true service. The grace Paul had received concerned both his personal salvation and his service as the great example of divine favor. Paul's own words are the best comment on this: "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Corinthians 15:10); and, "I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all His longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on Him unto eternal life"

(1 Timothy 1:16). Paul’s apostleship was marked out by the fact that he had "seen Jesus our Lord" (1 Corinthians 9:1), and by the "signs of an apostle," in "authority," (2 Corinthians 10:8; 2 Corinthians 13:10), in "all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Corinthians 12:12). Though desperately resisted by the Jerusalem Judaizers, he continually insisted, to the glory of God, upon "obedience of faith among all the nations." To obey God’s good news, is simply to believe it. There is now a "law of faith" (Romans 3:27); and Paul ends this Epistle with this same wonderful phrase: "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26). Paul was not establishing what is now called "the Christian religion"! Having abandoned the only religion God ever gave, that of the Jews, [9] he went forth with a simple message concerning Christ, to be believed by everybody, anybody, anywhere. And all was "for His name’s sake" --Christ’s. And why not! The Christ of glory had done the work, had "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross." He was the "propitiation for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). We are likely to think of the gospel as something published for our sake only, whereas in fact God is having it published for the sake of His dear Son, Who died. It is sweet to enter into this, as did John: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name’s sake" (1 John 2:12). Preachers, teachers, and missionaries everywhere, should regard themselves as laboring for Christ’s Name’s sake, first of all.

[9] "By "religion" (threskeia): we mean that worship which is conducted through ceremonies. Paul, indeed, calls that worship, in Galatians 1:13; Galatians 1:14 Judaism--(Ioudaismos). James 1:26 uses the word threskeia, which primarily means, fear of the gods. The fundamental thought in "religion" is the performance of duties. In fact, the English word "religion" from Latin, religio, a binding, that is, to bind duties on one, and is an accurate setting forth of the original meaning. Now this was exactly what was not done in the gospel. "Religious" duties as Such were wholly set aside, and faith in the living Christ substituted. Strictly speaking, a believer is a man who has a Person, not a religion. The "Judaizers" were those professing to be Christians who were determined to fasten on Christian believers "Iaudaismos," as Paul calls it. The cross ended all that: the veil was rent, the way to God made wholly open, apart from "religious duties and ceremonies, days, seasons, months and years"!

Romans 1:6 : Among whom are ye also,--called as Jesus Christ’s--The saints are connected with Jesus Christ,--"called as of Him"; as we read in Romans 8:39 : Nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 1:7 : To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called as saints [10] --Note that while God loved the whole world, it is the saints who are called the "beloved of God." They are His household, His dear children. Sinners should believe that God loved them and gave His Son for them; but saints, that they are the "beloved of God." The unsaved are never named God’s "beloved." A man, even, may, and should, love his neighbors: but his wife and children are "his beloved."

[10] We might render these expressions: "Jesus Christ’s by calling," "saints by calling." Calling, in this sense, is always of God the Father, who appoints to each creature its own manner, character, and sphere of being.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ--Paul uses practically this same form of address over and over;--and he connects grace with peace in his apostolic greeting

to all the saints to whom he writes,--as does Peter. Grace is always pronounced as from "God our Father" as the Source, and "our Lord Jesus Christ" as the Channel and Sphere of Divine blessing. Sometimes grace for the Church is considered in the benediction as wholly from Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 16:23 : "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (see comment on "Romans 16:20"). For our Lord Jesus Christ is "Head over all things to the Church"; and life and judgment are distinctly said to be in His hands: "That all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (John 5:21-23). In writing to individuals,--Timothy, Titus, and "the elect lady," (2 John 1:1) Paul and John insert the more personal word, "mercy"; for we are told that we each need mercy (Hebrews 4:16). The saints, looked at as a company, have obtained, in general, mercy. Like Israel of old, the Church is now God’s sphere of blessing. But each individual--even Paul himself--has need of peculiar mercy (1 Corinthians 7:25).

Words fail to express the blessedness of being thus under God’s grace, His eternal favor! Such, such only, have peace. All other "peace" than that extended by God and possessed by the saints, will "break up," as Rutherford says, "at the last, in a sad war." And how wonderful to be of those whose Father is God! to whom the apostle can say in truth, "God our Father." Only those who have received Christ have the right (exousia) to become children (tekna--born ones) of God (John 1:12).

Grace and peace are eternally proceeding from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,--through and by whom all blessing comes.

8 First of all, indeed, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ concerning you all, because your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world! 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the good news of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, 10 always beseeching in my prayers, if by any means at last I may be so prospered in the course of the will of God as to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, for your establishing: 12 that is, that I with you may be comforted mutually, through each other’s faith, both yours and mine. 13 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come to you (and was hindered until the present time), in order that I might have some fruit in you also, just as among the other Gentiles. 14 To Greeks and to Barbarians both,--both to wise and foolish, I am debtor. 15 So to my very uttermost I am eager to preach the good news to you also in Rome.

Romans 1:8 : First of all, indeed, I give thanks to God through Jesus Christ concerning you all--"The apostle pursues the natural course of first placing himself, so to speak, in relation with his readers, and his first point of contact with them is gratitude [11] for their participation in Christianity," says DeWette. Paul is ever thanking God for any grace he found in any saint. He looks at all who are Christ’s, through Christ’s eyes, because your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Not fathered or founded by any apostle, the assemblies that God had Himself gathered from all quarters into the world’s capital [12] had a faith in Christ which was "spoken of," nay, announced as a wonder, throughout the whole Roman Empire. Announced, too, without steamship, without telegraph, without newspapers, without radio! God sees to it that a real work of His Spirit is published abroad, as it was with the Thessalonians: "From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth." So with every real revival: the whole world soon knows about it.

[11] "When one puts alongside of this (thanksgiving and prayer) the similar language used by Paul to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians,--what catholic love, what all-absorbing spirituality, what impassioned devotion to the glory of Christ, what incessant transaction with Heaven about the minutest affairs of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, are thus seen to meet in this wonderful man!"--David Brown.

[12] Matthew Henry well remarks, "The church at Rome was then a flourishing church; but since that time, how is the gold become dim! The Epistle to the Romans is now an epistle against the Romans."

Romans 1:9 : Paul made unceasing prayer for these believers. He calls God to witness concerning this, as he frequently does when his soul is most exercised. See 2 Corinthians 1:23; Php 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:10. The expression, Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, is striking and significant. Those who would make man to consist of but two parts, soul and body, cannot properly explain "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23); much less "the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12). The constant witness of Scripture is that man exists as a spirit living in a body, possessed of a soul. Paul's service to God was in his spirit, and therefore in the Holy Spirit, and never "soulical" (not psychikos, but pneumatikos-- 1 Corinthians 2:14; Jude 1:19, James 3:15. Paul did not depend on music, or architecture, or oratory, or rhetoric. He did not hold "inspirational" meetings to arouse the emotions to mystic resolves. He served God directly, in his spirit. It was the truth in the Holy Ghost he ministered, and the results were "that which is of the Spirit." The spirits of his hearers were born again; and the Spirit witnessed to their spirits that they were born-ones of God. Thus it was that Paul spoke of God's "witness" to him: it was to his spirit God witnessed. Furthermore, his serving was not by outward forms, as in Judaism, but in intelligent service (see Romans 12:1), that is, knowing God and Christ directly by the Holy Ghost.

Romans 1:10 : Paul was pleading with God to bring him, in His good time, to these Roman Christians. His prayers, subject to God's will, always tended to this: unceasingly . . . always beseeching . . . to come unto you.

Romans 1:11 : His knowledge that he could through the marvelous message entrusted to him, impart unto them some spiritual gift, for their establishing, was the root of his deep longing to come to them. "Spiritual gift" does not refer to the "gifts" of 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; but to such operation of the Holy Spirit when Paul with his message should come among them, as would enlarge and settle them in their faith. In the words "some spiritual gift," "we see not only the apostle's modesty, but an acknowledgment that the Romans were already in the faith, together with an intimation that something was still wanting in them"--(Lange).

Paul knew that there was in him by the grace of God peculiar apostolic power, by both his presence and the ministry of the Word, to "impart a gift" (Greek, charisma), or spiritual blessing. "I know that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ," he says later (Romans 15:29). So it has been in their measure with all the great men of God, the Augustines, the Chrysostoms, the Luthers, the Calvins, the Knoxes, the great Puritans, the Wesleys, the Whitefields; and, even in our own memory, the Finneys and Darbys and Moodys, as well as the Torreys and the Chapmans; who, by their very presence, through the spirit of faith that God had given them, and through the anointing of the Spirit conferred upon them, have in a wondrous way

banished the spirit of unbelief in great audiences; and made it easy for the saints to run rapidly in the way of the Lord; to become, as Paul says, "mutually comforted," the preacher and the saints together, each by the other's faith; with the result that saints became established, in the truth and in their walk, as they had not been before.

We today, also, have the written Word and the blessed Spirit of God. We have, in the power of that Spirit, through these wonderful epistles written direct to us, the very words and power of the apostle. As he says to the Corinthians, "For I verily, but present in spirit, have already, as though I were present judged," etc. (1 Corinthians 5:3). For all who are willing to hearken to God, who gave Paul to be the minister of the Church, the body of Christ; and the minister of the gospel of grace and of glory,--to all, I say, who really hearken, Paul's voice becomes audible and intelligent. [13]

[13] "We must keep the personal-letter spirit of Romans before us, if we are to be truly benefited by it. So we shall seek not only to teach doctrine with Paul, but to exhort response with him. We must not only teach, "Paul said so and so to the Roman Christians"; but, "Paul says so and so to us." And we must remember that as Paul told Timothy to teach, exhort, charge, command, rebuke, to be urgent in season and out of season,--so must we exhort, command, rebuke, who teach Paul to others.

Here, then, is the apostle who knew the great secret, the heavenly calling of the Church, writing to the saints at Rome, who, though they were of Christ's Body, and were, therefore, heavenly,--in creation, calling, and character, did not fully know these facts,--longing to see them that he might impart unto them "some spiritual gift, for their establishing"; and, at the end of the Epistle, announcing that God is able to establish them,--but, "according to the revelation of the mystery, which had been kept in silence through aionian times, but was now manifested." (See Romans 16:25-27.) The burden of Paul's heart, therefore, is to make known to them this heavenly secret: that they were not connected with the earthly, the Jewish calling; but were in the Risen, Heavenly Christ; that, having died to the first Adam with his responsibilities, they were in the Second Man, the Last Adam, by divine creation; and were, therefore, heavenly. True, this heavenly truth is not fully developed in Romans, yet it was according to it that they were to be "established."

Romans 1:12 : His coming, therefore, he says, is, that I with you may be comforted mutually, through each other's faith, both yours and mine: but of course their blessing would be unspeakably the greater, because of the mighty gift and grace God had vouchsafed to this apostle for them. Paul's way of speaking here is most humble, gentle, and persuasive.

Romans 1:13 : Oftentimes I purposed to come to you (and was hindered until the present time)--He desired them to know this, for he longed for fruit in them, such as he was finding everywhere he went, among Gentiles. In this he is a perfect ambassador of Christ, longing to be used everywhere. That yearning to be used in telling the gospel lies deep in the heart of one who knows it, so if you want to hear some man of God, begin to pray God to send him to you! As to Paul's having been "hindered" before from getting to Rome, we probably have an explanation in the course of labor that God had appointed to him: "From Jerusalem, and round about [through Asia Minor] even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the good tidings of Christ . . . Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you: but now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you," etc. (Romans 15:19, Romans 15:22, Romans 15:23). Sometimes it was Satan that hindered, (1 Thessalonians 2:18); but here,

evidently, superabundant labors, as directed of God, in other parts. Only those carrying God's message of grace to men know fully these great hindrances: the crying need of doors already open; the desperate opposition of the devil at the entrance to every door. That I might have some fruit in you also--Paul's constant yearning was for fruit unto God in the souls of others. This must. characterize all true ministers of Christ. In the degree that this yearning after fruit prevails, is the servant of God successful. "Give me Scotland or I die!" prayed John Welch, John Knox's son-in-law.

Romans 1:14 : To Greeks and to Barbarians both,--both to wise and foolish, I am debtor. Greeks [14] were those that spoke the Greek language and had the Greek culture, which had covered Alexander's world-wide empire; and in which culture the Romans themselves gloried. "Barbarians" were those not knowing Greek, and thus "uncultured." So also the "Scythians" (Colossians 3:11) were the especially wild and savage,--as we say, "Tartars."

[14] To the Jew the whole world was divided into Jews (Ioudaioi) and Greeks (Hellenes), religious prerogative being taken as the line of demarkation. To the Greek and the Roman the world was similarly divided into Greeks (Hellenes) and Barbarians (Barbaroi), civilization and culture being now the criterion of distinction." --(Lightfoot.)

"Wise and foolish" is more personal, not meaning merely educated and uneducated, but of all degrees of intelligence. Since Paul is debtor to all, he is enumerating all. And he must begin to pay his debt by setting forth the guilt of all; which he does (Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20). In the words "I am debtor" we have the steward's consciousness, --of being the trusted bearer of tidings of infinite importance directly from heaven; and Paul was "debtor" to all classes. He does not here mention Jews, because, although full of longing toward them, he had been sent distinctly to Gentiles: "The Gentiles unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes," etc., (Acts 26:17). How different Paul's spirit here from that of Moses in the wilderness among murmuring Israel!

"And Moses said unto Jehovah . . . Have I conceived all this people? have I brought them forth, that Thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father carrieth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their fathers? . . . I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have. found favor in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness" (Numbers 11:11-15).

We must remember that Moses, beloved faithful servant of God, walked under law. The ninetieth Psalm is the very expression of the forty years in the Wilderness:

"All our days are passed away in thy wrath:

We bring our years to an end as a sigh, For we are consumed in thine anger, And in thy wrath are we troubled.

Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, Our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." But here is Paul, gladly a "debtor" to all, with a message of glorious grace: "God was in Christ reconciling the world "unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all"; Christ "tasted death for every man." And not only this, but the hope of the heavenly calling is set before earthly men. We are here seeing "less than the least of all saints," the most wonderful

servant God ever had, willing to "become all things to all men to gain some!" But remember, it is not a wonderful man speaking, but Christ in Paul (Galatians 1:16). Our Lord said of His own ministry: "The Father abiding in me doeth His works." And so of the ministry of the Lord's chief servant!

Now when Paul proclaims himself a "debtor," what does he mean by this word? Was he a debtor in any different sense from what other and all Christians are? For we are all Christ's "witnesses." Let us see. When Moses had received the tables written with the finger of God, and the pattern of the Tabernacle for Israel, he was bound, he was a debtor, both to God and to Israel, to deliver those tables and that pattern, as given to him by God. To Paul, the risen, glorified Christ Himself had given the gospel by especial "revelation" (Galatians 1:11; Galatians 1:12); and Paul, as we know, was especially to go to the Gentiles, (as Peter, James and John were to go to the circumcision). Just as definitely as Moses received the Law for Israel, so Paul received the gospel for us, and he was a debtor, both to God and to us, till he had that gospel committed to all. How unutterably sad to find many professing Christians shutting their doors in the face of Paul as he comes t his debt--comes to tell them the glories of the heavenly message given to him,--the unsearchable riches of Christ. In his last epistle Paul mourns that "all that are in Asia"--of which Ephesus was the capital! --"turned away from me." So soon! (2 Timothy 1:15).

Romans 1:15 : So to my very uttermost I am eager to preach the good news to you also in Rome--How blessed is the readiness, yea, eagerness, of this holy apostle to pay his debt, to preach the good tidings to those also in Rome. Rome despised the Jews, and Paul was "little of stature," with "weak" bodily presence; and with "speech," or, as we say, "delivery," "of no account" in the proud carnal opinion of men (2 Corinthians 10:10). Moreover, he would be opposed by any Jews of wealth or influence in Rome. Furthermore, Rome was the center of the Gentile world: its emperors were soon to demand--and receive --worship; it was crowded with men of learning and culture from the whole world; it had mighty marchings;--great triumphal processions flowed through its streets. Rome shook the world.

Yet here is Paul, utterly weak in himself, and' with his physical thorn; yet ready, eager, to go, to Rome! And to preach,--what? A Christ that the Jewish nation had themselves officially rejected, a Christ who had been despised and crucified at their cries,-- by a Roman governor! To preach a Way that the Jews in Rome would tell Paul was "everywhere spoken against" (Acts 28:22).

Talk of your brave men, your great men, O world! Where in all history can you find one like Paul Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, marched with the protection of their armies to enforce their will upon men. Paul was eager to march with Christ alone to the center of this world's greatness entrenched under Satan, with "the Word of the cross," which he himself says is "to Jews, an offence; and to Gentiles, foolishness."

Yes, and when he does go to Rome, it is as a shipwrecked (though Divinely delivered) prisoner. Oh, what a story! There, "for two whole years" in his own "hired dwelling" he receives "all that go in unto him" (for he cannot go to them); and the message goes on and on, throughout the Roman Empire, and even into Caesar's household! And what is the secret of this unconquerable heart? Hear Paul: "Ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me." "To me, to live is Christ"; "It was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me"; "By the grace of God I am what I am"; "I labor, striving according to Christ's working, who worketh in me mightily"; "I am ready to spend and be

spent out (R.V., marg.) for your souls." There was no other path for Christ, nor is there any other for us His servants, but, "as much as in me is," "to my utmost." Those who belong in Paul's company are ever "assaying to go" (Acts 16:7), ever "ready"--to preach or to suffer (Acts 21:13).

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For God's righteousness on the principle of faith to [such as have] faith is revealed in it [the gospel]: just as it is written, "The righteous on the principle of faith shall live."

Here we have the text of the whole Epistle of Romans: First, the words "the gospel"--so dear to Paul, as will appear. Next, the universal saving power of this gospel is asserted. Then, the secret of the gospel's power--the revelation of God's righteousness on the principle of faith. Finally, the accord of all this with the Old Testament Scriptures: "The righteous shall live by faith."

It will assist our study to notice at once the four "For"s in the apostle's argument: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel," [15] "For it is the power of God unto salvation," "For a righteousness of God is revealed in it"; and the "for" of the next verse, which makes this gospel necessary: "For the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men."

[15] "All philosophy is a perfect delusion; intellect has nothing to do with God at all. Faith is never in the intellect; and, what is more, the intellect never knows a truth. Truth is not the object of intellect, but of testimony. This is where the difference lies. You tell me something and I believe you, but the thing that receives truth (a testimony) is not intellect. Real intelligence of God is in the conscience. The mind is incapable of forming an idea of God, and that is where the philosophers have gone wrong,"--This word by Mr. Darby is the very truth!

Romans 1:16 : For I am not ashamed of the gospel--First then, we have Paul's willingness, all unashamed, to go to Rome, mistress of the world, with this astonishing message of a crucified Nazarene, despised by Jews, and put to death by Romans. "The inherent glory of the message of the gospel, as God's life-giving message to a dying world, so filled Paul's soul, that, like his blessed Master, he despised the shame.'" So, praise God, may all of us! For it is the power of God unto salvation--The second "For" gives the reason for Paul's boldness: this good news concerning Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearing, "is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." There is no fact for a preacher or teacher to hold more constantly in his mind than this. It is not the "excellency of speech or wisdom," or the "personal magnetism," or "earnestness," of the preacher; any more than it is the deep repentance or earnest prayers of the hearer, that avails. But it is the message of Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen, which, being believed, is "the empower of God"! "The word [16] of the cross is to them that are perishing, foolishness; but unto us who are being saved it (the word of the cross) IS the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

[16] "Notice, it is not the cross. Romanists put the cross on the top of the cathedral; millions wear a figure of the cross around their necks; but they may never have heard "the word of the cross." As Paul says further in 1 Corinthians 1:23, "We preach Christ crucified, [not the cross, merely] unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." As one has said, "Not to Thy cross, but to Thyself, My living Savior, would I cling!

Twas Thou, and not Thy cross, that bore My soul's dark guilt, sin's deadly sting.

"A Christless cross no refuge were for me; A crossless Christ my Savior could not be:

But, O CHRIST CRUCIFIED, I rest in Thee!"

Again we repeat that it is of the very first and final importance that the preacher or teacher of the gospel believe in the bottom of his soul that the simple story, Christ died for our sins, was buried, hath been raised from the dead the third day, and was seen, IS THE POWER OF GOD to salvation to every one who rests in it,--who believes! The word gospel (evaggelion), means good news, glad tidings,-- of course, about love and grace in giving Christ; and Christ's blessed finished work for the sinner, putting away sin on the Cross. (There is no other good news for a sinner!) The other word, for "preached," is kerusso, which properly means to proclaim as a herald, to publish. And if we would understand Paul's attitude in preaching the good news, we must not forget what he says in 1 Corinthians 1:21 : The reading in 1 Corinthians 1:21 should be, "God was pleased through the foolishness of the proclaiming to save them that believe." The word (kerusso) means, to announce as a herald, to proclaim. It does not carry the thought of the proclamation's content, of a glad message, as does the other word (evangelidzo). Therefore God selects the word kerusso to show in the great message 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 how he absolutely passes by the intellect of man, and sets aside all his possible reasoning, ability, philosophy and wisdom--in this amazing way: "by the proclaiming"! Here comes a small and weak Jew upon the assembly of the earth's "wise" at Mars' hill: "proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection." It is "foolishness" to them. Yet "certain men"--including one Mars' hill philosopher, and a prominent woman, and others with them, cleave unto him and believe the proclamation, and will spend eternity with God.

No; when you reflect on God's plan of proclamation--of Christ, dead, buried, raised, living: it does get right past everything of man. A herald --he does not stop to argue--he has a message; yonder he is; here he comes; yonder he goes--and the message is left. Man is set aside!

It pleased God through the proclaiming to save them that believe! Praise God! Anyone can hear good news!

Therefore the herald does not hearken either to "Jews," who would say, "We have wonderful forms of religion.; we have a great temple!" No, the herald proclaims "a Messiah crucified" by these very Jews!--and passes on! Nor does he hearken to the "disputers of this age"--the "wise," who call to him, "We have a new philosophy to discuss--let us hear your philosophical system." No; he proclaims a crucified, dead, buried and risen Son of God, and passes on. And as many as are ordained to eternal life will believe. All others are offended, or stirred to ridicule.

Paul's preaching was not, as is so much today, general disquisition on some subject, but definite statements about the crucified One, as he himself so insistently tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

"The power of God unto salvation" is a wonderful revelation! As Chrysostom says, "There is a power of God unto punishment, unto destruction: Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'" (Matthew 10:28). "The use of the word power' here, as in 1 Corinthians 1:24, carries a superlative sense,--the highest and holiest vehicle of divine power" (Alford). This story of Christ's dying for our sins, buried, raised, manifested, is the great wire along which runs God's mighty current of saving power. Beware lest you be putting up some little wire of your own, unconnected

with the Divine throne, and therefore non-saving to those to whom you speak. T. DeWitt Talmadge said at the funeral of Alfred Cookman, one of the most holy, devoted men of God America has known, "Strike a circle of three feet around the cross of Jesus, and you have all there was of Alfred Cookman." The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation." God does not say, unto reformation, education, progress, nor development; nor "fanning an innate flame." Salvation is a word for a lost man, and for none other. Men are involved either in salvation, or in its opposite, perdition (Php 1:28). To the Jew first and also to the Greek--The Jew had the Law. They had the temple, with its divinely prescribed worship. Heretofore, if a Gentile were to be saved, let him become a proselyte and come to Jerusalem to worship as did the Ethiopian eunuch. Christ came "to His own things" (John 1:11), to Jerusalem, to His Father's house (literally, "the things of My Father"). The apostles were to be witnesses--beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The Holy Spirit fell upon the hundred and twenty at Jerusalem. Upon the persecution that arose in Jerusalem from Stephen, the disciples "were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles," but Jerusalem was the gospel's first center, then Antioch in Syria, whence Paul and Barnabas, afterwards Paul and Silas, went forth. Afterwards, the center of God's operations was Ephesus, the capital of proconsular Asia, where after being rejected by the Jews in many cities, Paul separates the disciples, and all distinction between Jew and Greek in the assemblies of the saints is gone. Then he goes to Jerusalem to be finally and officially rejected--killed, if it were possible. God waits two years at Caesarea for Jewish repentance: there is none, but the direct opposite. Then the apostle, having been driven into the hands of the Romans by the Jews goes to Rome, the world's center, only to have the Jews reject his teaching (Acts 28). Thereupon it is announced: "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear."

Therefore, in expressing to the Jew first, Paul is not at all prescribing an order of presentation of the gospel throughout this dispensation. He is simply recognizing the fact that to the Jew, who had the Law and Divine privileges, the gospel offer had first been presented, and then to the Gentile. As Paul says in Ephesians "And He came and preached peace to you that were far off [the Gentile], and peace to them that were nigh [the Jews]" (Ephesians 2:17). We might just as sensibly claim that Ephesians 2:17 gives Gentiles priority because they are mentioned first--"you that were afar" over the Jews who were mentioned last,--"them that were nigh." To claim that the gospel must be preached first to the Jew throughout this dispensation, is utterly to deny God's Word that there is now no distinction between Jew and Greek either as to the fact of sin (Romans 3:22) or the availability of salvation (Romans 10:12). Paul's words in Galatians 4:12 are wholly meaningless if the Jews still have a special place. The meaning of the word "first" (pr ton) is seen in verse 8 of our chapter: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all." That is, thanksgiving to God was the first thing Paul wrote to the Romans in this Epistle. Then he proceeds to other things. It is an order of sequence; just as the gospel came "first" to the Jew and then to Greek, and now, since the "no difference" fact, is proclaimed to all indiscriminately, Jews and Greeks.

Romans 1:17 : For God's righteousness on the principle of faith to [such as have] faith is revealed in it [the gospel]: just as it is written, "The righteous on the principle of faith shall live." This third "For" gives another reason why Paul was not ashamed of the good news [17] : in this message concerning God's Son,--that He died for our sins, was buried, was raised,--there was brought to

light,--made manifest--a righteousness of God which had indeed been prophesied, but was really (especially to the Jew under law) absolute news: [18] God acting in righteousness, as we shall find, wholly on the basis of Christ's atoning work,--to be believed in, rested upon, apart from all human works whatever. It was on the principle of faith [19] by means of a message, and those exercising faith in the message would be reckoned righteous,--apart from all "merit" or "works" whatever. This is the meaning of "from faith unto faith"--literally, out of faith [rather than works] unto [those who have] faith.

[17] "In these days of "respectable" Christianity, with its great cathedrals, churches, denominations, colleges, seminaries, "uplift movements," etc., you may say, Men no longer have any temptation to be "ashamed of the gospel." But lo, and behold, it is not the gospel they preach; but a man-reforming, world-mending message of fallen flesh! Who today preaches of the wrath of God? But Paul speaks of wrath twelve times in Romans, and says: "If God visit not with wrath, He cannot be the Judge of the world." Who preaches of the awful things we are about to find true of the Gentile world in the end of this chapter? Who preaches, that even among the moral philosophers, the "better" classes (in the first part of Romans 2:1-29); or the "religious" world as represented by the Jew (last part of Romans 2:1-29); or in the whole world (Romans 3:10-20), that "none is righteous," "none doeth good"? Who preaches that the whole world is under the Divine sentence of guilt, and that no man is able to put this guilt away? that the shed blood of Christ as the vicarious sacrifice for human guilt is absolutely the only hope of man? who preaches this, today? Here and there, one! It is blessed for you, brother, if you are preaching the gospel Paul preached, and are not ashamed thereof! It is blessed if you art not sucking the poison-honey of Modernism; nor allured by earth's Kagawas into the fool's paradise of the "social-gospellers"; nor deceived by the Neo-Romanists,-- the Man-Confessionalists, the Buchmanites (falsely called the "Oxford Movement"). Better be in prison with Paul, with Paul's gospel!

[18] Note, it is the righteousness of God, not the righteousness of Christ. It is God's acting righteously upon the basis of Christ's redeeming work.

[19] A word concerning the preposition ek as used in Romans 1:17, "a righteousness of God from (ek) faith," etc., or "faithwise." There has been much objection to the translation of ek by "on the principle of"; yet that is about the expression nearest to the truth of any we have found, unless it be "faithwise." Literally, ek means out of, or from. We ourselves use "out of" thus: "He acted out of prudence," --(as animated by that principle) or, "He gave out of kindness." But it is of imperative importance that we get the great fact quickly and forever fixed in our hearts that God declares men righteous not by faith as the procuring cause, for the blood of Christ was that; not by faith as the putting forth of a certain faculty innate in man, much less by the keeping of divine commands, however holy and just; but out of reliance upon His own word as true, and on that alone. The "For" of Romans 1:17, For God's righteousness therein is revealed--in the gospel,--is also a logical setting forth of the reason why the good news concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is the power of God unto salvation. And this verse is the essence of the text of the whole Epistle: "Therein God's righteousness is revealed."

God could have come forth in righteousness and smitten with doom the whole Adamic race. He would have been acting in accordance with His holiness: it would have been "the righteousness of God" unto judgment, and would have been just. But God, who is love, though infinitely holy and

sin-hating, has chosen to act toward us in righteousness, in a manner wherein all His holy and righteous claims against the sinner have been satisfied upon a Substitute, His own Son. Therefore, in this good news, (1) Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (2) He was buried, (3) He hath been raised the third day according to the Scriptures, (4) He was manifested (1 Corinthians 15:3 ff),--in this good news there is revealed, now openly for the first time, God’s righteousness on the principle of faith. We simply hear and believe: and, as we shall find, God reckons us righteous; our guilt having been put away by the blood of Christ forever, and we ourselves declared to be the righteousness of God in Him!

Habakkuk prophesied of it (Paul quotes him in Romans 1:17); but ah, how little he dreamed of the fulness and wonder of it! It is the gospel that brings these to light! And now in the next section (Romans 1:18 ff) will come Paul’s fourth "For": showing man’s frightful state of guilt; and his need of the gospel:

02.02. Chapter 1B

CHAPTER 1B

18 For there is revealed God’s wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness [of life]; 19 because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, made known to the mind by the things that are made, are clearly perceived,--both His eternal power and divinity; so as to render them inexcusable: 21 because, though knowing God, they did not glorify [Him] as God, nor were they thankful [towards Him] but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of quadrupeds, and of creeping things.

It will not only fail to help us, but will seriously harm us, to study the awful arraignment of God against human sin, unless we apply it to ourselves, thereby discovering our own state by nature. Therefore we have sought to make plain these terms which Paul uses, in view of today’s sin. Christendom is rapidly losing sin-consciousness, which means losing God-consciousness; which means eternal doom: "As were the days of Noah . . . as it came to pass in the days of Lot . . . they knew not." Because iniquity abounds, the love of many professing Christians is waxing cold; so that we see a Sardis condition everywhere, "a name to live, while dead": on many faces, the horrid lack of spiritual life; the lightless, sightless eyes; the chill,--the corpse-like chill, of the lifeless, the unfeeling. On the other hand, among God’s real saints, those born from above and indwelt by the Spirit of God, there is everywhere, thank God, a gathering, an eagerness, a hunger for His Word, for news from Home,--for their citizenship is in Heaven!

Therefore let all who have ears to hear give the utmost attention to what God says about our state by nature. Do not apply the threefold "God gave them up" of Romans One to "the heathen," as most do. Behold, we are those of whom God says: "There is no distinction: all sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ALL are brought under the judgment of God. O saints, beware of the "select" circles, the "we-are-better" societies of pride! For all human beings are alike sinners: for "The Scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Galatians 3:22). The more you discover yourself to be a common sinner, the more you will realize God’s uncommon grace! And the more deeply you despair of man, of yourself, the more simple and easy it will be to rest in Christ and in His work of salvation for you.

Romans 1:18 : Wrath revealed from heaven--This is the tenor of all Scripture as to God’s attitude toward defiant sin. "Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven," we read in Genesis 19:24. We know that "God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world" (Acts 17:31); that He will "visit with wrath" at that time (Romans 3:5).

However, in the thrice-repeated "God gave them over" of verses Romans 1:24, Romans 1:26 and Romans 1:28, there is to be seen the character, the beginning, and the working of God's wrath in this world, in His judicial handing over of rebels to go further into rebellion. But the awful arraignment of humanity in Chapters One, Two, and Three; together with the particular account of their apostasy and lost condition, however terrible it be, is not a description of the finally damned, but of the at-present-lost: and, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." "Such were some of you," says Paul to the Corinthians, after an enumeration of those who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). "Effeminate, and abusers of themselves with men," the very kind of sinners described in our chapter, are in this enumeration. Let us admit, therefore, the judicial "delivering over" of humanity which has "exchanged the glory" of the God they knew for horrid idolatrous conceptions,--a present judicial action of God on earth, where and when He "lets men go their own way." But let us distinguish this apart from the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God from Heaven. At the Great White Throne of Revelation Twenty there will be no liberty left to the creature to indulge his lusts as in this present world. The lusts, indeed, will remain, and probably intensify forever: "He that is filthy, let him be made filthy yet more"; but the ability to indulge lust will be eternally removed, and the damned placed under the visitation of Divine anger.

Thank God, we may still cry with Paul, "Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!" Grace is still ready to reach the worst wretch on earth!

Note that ungodliness is direct disregard of God, which to the Jew would connect itself with the first table of the Law, the first four commandments; while unrighteousness has reference to wickedness of conduct, in itself and toward other men. Note further that it is distinctly said that the human race, in order to live an unrighteous life, held down the truth. The meaning of the verb translated "hold down" is seen in its use in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 : "Ye know that which restraineth," referring to the present restraining of the sin and wrath of man by the Spirit of God. It is also true, turning this about, that man in his wickedness restrains the truth he knows. (See also same word in Luke 4:42, "would have stayed Him.") Almost all men know more truth than they obey. They call themselves "truth seekers"; but would they attend a meeting where Paul preached the facts of this first of Romans?

Romans 1:19 : That which is known of God is manifest . . . God made it evident--Noah's father, Lamech, was for over fifty years a contemporary of Adam. Knowledge of God was held and imparted by tradition from the beginning. The fact that the "world that then was" became so corrupt as to necessitate destruction (Hebrew, "blotting out," Genesis 6:7, margin), only supports the awful account. Not only was the world bad unto judgment at the time of the Flood; but the world after Noah became such that God called out His own (from Abraham on) to a separate, pilgrim life. Sodom, and later the Canaanites, again filled up iniquity's measure and were "sent away from off the face of the earth" (Jeremiah 28:16). Utter uncompromising, abandonment of hope in man is the first preliminary to understanding or preaching the gospel. Man says, "I am not so bad; I can make amends"; "There are many people worse than I am"; "I might be better, but I might be worse." But God's indictment is sweeping: it reaches all. "None righteous; all have sinned; there is no distinction." And the first step of wisdom is to listen to the worst God says about us, for He (wonderful to say!) is the Lover of man, sinner though man be. You and I were born in this lost race, with all these evil things innate in, and, apart from the grace of God, possible to us. "The

heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately wicked." Only redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, can afford hope.

Romans 1:20 : For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world . . . are clearly perceived--"The heavens declare the glory of God." But humanity today prefers Hollywood's "sound-pictures" to seeing the "things" of the glorious God in the heavens,--beholding His works, and hearing their speech. How long since you have gone out and gazed at moon and stars, made by the blessed God, travelling in such quiet glory, beauty, power, and order? Men know, if they care to know, that an infinite Majesty made and controls this. Even His eternal power and divinity [20] --Paul connects the observing of the mighty and beautiful things of the universe with the consciousness of a personal God. [21] Human science, through its telescope, observes the vast courses of the stars, moving with amazing accuracy in their orbits, but often counts it a mark of wisdom to doubt whether an intelligent Being exists at all! But, "the undevout astronomer is mad," as said the great Kepler. No really great scientist today supports the Darwinian theory; and many,--and some of the most prominent scientific men are saying, There must be a God, a Creator. [22]

[20] Divinity (theiotes)--what pertains to God; rather than deity (theotes)--"the state of being God":--the Godhead. That there is divinity, men know from creation; God,--the Godhead, Deity, is known by His saints.

[21] We cannot refrain from quoting here Joseph Addison's beautiful hymn. Would that it were widely learned and sung today! The spacious firmament on high, With all the blue ethereal sky, And spangled heavens, a shining frame, Their great Original proclaim. The unwearied sun, from day to day, Doth his Creator's power display, And publishes to every land, The work of an Almighty Hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail, The moon takes up the wondrous tale, And nightly to the listening earth Repeats the story of her birth;

Whilst all the stars that round her burn, And all the planets in their turn, Confirm the tidings as they roll, And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all Move round this dark terrestrial ball?

What though no real voice nor sound Amidst their radiant orbs be found? In reason's ear they all rejoice, And utter forth a glorious voice:

Forever singing, as they shine, "The Hand that made us is Divine."

[22] Read "Does Science Support Evolution" by Dr. E. Ralph Hooper, for many years Demonstrator of Anatomy at the University of Toronto (The Defender Publishers, Wichita, Kansas, U. S. A.; 50 cents). It gives an astonishing amount of accurate testimony.

Next the reason for God's wrath is stated: men are without excuse--Men had the light, and that from God. His eternal power and divinity were, from creation onward, plain to men, from His works. Napoleon, on a warship in the Mediterranean on a star-lit night, passed a group of his officers who were mocking at the idea of a God. He stopped, and sweeping his hand toward the stars, said, "Gentlemen, you must get rid of those first!" Men secretly believe there is a Power above them,

and that their evil deeds deserve the wrath of that Power. In sudden peril, they scream like the guilty wretches they are, "God have mercy!" Knowledge of God, though not acquaintanceship with Him, lay behind Pharaoh's words, "I have sinned against Jehovah and against you" (Exodus 10:16); and behind the words of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4:7; 1 Samuel 4:8; 1 Samuel 5:7; 1 Samuel 5:8; 1 Samuel 5:11; and the proclamation of the King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:7-9).

Romans 1:21 : Because that, though knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful--Every human being knows he ought to give his being over to his Creator's worship and glory, and ought to be continually thankful for life itself, and for its blessings; but men refused both worship and gratitude: they became godless and thankless. But they could not free themselves thus easily from conscience and terrors: so came on idolatry. First they resorted to vain speculations and "reasonings," to escape the thought of God and duty. Then the judicial result: as Alford well renders, "Their heart (the whole inner man, the seat of knowledge and feeling), became dark (lost the little light it had), and wandered blindly in the mazes of folly." Think of a whole race of created beings knowing, but refusing to recognize, their Creator! of their eating from His hand daily, but refusing even one thanksgiving! Yet such ungodly ones, such unthankful ones, are all about you, now.

Romans 1:22 : Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools-- Rejecting the light of God's knowledge in their consciences, men now arrogated to themselves wisdom, and became--what? Fools! [23] "The fear of the Lord is the beginning" --of both knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 15:33; Psalms 111:10; Job 28:28).

[23] "Fools": "This is Paul, the writer's (that is, to say God's) estimate of the philosophers and religious leaders of the race. Paul knew the boasted wisdom of the Euphrates and of the Nile, the learning of Hellas, and of Rome. We know it today. But there is this difference: there are those in our time who see no generic difference between these ethnic sages and the prophets of God, while Paul declares the former to be but fools'."--(Stifler). The silliness of these "modern" shallow-pan days! How men are rushing back to the old pagan pit out of which God's Word and His gospel would have delivered them! They suck up sin; they welter in wickedness; they profess to be wise! They sit at the feet of "professors" whose breath is spiritual cyanide. They idolize the hog-sty doctrines of a rotten Freud: [24] and count themselves "wise"! They say, "God is not a person; men evolved from monkeys; morals are mere old habits; self-enjoyment, self-expression, indulgence of all desires--this," they say, "is the path of wisdom." It is the path of those who go quickly down to the pit and on to judgment! The very morals of Sodom, as our Lord foretold, are rushing fast upon us, and God will bring again the awful doom of Sodom (Luke 17:28-31).

[24] Crucifying Christ in Our Colleges, by Dan Gilbert, shows the monstrous doctrines of this evil "educator," whose influence is so great with many colleges and universities in the United States today. May God keep Freud's filthy feet from our shores!

Now if someone objects, saying, This is a strange introduction to the gospel of God's grace, we answer, It lies here before us, this awful indictment of Romans One, and cannot be evaded! Moreover, until man knows his state of sin, he wants no grace. Shall pardon be spoken of before the sinner is proved a sinner? While the evidence is being brought in, the whole attention of the court is upon that. If the evidence of guilt be insufficient or inconclusive, there is no necessity for a pardon!

Preachers and teachers have soft-pedalled sin, until the fear Of God is vanishing away. McCheyne used to Say, "A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God" A preacher who avoids telling men the truth about their sin as here revealed, is the best tool of the devil.

Romans 1:23 : And changed the glory of the incorruptible God--Incorruptibility is of the essence of God’s being. From the beginningless eternity past to the endless eternity to come, He is the glorious self-existent One. Now came the high insult: having rejected knowledge of God, but unable to escape the consciousness that He exists, men, like Israel later, "changed their glory for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass" (Psalms 106:20). The more you reflect upon the infinite glory and majesty of the eternal God, the more hideous will the unspeakable insult to Him of any kind of idolatry appear to you! Men first likened God to man; but, being given over, they rushed rapidly downwards: a bird, a quadruped; and finally, a reptile!

Vincent remarks "Deities of human form prevailed in Greece; those of bestial form in Egypt; and both methods of worship were practiced in Rome. See on Acts 7:41. Serpent-worship was common in Chaldaea, and also in Egypt, where the asp was sacred." Israel evidently learned calf-worship from Egypt’s sacred bull. [25]

[25] Mahatma Gandhi, he of the horrible, toothless, diabolical grin of conceited folly; having been educated in England, and having heard the gospel and read the Scriptures, and rejected their light: sits on the deck of the steamer returning from India--doing what? Forming mud images with his own hands! A self-advertising illustration of the idolater’s heart-conception of the glorious incorruptible God.

24 Wherefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, so that their bodies were dishonored among themselves: 25 such ones as they! who changed the truth of God into the lie! and worshipped and served the created thing rather than the Creator, Who is blessed unto the ages! Amen. 26 On account of this, God gave them over to shameful passions: for their females [26] changed the natural use into that contrary to nature: 27 and in like manner also the males [27] having left the natural use of the females, were inflamed in their lust one toward another, males with males working out shame, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was due.

[26] The Greek words used here are not the noble ones meaning men and women; but those denoting sex only, as in lower creatures. (For many examples, see theleioi and arsenes in Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon.) This passage has deep significance in this day of the "sex-craze": when, as some one says, "Human beings seem to be just beginning to realize that they are male and female." The first of Romans warns of what such a craze will end in!

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Romans 1:24 : God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts. This is deeper than the mere lusts of the flesh. Flesh has natural desires, which may or may not be yielded to. The lusts of the heart continue after the flesh is dissolved; and even when, in the tormented bodies of the damned, the

lusts of the flesh cannot be conscious or controlling, "the lusts of the heart" will forever exist.

Notice that when man is delivered from Divine restraint, the lusts of his heart plunge him into ever deeper bodily uncleanness, and bodily vileness. History backs up this fact with terrible relentlessness. What an answer is here to all the boasting of proud men of a "principle of development" in man; to the lying claim that man is ever "making progress." The "Golden Age" of Grecian literature, and that of Roman letters,--in both of them we find remarkable minds; but their works must be expurgated for decent readers! No printer, even in this corrupt age, would dare to publish books with literal descriptions of the orgies of "classical" days.

Romans 1:25 : For they changed the truth of God into the lie--That God is glorious, incorruptible, infinite, is the truth; that any image whatsoever, be it gold, silver, wood, stone; picture or symbol, is God,--God here names this the lie! [28] Any such thing, connected with worship, is a fearful travesty of the divine Majesty. Think of it! They worshipped and served the created thing rather than the Creator--who made the creature! This is that desperate hiding away from God by wicked-hearted man, called idolatry. (See Appendix III in the author's "Book of the Revelation.") [29] Who is blessed unto the ages. Amen. Paul's adding these humble, worshipful words after "Creator" both glorifies God and also differentiates Paul from the abandoned devotees of sin thronging the dark alley of human history; showing him to be a child of light, as is every real saint of God, though passing through a world of thick darkness.

[28] The expression in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 is exactly the same: God sends them who refuse the love of the truth "a working of error, that they should believe the lie": in this final case it is the apotheosis of idolatry,-- Satan's false Christ, the Antichrist, himself a lost man, whom they worship!

[29] There is no Scripture record of idolatry before the Flood. The solemn presence of the Cherubim at the gate of Eden, probably continued long. Sin was increasing, but the Spirit was striving with man (Genesis 6:3 Then the 120 years passed; man was given up and the Deluge-judgment came. After the Deluge, came Nimrod, son of Cush (hence Bar-Cush, which becomes Bacchus), and the Satan-invented plan of idols to obscure God,--by demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). God permitted this as a judgment on a race that did not desire knowledge of Him.

Romans 1:26 : For the second time we read, God gave them over--and now, unto shameful passions--There are natural and normal appetites of the body: God is not speaking of these, or even of the abuse of these,--adultery or harlotry--in this verse. He is describing that state of unnatural appetites in which all normal instincts are left behind. And it is significant, that, as originally woman took the lead in sin, so here!

Romans 1:27 : Here men are seen visited with a like condign, judicial "giving up" by God, in which they forget not only the holy relations of marriage, but even the burnings of ordinary lust, and plunge into nameless horrors of unnatural lust-bondage, all, males and females, receiving in themselves the due recompense of their error. Compare "among themselves" of Romans 1:24, with "in themselves" of Romans 1:27 : "These words bring out," as Godet remarks, "the depth of the blight. It is visible to the eyes of all." And Meyer also: "The law of history, in virtue of which the forsaking of God is followed among men by a parallel growth of immorality, is not a purely natural

order of things; the power of God is active in the execution of this law."

What a fearful account is here! A lost race plunging ever deeper, by their own desire! Left in shameful, horrid bondage, unashamed,--not only immoral, but unmoral, hideous. Missionaries abroad can tell you of what they find; as can the Christian workers in our great cities. But you would be unprepared to believe what exists, in the private lives of many, even in country districts through Christendom. And if God has "made you to differ," thank Him only! It will not do to hold up your hands in self-righteous dismay, and say, These verses do not in any particular describe me. For God will show you and me that this is exactly the race as we were born into it, and out of which the only rescue is being born again. All these things pertain to lost, fallen man. Man is a tenant of the earth only by Divine grace, since the Deluge. [30]

[30] "Few, perhaps, realize what is going on right here in America (not Russia) in these last days. Read these two extracts: From Children of the Jungle, by Thos. Minbaugh, Prof. of Sociology, University of Minnesota. (Reprinted in Reader's Digest, 1935): "Child tramps learn all about life--and who can do that and ignore sex? More and more girls are following their brethren on the bum; about one tribe in ten has female members. About one child tramp in 20 is a girl, disguised usually in breeches, but just as appallingly homeless as the boys, and young-- under twenty. They live in the jungles and boxcars, serving as mistresses and maids, sharing the joys and sorrows of life on the roads. They treat all boys and men alike; the girls are available to any and all in the camp. Occasionally a pair of girls travel with a gang for weeks; others prefer variety. They go from jungle to jungle without discrimination; they know they will be welcome." From The Disinherited, by J. Pegano, Scribner's, also reprinted in Reader's Digest: "I visited the jungle,' a mile or so out of town. All men who are on the bum' have a certain similarity--a lean and sullen look. [Describes some] . . . and a hatchet-faced man whom I recognized to be what is known among men on the bum, as a wolf. A wolf' is a man who picks up young boys on the toad, for reasons it is not necessary to go into. There are hundreds of wolves' on the road, and thousands of boys fall a prey to them."

28 And just as they did not approve to have God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a mind disapproved [of Him],--to practise things not befitting [His creatures]; 29 having become filled with all injustice, destructiveness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, guile, malignant subtlety; secret slanderers, 30 open slanderers, hateful to God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of bad things; without obedience to parents, 31 without [moral] understanding, without good faith, without affection for kindred, without [consent to] truce, without mercy: 32 who, conscious of the righteous decree of God that those practising such things are worthy of [the sentence of] death, not only keep on practising the same, but also are pleased with those that are practising them.

Romans 1:28 : Here we have for the third time the judicial utterance, God gave them over. This time it is to a settled state, a reprobate mind. There is such a solemn irony in the manner of speech in the Greek, that it should be brought out as well as the English will allow. Alford translates it: "Because they reprobated the knowledge of God, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Conybeare renders it: "As they thought fit to cast out the knowledge of God, God gave them over to an outcast mind." We might render it: To a mind disapproved of God, since they did not approve knowing God. And given over to do what? To live lives, think thoughts, be such creatures,

as are not befitting the universe of the blessed God; and most particularly not befitting man, who was created in God’s image. In the following verses, Romans 1:29-32, three things are seen: first, some nine phases or developments of human sin (Romans 1:29); second, the kind of people it makes (Romans 1:29-31); and third, the fearful human conspiracy or agreement of wickedness of man against God (Romans 1:32). Let us mark each carefully. (The student of Greek may well study the roots of these twenty-two nouns and adjectives, given in the footnote). [31]

[31] 1. adikia; 2. poneria; 3. pleonexia; 4. kakia; 5. phthonou; 6. phonou; 7. eridos; 8. dolou; 9. kakoetheias; 10. psithuristas; 11. katalalous; 12. theostugeis; 13. hybristas; 14. hyperephanous; 15. aladzonas; 16. epheuretas kakOn; 17. goneusin apeitheis; 18. asunetous; 19. asunethetous; 20. astorgous; 21. asponpdous; 22. aneleemonas And remember God says men are filled with all these things! And not only so: they are filled without restraint or limit! "With all unrighteousness, all destructiveness," etc.

Romans 1:29-31 : l. all injustice--Selfishness, enthroned against all rights of others.

2. destructiveness--The same word is used to describe Satan and his hosts: "the evil one," "hosts of wickedness," in Ephesians 6:12; Ephesians 6:16. It denotes wickedness in hostile activity.

3. covetousness--literally, the itch for more. "(a) Claiming more than one’s due, greedy, grasping; (b) making gain from others’ losses; (c) the act of over-reaching by selfish tricks. To take advantage of another’s simpleness, to over-reach, defraud." - Liddell and Scott. Lightfoot says, "Impurity and covetousness may be said to divide between them nearly the whole domain of selfishness and vice." Vincent distinguishes between covetousness and avarice: "The one is the desire of getting, the other of keeping." Paul constantly defines covetousness as idolatry, worship of another object than God; and associates it with the vilest sins (1 Corinthians 5:11; Ephesians 5:3; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Many professing Christians are withering in a blight because of this unjudged sin.

4. malice--"malignity, maliciousness, desire to injure" (Thayer).

5. full of envy--The apostle takes another full breath here, beginning anew this hell-meat catalog. Envy is the hate that arises in the heart toward one who is above us, who is what we are not, or possesses that, which we cannot have, or do not choose the path to attain. "Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Him." He was holy and good, which they pretended to be, and knew they were not,--nor really chose to be.

6. murder--How strikingly the Holy Spirit brings these words, envy, murder, which sound so alike in the Greek,--phthonou, phonou--into the order and connection which they constantly sustain in life.

7. strife--Literally, beating down in wrangling and contention. How "full of strife," indeed, is this human race!

8. guile--Jesus called Nathaniel "an Israelite in whom is no guile" (John 1:47). The Greek word means "a bait for fish," and so, to catch with a bait, to beguile. So in what is called "business" today, men are baited and lured: and "society" lives by it! This is the human heart.

9. malignant subtlety--The Genevan New Testament renders it, "Taking all things in an evil sense."

10. secret slanderers--By this Greek word of hissing sound (psithuristas), the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) renders the Hebrew lahash: "a snake-charmer's magical murmuring.'" Let those privately peddling evil reports, remember that God views their tongue as the slithering of the adder! It is remarkable how secret slanderers can "charm" others (fitted thereto by their evil nature) into believing their slanders. We heard of a modest, excellent young woman secretly slandered by a jealous rival. She could not overcome the falsehood, and died within a year.

11. open slanderers--Literally, those who speak against, incriminate, traduce. See its use in 1 Peter 2:12. Many openly rail at others--especially if their own lives are condemned by theirs.

12. hateful to God--Hateful toward God, because haters of God. The word means to show as well as to feel such hatred: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God."

13. insolent--People taking pleasure in insulting others.

14. arrogant--Full of haughty pride toward others.

15. boasters--The very contrary of Him Who said: "Come unto Me--I am meek, and lowly of heart."

16. inventors of bad things--From the days of Cain's city onward (Genesis 4:16-22), men have progressed in evil; until Jehovah said Israel did evil that "came not into His mind" (Jeremiah 19:5).

17. without obedience [32] to parents--literally, not able to be persuaded by parents. What a photograph of the "youth" of our day! This appalling rejection of parental control is developing amazingly in these last days, just as God said it would (2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Timothy 3:2). It brings a curse upon whole families, whole communities, and whole lands. Obedience to parents brings promised blessing: "Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2; Ephesians 6:3).

[32] In the six words of which this is the first, God emphasizes the negative, or stubborn quality of badness Each of these words begins with the Greek alpha, which has the force here of alpha privative: denial or negation of the quality expressed in the word. Therefore we have translated the first letter in all six "without,"--a rendering consistent rather than elegant, as accuracy of interpretation, rather than "excellency of speech" should be sought here.

"The eye that mocketh at his father, And despiseth to obey his mother, The ravens of the valley shall pick it out, And the young eagles shall eat it."

-- Proverbs 30:17. This explains many an early death! Yes; and terrible deaths long delayed.

18. without moral understanding--The verb is used in Scripture only of moral and spiritual understanding (Matthew 13:14; Matthew 13:15; Matthew 13:19; Matthew 13:23; Matthew 13:51). This adjective (Romans 1:31) means, without any understanding of Divine things; having no proper moral discernment. That is the awful condition of the human race; and, remember, you and I were born in it.

19. without good faith--Faithless, bound by no promise or covenant. This is a very heart-disease! The word denotes that wickedness that does not intend to carry out its pledged word, except for selfish ends. Broken business contracts, violated national treaties, light betrayal of personal

confidences,--all have this hideous condition as their root.

20. without natural affection--Without affection for kindred. Even a third century pagan poet, Theocritus, calls these "the heartless ones." How constantly we see, especially in the selfish lives of graceless "moderns," utter disregard of the natural ties which a kind God has used in "setting the solitary in families." Such are really moral morons; but the possibilities of all these things are in every one of us.

21. without [consent to] truce,--literally, not willing to consent to a truce, or cease hostilities. The present ruthless civil war in Spain, and the savagery of Japan in China, are examples. Indeed, only an "armistice," not a peace, was concluded after the World War; and, despite all "treaties" since, there persists a sort of international suspicion; proving that men know, as by instinct, the implacability of human nature. [33]

[33] "I stood several years ago upon "Starved Rock," near LaSalle, Illinois, a beautiful hill with precipitous sides, where in 1769 the entire tribe of the "Illinois" Indians were starved, almost to the last man, and the tribe practically exterminated, by other Indian tribes besieging the rock. You say, But those were Indians: I am civilized. No, God says, "There is no distinction; for all sinned." And even Paul cried, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

22. without mercy--It is said that Nero as a child amused himself in pulling the legs and wings from insects. Perhaps you cry out at this, saying, I have always been tender-hearted towards animals. Indeed? And how about people? Are you tender-hearted towards them? to all of them? Think deeply on this: God "delighteth in mercy"; but "man's inhumanity to man makes countless millions mourn." Consider: A merciful God! unmerciful creatures! And now we come to the dark, wilful conspiracy of evil of this whole human race. For, remember, what we have been reading is not an indictment of the heathen merely, but of the race. It does indeed depict the progress of human wickedness, and how God gave the race over to those lusts that judicially followed their sin. Yet, as we shall find in the next chapter, it is humanity as such, as thus degraded, of which God is speaking.

Romans 1:32 : Who, conscious that such things are worthy of death, not only keep practising them but approve of others practising them.

Here we are confronted with three terrible realities: (1) They have complete inner knowledge from God (Gr. epignontes) that their ways deserve and must have Divine condemnation and judgment; (2) they persist in their practices despite the witness of conscience; (3) they are in a fellowship of evil with other evil-doers! The Greek word here (syneudokouso) which we have rendered "are pleased with," "approve of"; the Revised Version renders "consent with"; Bagster's Interlinear, "are consenting to"; Moule, "feel with and abet." "Not only commit the sins, but delight in their fellowship with the sinner," says Conybeare; "Not only practice them, but have fellow-delight in those that do them"--Darby; "Not only do the same, but applaud those that do them"--Godet; "They not only do these things, but are also (in their moral judgment) in agreement with others who so act" --Meyer.

What a description of this world of sinners, this race alienated from the life of God,--at enmity with Him, and at strife with one another! But all in a hellish unity of evil! THE WRATH OF GOD--IN ROMANS

1. The Greek word for wrath (orge) is used twelve times in this book of Romans, and always as connected with God. In all twelve occurrences in Romans it is referred to God: "The wrath of God is revealed" (Romans 1:18); "wrath in the day of wrath" (Romans 2:5); "Wrath and indignation" (Romans 2:8); "God visiteth with wrath" (Romans 3:5); "The Law worketh wrath" (Romans 4:15); "Much more shall we be saved from the wrath [of God] through Him [Christ]" (Romans 5:9); "If God, willing to show His wrath, endured vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (Romans 9:22); "Give place unto the wrath" [of God] (Romans 12:19); "Wrath to him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4); "Not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake" (Romans 13:5).

Now the fundamental word for "wrath" is orge, and it always looks, in Romans, toward the final, or last, Judgment; although including, as in Romans 13:4, Romans 13:5, God's governmental actions through present human authorities. This distinction between the outpouring of governmental wrath which precedes the Kingdom, and the final Assize at the Last Judgment is of primary importance. Paul is dealing in Romans with eternal things; with "no condemnation," on the one hand; and with final condemnation on the other. It is not the attitude and actions of God as the dispensational Ruler of earth's affairs, but the final Judge dealing with eternal individual destinies, of Whom Paul is writing.

Mark carefully, therefore, that Paul, who is setting forth the gospel of grace, describes the blessedness of those who receive that gospel as forgiven, justified, at peace with God. Romans is a court book. God, who adjudged all guilty under sin, gladly declares righteous and safe those who trust Him. Contrariwise, those who reject His mercy and grace are visited by the same Judge, even God, with wrath. Both the wrath in the one case, and the grace in the other, proceed from God's personal feeling. and just as there was personal Divine mercy and eternal tenderness toward the believer, so there is personal Divine wrath and eternal indignation against those who despise His love and mercy, as set forth in the death of His Son. It is righteous indignation, certainly; but it is personal indignation. Listen carefully to God's own words as to this future visitation of wrath upon the finally impenitent: "Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14); "Lest there should be among you man or woman whose heart turneth away from Jehovah, to serve other gods, and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart . . . . Jehovah will not pardon him, but then the anger of Jehovah, and His jealousy, shall smoke against that man" (Deuteronomy 29:18-20); "Jehovah is a jealous God, and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath or His enemies"; "He will pursue His enemies into darkness" (Nahum 1:2; Nahum 1:8); "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19); "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Hebrews 10:31) "Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I, Jehovah, have spoken it and will do it" (Ezekiel 22:14)

It is fatuous folly to seek to avoid the manifest, necessary meaning of such words. God, who alone has the right to avenge, will avenge! The very first chapter of the Prophets warns any willing to hear: "Ah, I will ease Me of Mine adversaries, and avenge Me of Mine enemies!" (Isaiah 1:24). Human justice is to be meted out by juries of men and by judges, uncolored by personal feelings. Not so with God! As is not the case in human courts, it is the Judge Himself who has been wronged. It is His light that has been refused for darkness. It is His salvation, and that by His Son's

blood that has bee despised. And it will not be justice merely, but the infliction of penalty by an outraged Being whose Name is Love, now aroused to a righteous fury commensurate with the measureless guilt of the hideous haters of His holiness, the despisers of His mercy--it will be by the Hand of the Judge of all, Himself, that wrath will fall upon the guilty. As for the "great" pulpiteers of Christendom, the favorites of the rapidly apostatizing denominations of this day, the men who, by their ecclesiastical politics or personal ability, or so called "scholarship," are "outstanding" and yet deny or ignore the wrath of God,--fear them not! They are false prophets, prophets of "peace,"--which can only be found in the shed blood of the Redeemer: the blood which they do not preach.

Oh, that Day! that Day!--for these lying preachers of "peace, peace," who have said, "God is too good to damn anybody." And shall God, in that Day, refuse to remember the agonies of His Son on the Cross? Shall He change that holy hatred of sin, wherein He forsook Christ and spared Him not?--all because miserable guilty Universalists, Unitarians, Millennial Dawnists, "Modernists," "Christian(!) Scientists(!)"--all the fawning "Hush, hush" preachers, have promised to men "a God that would not show wrath against sin!" A God who would indeed "spare all,-- yea, probably, even Satan, finally!"

Let this awful word Orge, wrath, settle into the conscience of every soul; for God hath spoken it! And every Preacher and every Prophet of God has warned of it: Enoch (Jude 1:14; Jude 1:15); Noah (2 Peter 2:5); Moses (Deuteronomy 32:35); the Psalmists, the Prophets (for example, Isaiah,-- all of Isaiah 24:1-23 and Isaiah 34:1-17); the Lord’s forerunner, John the Baptist, with his "Flee from the wrath to come"; the Apostles,--from Romans to Revelation; and the great Preachers and Evangelists of the Christian centuries,--the men who have won souls--the Reformers, the Puritans, the Wesleys, Whitefields, Edwardses, Finneys, Spurgeons, Moodys,--all have told of man’s guilt and danger, of the coming judgment, and of the wrath of God upon the impenitent and unbelieving.

2.This wrath is here in Romans 1:18 declared to be now, like the gospel, revealed from heaven; and that, now, against all ungodliness; and against all unrighteousness of men; in that they have resisted the truth they know.

Heretofore, as at the Deluge, and that terrible day when "Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven," God had revealed His wrath on earth when men’s cup of iniquity was full; as we read also in the case of the Canaanites (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24; Leviticus 18:25). Yet, God "overlooked" much that was evil, even in Israel (Acts 17:30; Matthew 19:8). But now, He "commandeth all men everywhere to repent,"--in view of a revealed coming day of judgment, "by the Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:30; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16), and of which judgment He hath given certainty to all men by raising this coming Judge from the dead! The cross brought to an end God’s "overlooking" sin, by judging it, even to the utter Divine forsaking of Him whom God sent to bear sin. Sin, therefore, is brought into the open; God’s wrath from, heaven is now revealed against it all! If the blood of Jesus, God’s Son cleanseth believers "from all sin"; then no sin has been left unjudged at the cross, and no sins will be unjudged upon the lost, at the Great White Throne, nor be "overlooked" today!

This, then, is the first full, formal, and general, announcement of wrath from heaven. For heretofore God had man on trial. While Israel had "the house of God" on earth, and were being

tested under law, there was (humanly speaking) the possibility of human recovery. But when they, with the Gentiles, crucified the Lord of glory,--killed the Righteous One, four things came to light: (a) the absolute character of man's sin; (b) the absoluteness of God's holiness which could not spare the Son of His love, when once sin was laid on him; (c) the absoluteness of God's love and grace toward sinners, in publishing forgiveness and righteousness as a free-gift through Christ,--"beginning from Jerusalem--where men had crucified His Son! and (c) the revelation from heaven of Divine wrath against all ungodliness, all unrighteousness. It was not that God hated sin less in the past, in "the times of ignorance." But there had been "overlooking, forbearance." Now, with the full revelation of both human guilt and Divine grace by the Cross, there must also be fully announced God's wrath from heaven against all sin. It is no longer an earthly, governmental affair,--as against high earthly offenders, such as Pharaoh, the Sodomites, or the Canaanites; but against all ungodliness, all unrighteousness. In grace God at the cross had come forth; not in Law or judgment, but as He was, in His being,--that is, absolutely, as Love, offering pardon and justification to men. Therefore, all He was, absolutely, in Heaven His dwelling-place, against the awful thing, sin, must, along with His pardoning grace, be revealed! The days of "winking at" ignorance are over; for, "He spared not His own Son!" So now, that God is against all sin must be revealed. The days of that protection from God's wrath that religion had afforded are over! For had not Judaism afforded a kind of protection? Jehovah dwelt in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and the temple. An outward walk according to external enactments, secured the nation Israel, amidst which God dwelt. But no longer! "Your house is left to you desolate," said the Lord to the Jews. "The blood (for forgiveness), and the water (for cleansing) followed man's spear of hate thrust into the Redeemer's side." But by that very fact we know that there is absolute wrath against man's sin! Only, flee not from this wounded Lamb; for here the wrath has struck! There is safety here,--though nowhere else in the universe!

3. It will fall to other pens than Paul's--to those of Peter and Jude, and especially to that of John, in the Apocalypse, to describe the particulars of time and mode of visitation of God's wrath; together with the places of confinement and punishment of the wicked, both before and after the Last Judgment. Peter will write of "Tartarus," where God cast the rebel angels of (Genesis 6:1-22; 2 Peter 2:4); and Jude will describe both the "everlasting bonds" of those angels, and also the "eternal fire" that overtook the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah; while John will show the risen Christ with the keys of death and of Hades (the detention-jail at present of lost human spirits); and John will describe also that awful "lake of fire" which shall be the final portion of the devil and his angels, and of those who sided with him against God. (Compare Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41.)

Paul, however, will set forth the scene as from God's court. Just as his gospel will show a God whose love is such that He gave Christ for wicked, hateful sinners, and offers to justify the ungodly who believe Him; so the contrary of justification--condemnation, becomes the portion of the rejecter of mercy

Since grace is the outpouring of God's "heart of mercy," and is a personal feeling; so despised mercy arouses in God (and how necessarily), the opposite of mercy,--wrath! Paul's words will therefore be: grace, and over against it, wrath. Justification, and over against it, condemnation. Life, and over against it, death. He will say to the saints, "Ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life." And, of the things whereof the saints are now "ashamed," --"the end of those

things is death!"

4. But be it noted, there is absolutely no foot of Scripture ground to stand upon for those who, refusing the Bible doctrine of a God who "visiteth with wrath," bring in their subtle arguments for the "final restoration of all." Honest readers know that the very opposite is taught throughout the Scripture. There is no wrath upon believers. There is forever nothing but wrath for unbelievers. If you value your soul, regard with utter horror all trifling on this question. If you do not believe in Divine wrath, you are not subject to Scripture, and you are in fearful personal danger. The errorists begin very subtly,--as the Bullingerites began with the doctrine of "soul-sleeping." (See footnote to Romans 15:8) Then there are the "annihilationists," the "conditional immortality" falsifiers, the Christadelphians, the "restorationists," the Seventh Day Adventists, and all the rest of the rabble. These false prophets are lulling millions upon millions into a deathful slumber from which only the crack of doom will rouse them. There are no "soul-sleepers" or "restorationists" in Hades! They know the truth now! And they are in nameless terror of coming Judgment and final eternal Hell. The God of the twentieth century is not the God of the Bible, but the God of the vain imaginations of shadow men,--men who will not look honestly at history (as, e.g., the Flood, or Sodom and Gomorrah); nay, who will not look honestly at present events! Preachers are found by the thousands who pooh-pooh the thought that the great calamities, such as the late war, and that now looming, are judgments of God; that great droughts or floods or storms are sent by Him. Like the hardened wretches whom Ezekiel saw, they say, "Jehovah seeth us not; Jehovah hath forsaken the land."

If Paul, at the beginning of Church days, could write to Roman Christians that terrible arraignment of the human race with which this Epistle begins, and must begin, what shall be the attitude, and what the words, of any faithful preacher or teacher at this, the end of the Church times, after nearly 2000 years of unbelief, heresy, divisions, and general denial of the guilt and danger of lost men!

Merely to give in this book the meaning of the words of Paul,-- without applying them to the very soul and conscience of the reader, would, in view of the conditions prevalent today, be both fruitless and cowardly: fruitless, because the present day will not study, and least of all, thoroughly study, Scripture; and cowardly, because shrinking from applying truth would be seeking to be "fundamental" without offending anyone!

"If thou warn the wicked . . . thou hast delivered thy soul," God speaks. The gospel of Christ is written in letters of heavenly light against the fearful black cloud of human guilt flashing with warnings of coming wrath! TO THE PREACHERS OF "THE SOCIAL GOSPEL" This is the doctrine that Jesus Christ came to reform society (whatever "society" may be!); that He came to abate the evils of selfishness, give a larger "vision" to mankind; and, through His example and precepts, bring about such a change in human affairs, social, political, economic and domestic, as would realize all man’s deep longings for a peaceful, happy existence upon earth, ushering in what these teachers are pleased to call, "the Kingdom of God."

1. Now, in the first place, Jesus Christ came to save sinners, not "society." He said, "The Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins." Now, sins are individual transgressions against a personal God; there is no such thing in Scripture as these social-gospellers dream of,--a condition of "society" to be "changed" or "ameliorated." All that really exists is the guilt of a vast number of really guilty sinners. "Society" does not exist before God at all; and it is a vain delusion of the devil

that sins are dealt with en masse.

2. Sinners, having been pardoned, find themselves in a blessed fellowship, a really heavenly thing, constituted by the Holy Spirit, who indwells each of them. But to confuse this fellowship with what these social-gospellers call "society," is to forget that "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

3. It flatters men's vanity, of course, and shelters them from conviction, to be dealt with as "society," and not as guilty souls needing personal pardon through the shed blood of Christ. Therefore this gospel (which is not a gospel, but a lie, a delusion of Satan), draws together vast concourses of unconverted men and women, "church-members" and "non-church-members." Its preachers are plausible and popular, for if "society" is going to be saved in a mass, individual repentance need not be mentioned. The Jesus of these men,--the Stanley Joneses, the Sherwood Eddys, the Frank Buchmans, the Bishop McConnells, the Kagawas, and a whole host of drifters and on-the-fencers, is not the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world by an atoning sacrifice, not the One despised, forsaken, smitten of God, of the fifty-third of Isaiah! He is not at all the substitutionary Sacrifice drinking the cup of wrath for man's guilt! But He is "the Christ of the Indian Road"--or the American road, the Canadian road, the English road, as you please; walking by the wayside, teaching the multitudes, as in the Four Gospels, BEFORE HE WAS REJECTED AND DIED. He is not the RISEN CHRIST, with all power in heaven and earth given unto Him, pouring forth the Holy Spirit and doing mighty works, as in the early church days.

I affirm that the present day popular preachers DO NOT KNOW what human guilt, before God, is! DO NOT KNOW that Christ really bore wrath under God's hand for the sin of the world! DO NOT KNOW that He was forsaken of God, as the whole race, otherwise, must have been! I affirm that they are preaching as if an unrejected, uncrucified Christ were still being offered to the world! They preach the "character" of Jesus, saying "nice things" of Him, and telling people to "follow His example": while the truly awful fact that Christ "bare our sins in His own body on the tree," that He was "wounded for our transgressions," that He was "forsaken of His God"; that "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up,"--and that "for our trespasses," is never told to the poor, wretched people! Nor are they warned of that literal lake of fire and brimstone into which "every one not found written in the book of life" will be cast, and that forever.

One look into the lost eternity to which these last-days "preachers" are leading those who follow them, renders even the briefest consideration of these men who dare to call themselves "preachers of the gospel," beyond all enduring. As Jeremiah cries:

"Concerning the prophets. My heart within me is broken, all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of Jehovah, and because of His holy words.

"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah. They say continually unto them that despise Me, Jehovah hath said, Ye shall have peace; and unto every one that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come upon you . . . Behold, the tempest of Jehovah, even His wrath, is gone forth, yea, a whirling tempest; it shall burst upon the head of the wicked . . . I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I

spake not unto them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My council, then had they caused My people to hear My words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings" (Jeremiah 23:9; Jeremiah 23:16; Jeremiah 23:17; Jeremiah 23:19; Jeremiah 23:21; Jeremiah 23:22). And Ezekiel:

"And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of Man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own heart, Hear ye the word of Jehovah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! . . . They have seen falsehood and lying divination, that say, Jehovah saith; but Jehovah hath not sent them: and they have made men to hope that the word could be confirmed. Have ye not seen a false vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, in that ye say, Jehovah saith; albeit I have not spoken?

"Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there is no peace; and when one buildeth up a wall, behold, they daub it with untempered mortar: say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall" (Ezekiel 13:1; Ezekiel 13:2; Ezekiel 13:3; Ezekiel 13:6; Ezekiel 13:7; Ezekiel 13:10; Ezekiel 13:11; Ezekiel 13:12-14; Ezekiel 13:15).

And,

"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezekiel 33:8; Ezekiel 33:9).

You may say, Those were Old Testament prophets--Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and Those were messages to the Jews. Wait till you meet, as you will shortly, the God Who inspired these prophets. Let us see what you will say to Him,--you who profess to preach the gospel of Christ. and yet preach it not! And Paul saith: "Though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." "For I delivered unto you first of all that . . . Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, . . . that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." This very declaration of the gospel after Christ died, is that atoning death of His. When you leave that out, and prate about the "beautiful life" of Jesus, you are deceived by the devil and are a deceiver of other souls.

4. We know that this "social gospel," the false news that humanity is to be reached in the mass, and not by individual conviction, individual faith, individual new birth by the Holy Spirit, is a lie, because Scripture directly contradicts any such notion:

Hear Paul: "In the last days, grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Peter also: "In the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying. Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:3; 2 Peter 3:4).

Paul again: "Evil men and imposters shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). And our Lord plainly says:

"In the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:29; Luke 17:30).

How dare you call yourself a believer of Scripture, while you deny such plain words as these, and preach a fool's dream, that the world, with the devil still here, its prince and god; and man still unregenerate--that the world will by some "social gospel" gradually change in character? It is a lie! and those that preach it, preach a lie. The words of God shall be fulfilled, and not the mouthings of a McConnell or the fumings of a Fosdick.

And, O social gospeller, if you are looking for a changed state of "society," who is going to help you bring it in? The Holy Ghost will not, for He has inspired men to write that the very opposite will occur! that men shall hate one another, and that the world will grow worse, to the very return of Christ. And we know that enlightened Christians will not go about to bring in what they know from God's Word is not coming in! And ignorant Christians cannot help you,--for they know not how. And we know that this selfish world will not go about to bring in your social dream: for you and we know they are set on their own interests, and will remain so. And Satan cannot do it, if he would!

So, O social gospeller, who would go about to bring in a "new social order," you are left to do it yourself, without that regeneration by the Holy Spirit which alone truly saves men; without any message of pardon for guilty souls through the shed blood of a Redeemer (for you do not preach that!) without the help and prayers of true believers: for, these pray, "Thy Kingdom Come"; but they know that Christ must return to earth to bring in that Kingdom; and they know that all other promises are false and lying hopes!

02.03. Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2 The Great Principles according to which God’s Judgment of Human Action Must Proceed.

1 Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man,--any one judging [others]: for in the very matter in which thou judgest the other man, thou art giving judgment against thy very self: tor the same things thou art practising,--thou who art judging!

WE HAVE TRACED the awful history of the human race in iniquity and idolatry, especially since the Flood, and have seen that fearful indictment of above twenty counts which ends Chapter One.

We now enter upon the greatest passage in all Scripture as to the principles and processes of God in His estimate, or judgment, concerning His creatures. If God is "Judge of all," and if the whole world is to be "brought under the judgment of God" (Romans 3:19), God will surely take pains to make known the great principles of His action, so that men may know beforehand how He will decide and act. Otherwise, men would "imagine vain things" about the true God, and hug their delusions to their own damnation. The personal character of God’s relations toward men, either in the matter of salvation or of damnation, is rapidly being forgotten by this generation. Yet, if God be God, He must be the Judge of All. Back of the whole revelation of His works and ways, in His Word, is God Himself. And it is only the fool that saith in his heart, "No God." Mark that it is in his heart, his desires, that he speaks; and not in his reason or judgment!

God created man "in His own image." Since we are persons,--so is God. Since we have personal feelings,--so has God.

Now every creature stands in relation to God according to what God is. God cannot change. Daniel Webster, in answer to the question: "What is the greatest thought that ever entered your mind?" said, at once, "My responsibility to my Maker!" You must meet God, and that as He is, not as you might wish Him to be. If you have Christ, you have already met Him! If you have not Christ, you have still to face God in His infinite holiness, and that arrayed against you, at the Judgment Day.

Now Romans 2:1-29 deals with those who do not believe that the awful things of the first chapter mean themselves. Consequently, we find two sets of such self-appointed "judges" of others [34] in Romans 2:1-29 :

[34] Note: The Greek verb for "judging" in the first verse does not mean to estimate a man’s value but to condemn his person.

First, Those who discountenance the "openly bad" of humanity, considering themselves "better"--because of race, civilization, environment, education, or culture; and,

Second, Those who discountenance the bad, thinking themselves "better," because of their religion,--the possession of the Divine oracles: these, of course, were, in Paul’s day, the Jews

(Romans 2:17).

Concerning the first class, the "respectable" sinners, who esteem themselves "better," God lays down six great principles of His estimate or judgment of men; and adds a seventh concerning the second class, the "religious" sinners; of whom God declares that the world itself despises inconsistency between practice and religious profession.

Now just because the history of our race has been so black, as shown in Chapter One ("God gave them up--God gave them up--God gave them up--"), we who read the record are ourselves in peculiar danger, for the doors into the death-chamber of self-righteousness so easily open to us! We readily fall into the delusion that God is speaking in this chapter concerning heathen idolaters, who finally descended to worshiping "creeping things,"--and that He cannot be speaking to us! But will you remember that God comes quickly, through this sad history, to man’s settled state. For at the end of the history, the announcement concerning men is, "being filled with all unrighteousness!" By and by God will announce that there is no distinction" as to sinners, and will publish the fact that there is but one way of salvation for all men alike,--and that through the shed blood of a Redeemer. But here, as we have above said, God is heading off from escape first the proud "judges" of others, of every sort,--the moralists, and moral philosophers, all the "moral" folks,--the "whosoevers" that "judge"; and, second, those who would escape the consciousness of guilt and judgment by running under a "religious" roof-- whether a Jewish shelter, as in Paul’s day, or a "Christian" one, in our day.

SEVEN GREAT PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S JUDGMENT 1. God’s judgment is "according to truth" (Romans 2:2).

2. According to accumulated guilt (Romans 2:5).

3. According to works (Romans 2:6).

4. Without respect of persons (Romans 2:11).

5. According to performance, not knowledge (Romans 2:13).

6. God’s judgment reaches the secrets of the heart (Romans 2:16).

7. According to reality, not religious profession (Romans 2:17-29).

ACCORDING TO TRUTH,--NOT HUMAN IMAGININGS Verse two of this chapter describes the first principle of God’s judgment: it is "according to truth":

2 And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practice such things. 3 And dost thou reckon this, O man, judging them that practice such things, and thyself doing the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4 Or dost thou even despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God is meant to lead thee to repentance?

First, then, the judgment of God is "according to truth." Every man is naturally blind to his own state and sins. Not unless mightily convinced by the Holy Ghost, can any man imagine God’s dealing in justice with him! The third verse brings this out. Godet (though seeking to confine this passage to the Jews) strikingly renders it: "Dost thou reason that thou wouldst escape,--thou? [35]

A being by thyself? A privileged person?" And he adds, "The Greek word here used (logid-zomai--to reason) well describes the false calculations whereby the Jews persuaded themselves that they would escape the judgment wherewith God would visit the Gentiles."

[35] The pronoun "thou" is emphatic in the Greek, indicating a fond conceit about oneself. But Paul does not begin with the Jews as a class until Romans 2:17. Here in the first part of the chapter he is seeking to arouse all men from that sense of security arising from self-love and self-flattery. [36] We must apply these searching sentences to all "respectable" persons, to all those who, being themselves impenitent, yet "judge" others.

[36] Bengel, agreeing with Meyer and Godet, gives a searching word here: "Everyone accused, tries to escape; he who is acquitted, escapes." And Meyer: "But it is not by an acquittal that the Jew (or any religious person) expects to escape; but by being excepted entirely from the judgment of God. According to the Jewish notion, only the Gentiles shall be judged; while all Jews, as the children of the kingdom--of Messiah,--shall inherit it!"

God sees the facts, nay, the motives behind the facts, of the life of every creature. Of course, this whole second chapter, and the first part of the third, is meant by God, whose name is Love, to drive us out of our false notions of Himself and His judicial procedure, into the arms of our Redeemer, Christ; who has borne wrath, the wrath of God, as our Substitute. But whether you are brought to flee to Christ or not, you must face the facts: God is a God of judgment, and a God of truth. See how He "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up." It is not because God loves to judge and condemn, for He definitely says judgment is "His strange work" (Isaiah 28:21). Nevertheless, He must judge, and it must be "according to truth," according to the facts, the realities which are, of course, known to Him. He needs no "jury" to decide any case. He is Himself Witness, Jury and Judge.

Now, in Romans 2:3, Romans 2:4, we see God dealing with the accursed folly of the deceitful heart of man, who dreams that by merely judging others (though he practices the same things), he shall escape God’s judgment. Some one says, "We hate our own faults when we see them in others." But this state goes beyond even that, for it puts God right off His throne, and makes Him connive with a guilty sinner, just because, forsooth, this sinner discerns clearly and decries loudly the sins of others,--while committing the same himself.

Furthermore, such a "judge" of others becomes, in his self-confident importance, blind to God’s constant mercy toward himself--not feeling the need of it; and in his self righteous blindness knows not that the "goodness" of God is meant to lead him to personal repentance instead of to judgment of his fellows. [37]

[37] The goodness of God to us, remembered, reflected upon, heartily believed in, moves the heart, and changes the whole attitude toward God. The great preacher of repentance, John the Baptist, cried, "Repent, for the Kingdom" --all you Jews have been hoping for! "is at hand," He was stern, as was his Lord, only with religious pretenders.

Note the degrees or stages, also, of God’s kindness during the earth-life of such a man: First, it is God’s "goodness," in daily preserving him, providing for him, and protecting him. Second, Divine goodness being despised by him, God’s "forebearance" is exercised,--God does not smite instantly the proud ingrate, but goes on in goodness toward him, withholding wrath even at times

when disease, danger, or death threaten all about him. Third, all God’s goodness and forbearance being despised, God’s "long-suffering" keeps waiting, even over "vessels of wrath" (see Romans 9:22).

ACCORDING TO ACCUMULATED GUILT 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of

God--

We have here the second principle, the cumulative character of continued impenitence. This shows how the hardened and impenitent sinner "lays up" during a prosperous earth-life constant "treasures" of wrath, [38] which will be revealed at the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:1-15, when all the evil works of the lost will be shown in all their ramifications and evil influences, and effects upon others, as well as in the fearful personal guilt of hardness and impenitence against God’s mercy. Not until the last evil result of a life of sin has been marked and weighed, can the final reward of the sinner be shown,--as all will be shown in that "Day." This is the outlook, probably, with most people we meet! How dread and awful that outlook for the sinner who has taken God’s earthly gifts and blessings as a matter of course,--no brokenness of heart or contrition toward God! Nay, not even thankfulness! "Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease" (Ezekiel 16:49; Ezekiel 16:50). And our Lord, in speaking of the utter carnal security of the Sodomites, says, "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30).

[38] There is an evident correlation between the phrase, riches of goodness,’ Romans 2:4; and the Greek word translated treasure up’. The latter word, as well as the dative of favor, seauto, for thyself’, have certainly a tinge of irony. What an enriching is that!"--Godet. Also Bengel: "Note the antithesis between despising the riches of goodness,’ and treasuring up wrath’; between hardness’ and goodness’; between impenitent heart’ and repentance,’ of verse 4. Also note that it is against thyself’ thou art treasuring wrath, not against others whom thou judgest. Finally, the unquestionable antithesis between forbearance’ and revelation of judgment.’" And David Brown: "What an awful idea is here expressed,--that the sinner himself is amassing, like hoarded treasure, an ever accumulating stock of Divine wrath, to burst upon him in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God’! And this is said not of the reckless, but of those who boasted of their purity!" So they are today, in these last days: "Treasuring up unto themselves wrath" for that fearful "day of wrath."

Remember, if the goodness of God toward you is not leading you to repentance, then every day, every hour, you live, drops another drop into the terrible "treasure" of indignation which will burst the great dam of God’s long-suffering--in the great Day of Wrath, when God shall reveal His righteous judgment! (Of course, if you flee to Calvary, you will "not come into judgment" (John 5:24): for Judgment has already struck there!) ACCORDING TO WORKS

6 Who will recompense to each one according to his works: 7 to them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruptibility, life eternal: 8 but to those who are contentious, and disobey the truth, being obedient to unrighteousness, shall be wrath and

indignation, 9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, both of Jew first, and also of Greek; 10 but glory and honor and peace to every soul of man that worketh good, both to Jew first, and also to Greek. The third principle then, is, "according to works": "Who will judge every one according to his works." How could it be otherwise? You know that when a case comes to trial in courts of law, men first endeavor, through questioning witnesses, to discover the facts. Now God knows all the facts about every one of Adam's race, and His judgment must be in accordance with them. It is not that God desires you to be damned, but, contrariwise, to believe on His Son, upon Whom His judgment for human sin fell at Calvary. Nevertheless, those that come up at the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) will be "judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works" . . . "They were judged every man according to their works."

But, as we shall see, it is the life as a whole, the life-choice, that is in question here. Consequently, we read here of the two great classes: the patiently enduring, and the rebellious; those whose life-practice is good, and those who work evil; those who obey the truth, and those who reject it in order to remain in the unrighteousness they love.

Romans 2:7 : The "patient continuance in well-doing" is not at all set forth as the means of their procuring eternal life, [39] but as a description of those to whom God does render life eternal. Well-doing is subjection to and obedience to the light God has vouchsafed. [40] To Abel, "well-doing" meant approaching God by a sacrifice, as a sinner, as he had been taught to do. To Noah, "continuance in well-doing" meant building an ark to save his house and preserve life upon the earth, involving years of labor, and the ridicule of man. To Abraham, it meant leaving his country, his relatives, and his father's house, and becoming a stranger and pilgrim on earth. To Job, it meant his God-fearing, evil-rejecting life; and afterwards, in the midst of his great affliction, bowing before the presence of God in dust and ashes. To Matthew the publican, it meant rising from his business and following the Lord Jesus; to Cornelius the centurion, a life of patient prayer and generosity,--and then believing the gospel at Peter's lips. To Lydia, it meant humble and faithful attendance at "the place of prayer" till Paul came and "her heart was opened" to give heed to the gospel of grace spoken by the apostle,--whence followed her "obedience of faith."

[39] It must carefully and Constantly be borne in mind, as we have said above, that the question in this chapter is, the principles of God's judgment as Judge of all, and not the last assize itself, nor any account of the manner in which those said to be "working good" entered upon that path (which, of course, is always by a publican's trust in a God of mercy). But we are being shown in Romans 2:1-29 how God must proceed in accordance with His being, toward two classes,--those subject to Him, and those refusing subjection. Alford well says: "The Apostle is here speaking generally, of the general system of God in governing the world,--the judging according to each man's works--punishing the evil, and rewarding the righteous. No question at present arises, how this righteousness in God's sight is to be obtained--but the truth is only stated broadly to be further specified by and by, when it is clearly shown that by works of law (erga nomou) no flesh can be justified before God. The neglect to observe this has occasioned two mistakes: (1) an idea that by this passage it is proved that not faith only, but works also in some measure, justify before God; and an idea that by well-doing here is meant faith in Christ. However true it be, so much is certainly not meant here, but merely the fact that everywhere, and in all, God punishes evil and rewards good."

[40] God often, in His saving-grace, meets an enemy like Saul of Tarsus in the very heat of his opposition to Christ; or saves, and reveals His truth to, young men of wild dissipation like Augustine; or takes up and leads all the way to the Celestial City a profane Bunyan. Nevertheless, of these also, it could be said, as Paul spake: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." After grace reached them, they too are described as "those who sought for glory and honor and incorruption." We repeat that Romans 2:7-10 are not a revelation of the way of salvation, but a general description of the character of those that are saved. In every age since man sinned there have been those like Jabez, who was "more honorable than his brethren, and called upon God" (1 Chronicles 4:9; 1 Chronicles 4:10); and like Joseph, who was "separate from his brethren." There always have been choosers of God and rejectors of God.

Romans 2:8 : We need only sketch in Scripture a few of the contentious, the factious [41] a Cain who was angry, and hateful at God's accepting Abel's sacrifice; an Esau who despised his birthright and hated to the end the people of God; a Pharaoh who said to Moses, "Who is Jehovah that I should hearken unto His voice?" A Saul who despised the word of Jehovah and sought to destroy His elect king, David; a Jehoiakim, apostate king of Judah, who "cut with his penknife" and burned the prophecies of Jeremiah; scribes and Pharisees, who rejected John's baptism of repentance,--and, consequently, our Lord's loving offer of eternal life for sinners through faith in Himself alone; infidel Sadducees, who obeyed not the truth, by ridiculing it, as Modernists do today. All about us we perceive them,--"the factious," those who oppose to Scripture their notions or arguments, and continue to obey unrighteousness. The world is filled with them, and they will fill hell shortly!

[41] Literally, it reads here, "those who are of contention"; that is, whose hearts, instead of believing and obeying, rise in opposition to the truth, contending inwardly against the truth and outwardly with them that proclaim it. The word "contentious" here evidently refers to the first conscious risings of man's wicked heart against God's revealed will. "Of contention' defines unbelievers, as those who are of faith' defines believers" (Hodge). And now we must faithfully read and believe what God declares will befall these "factious" unbelievers: Wrath--indignation--tribulation--anguish [42] thus is the fearful visitation of The Great Day upon the impenitent described, with concise but sweeping comprehensiveness: Wrath: this is "revealed from heaven" as the state of God's mind toward the unbelieving wicked--"the wrath of God abides upon him" (John 3:36). Indignation: this is vividly described in Nahum: "Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?" Or Ezekiel: "I have poured out My indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath." It seems to be the outburst in visitation of wrath stored up. Then (Romans 2:9), tribulation: Here the visitation strikes its object. The false peace of his hardened, impenitent earth-life is now horribly broken up by direct visitation from God in vengeance. Finally, anguish: which sets forth the result of that tribulation which meets the lost directly from an angry, indignant Creator and Judge. "I am in anguish in this flame," cried lost Dives, in Hades (God's prison for the lost until the Day of Judgment). What unspeakable horrors, then, will that Day bring!

[42] Wrath (orge) and indignation (thumos) is the true Greek order here. Alford's comment is excellent: "According to the arrangement, the former word denotes the abiding settled mind of God, as in John 3:36, towards them; and the latter, the outbreak of that anger at the Great Day of retribution."

Romans 2:10 : But God must again, in His heart of love, show in what sweet, heavenly contrast are those working good: glory, honor, peace,--to every such soul, Jew or Greek! The order of the words plainly points to that day when the righteous will be manifest. Then will be manifested in them that glory which they sought; there will be public honor; there will be everlasting peace!

Now remember that although we have not yet come in this Epistle to the unfolding of the way of peace, yet it belongs to your peace to let this great passage we are studying fall full into your heart.

WITHOUT RESPECT OF PERSONS 11 For there is no respect of persons with God. 12 For as many as made a life-choice of sin, though without law, without law also shall perish; and as many as under law made a life-choice of sin, shall be judged by law. [43]

[43] Literally: "For as many as without law sinned, without law also shall perish; and as many as under law sinned, through law shall be judged." But the tense of the verb sinned, in both cases is the aorist; and cannot refer to the mere fact that they committed sin; for "all have sinned." The word "sinned" must refer to the general choice of sin as against righteousness and holiness. Therefore have we translated it "life-choice of sin," because the whole life is here looked at as a unit, and that life was a choice of sin, whether by Gentiles without the Mosaic law, or by Jews under it.

Romans 2:11 :The fourth principle, then, is, "Without respect of persons." Among men, there is almost nothing else but what James and Jude denounce as "showing respect of persons"--"for the sake of advantage." The rich, the educated, the travelled, the cultured, the prominent, the influential, the pleasing, the strong,--are all sought after. The poor, the ignorant, the weak, are despised and neglected. But not so with God. He sees men through His own eyes of holiness and truth always. He "seeth not as man seeth." It is a terrifying thought to earth’s great,--but an infinitely comforting thought to every humble God-fearing soul,--that there is an impartial One, with no respect of persons, with whom they have to do!

Distinction in responsibility, according to privilege enjoyed, is constantly carried through Scripture. But light is light,--not darkness at all. Light is an absolute quality. If persons were lost in a forest at night, the least glimmer of light seen somewhere would attract those who desired deliverance from darkness, and they would hasten toward it; while those that feared light because of works of evil in which they desired to persist, would shrink back farther into the darkness; loving darkness not for its own sake, but, as our Lord said, "because their works are evil." In both cases, whether of those that do not have the (Mosaic) Law, or of those living, as the Jews did, under it if they choose sin, there is doom. There will be no respect of persons at all. Those "without law" choosing sin "shall perish": those "choosing sin under law shall be judged by that law," and consequently go into more terrible damnation. [44]

[44] There is a poisonous vagary floating like a miasma through Christendom, that those who do not have the light of the gospel will be saved, either by a "second chance," or by "purgatorial fires,"--because, forsooth, "God is too good to punish sinners." Paul will answer these theories in Romans 3:1-31 by an unanswerable question: "Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? God forbid: for how then shall God judge the world?" Meaning, that wrath is inseparably connected with judgment, whatever the degree of light sinned against may have been. How indescribably more

awful will be the doom of those who now constitute a third company--even those who reject the love and grace of God manifested in His Son! (Hebrews 10:28; Hebrews 10:29). Always remember that the contemplation of an especially heinous degree of iniquity and consequent judgment is accompanied in the deceitful human heart by the delusion that those not chiefly guilty shall somehow wholly escape. But Romans 2:12 distinctly says as many as chose sin, even though they be "without law" (anomos--Cf.1 Corinthians 9:21 --without externally declared divine revelation), shall also perish. Now, the word perish here is a terrible word! When used in Scripture regarding human beings it never hints of annihilation, but rather the contrary: "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matthew 10:28). What "destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" means as to time, is shown in Matthew 25:41-46 : "Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.' And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life,"--compared with Revelation 20:10 : "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the Beast and the False Prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night unto the ages of the ages." Note the same word, aionios, eternal, concerning life and concerning punishment. "The ages of the ages" is God's constant phrase for the duration of His own endless existence; and for that of Christ, the Son; and for that of His saints. See Galatians 1:5 (the first instance of this phrase,--used 21 times in the New Testament). Revelation 4:9; Revelation 1:18; Revelation 22:5, need to be compared with Revelation 20:10, as examples.

ACCORDING TO PERFORMANCE, OR OBEDIENCE, NOT KNOWLEDGE

13 For not those hearing law are righteous before God, but on the contrary those doing law shall be accounted righteous. 14 (For when Gentiles not having law, by nature do the things of the Law, these, not at all having law, unto themselves are law; 15 for such show forth the work written in their hearts of the Law, their conscience bearing joint-witness [to this "work"in their hearts], and their inward thoughts answering one to the other, accusing [them] or else excusing [them].)

Romans 2:13 : Not those hearing law, but those practising, accounted righteous before God. The fifth principle is, that hearing God's Word is no advantage without obedience. Paul addresses the Jew directly, beginning at Romans 2:17; but here, in Romans 2:13, the principle is announced in general. It is not yet the Jew as possessing circumcision and the Law, as in Romans 2:17-29 (for the word is hearing law--not the Law). But it is, in Romans 2:13, the great fact, (true of Jews or Gentiles), that the possession of Divine truth can avail nothing with God apart from subjection and obedience thereto. There is no form of the "deceitfulness of sin" more insidious and more prevalent (because of its subtle power over the self-righteous heart) than that of settling down into false peace because of merely knowing God's truth. Nor does God in this verse say any will be justified by "doing" (for He tells us plainly elsewhere that none will be), but He is saying here that doing, not mere hearing, is what His judgment calls for. We shall find that the gospel will speak of the "obedience of faith": whereas disobedience and unbelief are interchangeable words.

We know that the blood of Christ is the only procuring cause for our being accounted righteous, and faith the sole condition. Yet it is deeply instructive here to quote a passage like that of Luke 1:6, concerning Zacharias and Elizabeth: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Now their walk was not the ground of

their acceptance, although only such as they are accepted! For they were subject to God’s Word, not mere hearers, but doers. The first verse of the book of Job describes such another. Indeed, at heart all God’s saints are such.

Romans 2:14-15 : (For when Gentiles [ethn [45] --nations] not at all having law--that is Law as an external revelation from God (the Law if you will): these words alone, although there are many like passages, wholly refute the claim that God gave the Law to all nations. By nature, the things of the Law are doing--this does not mean that they are fulfilling the claims of the Law, for they do not have it, but that they are unconsciously aware, as moral beings, of what is right and wrong. These, law not at all having, to their own selves are law. We are giving the literal rendering of this passage. Note, first, that they do not at all have law, that is, external Divine enactment. Next, they are by their moral constitution, not by external enactments, "law to their very selves." Being such ones, as show out [by their actions] the work (of the law) written in their hearts--Here, note most carefully that it is not the Law that is written, for the word "written" agrees grammatically with "the work." It is a work that is written by God in the constitution of these whom He has "suffered to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). For "as for His ordinances, they [the nations] have not known them" (Psalms 147:20). God is describing how He has constituted all men: there is a "work" within them, making them morally conscious. As we have said elsewhere, such a "work" would not be contrary to any succeeding revelation to Israel. Indeed, if the Israelites had not had this "work" within them, their moral constitution, the external enactments given by Moses might as well have been given to the stones of the wilderness. The conscience of these [nations] bearing fellow witness [with the Law,--though they have it not] and their inner-thoughts accordingly one with another accusing or else excusing)--Note that Romans 2:14, Romans 2:15 are a parenthesis explanatory of Romans 2:12, Romans 2:13 : read Romans 2:13 and Romans 2:16 consecutively to see this fact.

[45] This Greek word ethne, translated "Gentiles" in our versions, could always, and in some cases with great advantage, be translated "nations." It means. like the Hebrew goyim, nations foreign to Israel--not having, as had they, the true God.

ACCORDING TO HEART-SECRETS 16--in the day when God shall judge the secret counsels of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:16 : The sixth principle of God’s judgment here is that it comprehends the very secrets of men. Within every human heart, in hours of consciousness, there is going on a constant dialogue, as we read in Romans 2:15 : "Their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them." There are those, indeed, in whom conscience has been "seared as with a hot iron," so that its voice is no longer heard in protest. In these, also, however, God continually reads the dark, secret things of sin. And in the coming "day" all secrets must come to light. For the wicked, what an outlook! Even the saints, when Christ appears the second time, will come before the judgment seat (bema) of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). And, while the question of their works as sins will not be brought up at all,--for it is "apart from sin" that He appears to His own (Hebrews 9:28),--yet to these, nevertheless, it is said in 1 Corinthians 4:5 : "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God." It will be a solemn enough time, even for the saints, to have the

works of their lives since their salvation examined, yea, even concerning the "counsels of the hearts," their hidden motives. For the saints will receive only such "praise from God" as is righteously possible for each. But how unutterably awful even the contemplation of appearing unforgiven before a God Who will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ,--no longer a patient and willing Redeemer, but God's appointed Judge in righteousness! (Acts 17:31). In this great passage, Romans 2:12-16, review carefully these facts:

(a) Absence of degrees of privilege possessed by others, excuses no one.

(b) The greater the privilege, however, the more searching and severe the judgment.

(c) All have committed sin, but it is the life-choice of sin, the life looked at as a whole, that is considered, in this place.

(d) Merely "hearing" the Law by a Jew (or, today, by Gentiles, the gospel) justifies no one. The Jew boasted in knowing the Law, but Christ said, "None of you keepeth the Law." Thus, today, millions conscious of "Christian" privilege, and making "Christian" profession are going steadily on to judgment. For the Jew did not obey the Law (which commanded righteousness), and the merely professing Christian has not obeyed the gospel, which commands personal faith in the shed blood of the Redeemer, and confession before men of faith in Christ Risen.

(e) The Gentiles, by their very moral constitution, "by nature," approve the things of the Law: that is, all men know it is wrong to lie, steal, and murder. I asked Chinese who had never heard the Law or the gospel if they knew these things were wrong; they all admitted they did. Consequently,

(f) They are said to be "a law unto themselves, since they show the work of the Law, written in their heart." It is an inner moral consciousness "written" in man's heart, a "work," which while not the Law (though of course not contrary to it), must nevertheless, not be confounded with that operation of God in the future in the hearts of redeemed Israel, when He restores them: "I will put my Law in their inward parts [they will love it], and in their hearts will I write it." [They will not have to try to recollect the Law: they will have it constantly and always before them] for the "stony heart" will have been "taken away" (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-27). It is then that the (Mosaic) Law will be fulfilled in "every jot and tittle," by redeemed Israel. But the work of the Law appears in every human being; so that we read,

(g) Man's conscience bears fellow-witness to this law-work in his moral constitution; consequently men daily, hourly, constantly, are having "inward thoughts" which have voices of accusation or approval, according as a man's conduct may be. To repeat, then, God here declares that there is a righteous "work" Divinely written and maintained in all men's hearts, from which they cannot escape; because their consciences "agree" with it (with this inner working). This "work" is evidently what lies at the root of the human conscience. The Law (of Moses) has never been written in the hearts of the Gentiles; but a Divine "work" is present in all men. The moral and spiritual constitution of man came 2,500 years before Moses' Law; and the latter could only be the written expression of what existed before as a work, or witness, in man's being, to which his conscience attested. [46]

[46] Of course the Sabbath was not a part of this "work" in man's heart. For, although God. "blessed" the seventh day (Genesis 2:3), and "hallowed" it, it was because He rested from all His

work on that day. And it was into His rest that men failed to enter. For God first revealed the Sabbath to man when He gave it to Israel by means of the manna, and explained it at Sinai (Exodus 19:1-25). It was God’s special token of a covenant between Himself and Israel. No one can read Exodus 31:12-17, with an open mind, and fail to see that the Sabbath was a new revelation to Israel at that time! (Compare Nehemiah 9:14) To Adam was given one simple test of his obedience--not a day, but a tree! Israel to whom God’s rest was proposed twice, have ever failed to enter it (Hebrews 4:3-8). See further discussion of the Sabbath in Chapter Fourteen.

ACCORDING TO REALITY, NOT RELIGIOUS PROFESSION The seventh principle of His judgment, therefore, is, that even a Divinely revealed religion provides no security to its professor if devoid of reality: whether the "Jews’ religion" at the beginning of the dispensation, or the "Christian religion" (as it has come to be called), today (Romans 2:17-29).

17 But if thou bearest the name of a Jew, and restest upon the Law, and gloriest in God, 18 and knowest His will, and approvest the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the Law; 19 and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the Law the form of knowledge and of the truth: 21 thou therefore teaching another! art thou not teaching thyself? thou, preaching not to steal--dost thou steal? 22 thou, saying not to commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou, holding idols in abhorrence, art thou a temple-robber? 23 thou, who art glorying in the Law, through thy own transgression of the Law, art thou dishonoring God? 24 For the name of God through you [Jews] is being blasphemed among the Gentiles, even as it is written! 25 For circumcision indeed does profit, if thou art a law-keeper: but if thou art a transgressor of law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision. 26 If therefore the uncircumcision be observing the moral requirements of the Law, shall not the uncircumcision of such a one be reckoned for circumcision? 27 and shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it keep the Law, rise up in judgment against thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of law? 28 For he is not a Jew, who is one in appearance: neither is that circumcision which is in appearance, in the flesh! 29 But on the contrary, he is a Jew who is one in secret; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter; whose praise is not from men, but on the contrary, from God! In the above verses Paul directly addresses the Jew. He shows that the Jew "rested" on The Law,--on having it; and was proud that the will of the true God had been revealed to him; that he "knew" that will, and was therefore able to "approve the things that are excellent." He developed a confidence in himself as a guide, a light, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher, because in the law he had "the form of knowledge and of the truth." But did he apply it to himself,--his teaching, his preaching, his saying what folks should be, his abhorring idols, his glorying in The Law? Nay! the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the selfishness, the pride, the covetousness, the general wickedness of the Jew!

Paul goes on to declare that Jewish circumcision, which was the mark of that nation’s separation to God, was good only if one were thus really separated to God, but that if not, the Jew was really an uncircumcised one; that he was excelled instead, and "judged," by those who, wholly outside circumcision, feared and walked with God. Paul finally declares that a man is not a Jew who is merely one outwardly, and that God does not regard mere outward circumcision: that the only Jew in God’s sight is an "Israelite indeed," like Nathaniel, sincere and without guile; and that circumcision is a heart matter, in the real spirit of separation to God and regard for Him. (See the

same phrase by which God describes a real Jew [en t krupto] in Matthew 6:3; Matthew 6:6, etc.) So much for the Jew who was the "religious" man, when Paul wrote Romans. But the "religious" man today is the "professing Christian," and "church-membership" as they call it, has taken the place, in the thought of Christendom, of the Jew's consciousness of belonging to the favored Israelitish race.

If we should thus apply this passage (Romans 2:17-29), must it not read something like this?--"If thou bearest the name of a Christian, and restest on having the gospel, and gloriest in God, and knowest His will, and approvest the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the gospel; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, having in the gospel the form of knowledge and of the truth"--Then would follow the searching questions of Romans 2:21-22; for do we not know teachers that teach others, but refuse to follow their own teaching? And preachers that denounce stealing, but are accused by the world of being themselves money-grabbers? [47] So it would read, "Thou who gloriest in the gospel, through thy disobedience to the gospel, dishonorest thou God? The name of God is blasphemed among non church-members' [48] because of you! Church-membership [49] indeed profiteth if thou be an obeyer of the gospel; but if thou be a refuser of a gospel-walk, thy church-membership' is become non church-membership.' If therefore a non church-member' obey the gospel, shall not his non church-membership' be reckoned for church-membership' ? And shall not non church-members,' if they obey the gospel, judge thee, who with the letter and church-membership' art a refuser of a gospel-walk? For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that church-membership' which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and church-membership' is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

[47] The preaching of the gospel is called in the world a "learned profession," along with law and medicine, instead of a high calling of God. The world sneers at the ecclesiastical politics and self-seeking it sees displayed so often. Many professional evangelists, especially, have caused a stench by their reaching after men's pocket-books.

[48] Of course we are not referring here to humble, repentant people who may not have become connected as yet with any company of believers: for we have found some few of this class. On the other hand, neither do we at all refer, in the questions above, to the cynical, self-righteous, critics of the church, and church-fellowship, who complain: "The church is full of hypocrites, therefore, I will have nothing to do with it." The folly of such as these is at once manifest: hypocrites are going to hell; and these men, who pretend to be shunning the hypocrites on earth, if they reject personal faith in and public confession of Christ, are on their way to join them throughout eternity! For whatever the failings of Christians, in their divisions into sects, their all too manifest weakness of faith, and their inconsistencies, true believers find themselves desirous at once of fellowship with other believers--be the weakness of those believers what it may!

[49] We repeatedly call attention to the fact which every student of Scripture discovers, that believers are not known in Scripture as members of a local assembly, but members of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30): "members of Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:15); and, "members one of another" (Romans 12:5). This is the only membership found in Scripture. Although men use the word "member" of this or that local assembly or "denomination," the word should be fellowship instead of membership. There is but one Body: "There is one Body and one Spirit." This should be the

constant consciousness of all Christians. To conceive of a Presbyterian body, or a Baptist body, or a Methodist body, is to defeat at once the one great Body-consciousness which the Holy Spirit desires to create in all true believers, in answer to our Lord's Great Prayer in John 17:21 : "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us." This, of course, is the very farthest remove from the modernistic cry for "unity," (as they say), in which they would include all in an outward gathering together--whether believers, unbelievers (modernists), Jews, or what-not. The unity of the Body of Christ is in the Holy Spirit, and every believer is a member of that one Body of which Christ Himself is the Head. The essence of sectarianism is to be so committed to a system, or to a person, as to be unable to go on with God, in living faith. No man, no system is fully right. Only God's Word is perfect. If you are free, you will not be governed in reading God's Word by what any man may say, however excellent; or what any system holds. If you must run to this or that "authority," you are a mere sectarian. The Holy Spirit has come! "My children shall be taught of Me," God has said.

Now before we proceed, remember yet once again, that God's great announcement of these principles of His throne is given to awaken men out of their false hopes about themselves, unto the truth about themselves; and is to be regarded as a description of God's judgment, as it must be--in order that men may be aroused, and not refuse His truth. But do not confuse Romans Two with Revelation Twenty! At the Judgment Day there will be no such preaching and reasoning with men as Paul here is doing, but damnation only--"according to their works--the things written in the books." O sinner, if God's rebukes are still coming to thee, there is sweet hope for thee! There will be no rebukes in that Great Day: but "visitation" only!

02.04. Chapter 3A

CHAPTER 3A The Jews had God’s Oracles--a Great Advantage: their Unfaithfulness Proves, not Hinders, God’s Just Judgment. Romans 3:1-8.

Sweeping Fourteen-fold Indictment from Old Testament Scriptures: All Men, Jews and Gentiles, Brought in Guilty before God; and so All Mouths Stopped. Romans 3:9-20.

Grace, However, for the Guilty! God’s Righteousness by Another Way than Law-through Faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 3:21-31.

1 What advantage then hath the Jew [over the Gentile]? or what has been the profit of circumcision? 2 Much every way: foremost of all, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 For what if some were faithless to the trust? shall we at all think that their faithlessness annulled God’s faithfulness? 4 Be it not thought of! Yea, let God be true, though every man aliar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, And mightest prevail when Thou comest into judgment [by man]. 5 But if our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? (I speak after the manner of men). 6 Be it not thought of! for then how shall God judge the world? 7 But if the truth of God through my lie abounded unto His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? 8 and why not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say). Let us do evil, that good may come?--whose condemnation is just! OR TO PARAPHRASE this passage: "What preeminence then (if both Jewhood and circumcision are spiritual and inward only) hath the Jew? Or what has the Divine ordinance of circumcision amounted to? Much in every respect! But first and foremost that to that nation the oracles of God were entrusted. For what if some were faithless (to that trust)? Shall their faithlessness render inoperative the faithfulness of God (in carrying out those oracles)? Far be the thought! Yea, let God be found true, and every man, Gentile and Jew (found) false; as it is written (and that by king David, himself, confessing blood-guiltiness): That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, And mightest prevail when Thou are judged (by sinful man as to the justice of Thy ways.’)

"But (it is further objected) if the unrighteousness of us Jews has proved and publicly commended the righteousness of God both as to His holy nature and’ as to His truth--(for He plainly prophesied Israel would sin) can we not say that God would be unrighteous to visit us Jews with wrath? (I am speaking thus,--though with horror--because it is the way men talk). Now away with the thought! [50] For how then (if it were unrighteous for God to visit a Jew with wrath) could God judge the WORLD? (as He indeed will). But (the Jewish objector continues) if the truth of God through my falsity has abounded unto His glory, why am I still judged as a sinner? and why not (since our Jewish evil-doings have in the past been made by God to bring about good)--why not keep doing evil that good may come? They are even slanderously reporting our teaching this awful doctrine!--because we preach righteousness by grace and faith and not by good works. The condemnation of those who bring such arguments is self-evident, and on the very face of it, is just!"

[50] The Greek expression me-genoita, translated in both A. V, and R. V. "God forbid," does not contain the name of God, and should not be so translated. It amounts to "Banish the thought!" Literally, it is, "Be it not so!" or, "Let it not be conceived of!" Paul uses it frequently,--as much as nine or ten times in this Epistle--to denote instant and horrified rejection of a conception.

Now to us, at this end of the dispensation, this insistence of God upon moral reality before Him of all, including the Jews themselves, "seems simplicity itself; but it was not so simple to those whom it seemed to strip of all their special and Divinely bestowed privileges." Paul assuredly tells us, in this third chapter, that there is "no distinction" before God between Jews and Gentiles as regards sinner-hood, but he will meet those objections which would arise (Romans 3:1-8) based in the Jew's mind on (a) the peculiar position of privilege given by God to Israel as Jehovah's separate people; and on (b) the righteous character of God Himself as conceived of by the Jew in his privileged position. These objections [51] are specious and daring--next to blasphemous: but they must be answered.

[51] Probably Alford is right in viewing these objecting questions "not as coming from an objector, but as asked by the apostle himself anticipating the thought of his reader." I would suggest, however, that the questions beginning in this manner in verse 1 proceed to Paul's thinking Jew-wise in verse 5, and finally, in verse 7, quoting verbally what a Jew (not Paul) would say. This whole passage is generally regarded as one of the most difficult in the whole Epistle. But it will, as we spend work upon it, repay us, Bunyan says:

"Hard texts are nuts--I would not call them cheaters: Whose shells do ofttimes keep them from the eaters." The importance of this great passage cannot be overestimated, for if the Jew as that end of the dispensation, or any "religious" person at this end, be allowed to plead special privilege or light as exempting him from judgment, he will spiritually (of course not actually) escape the general sentence of verse 19(Romans 3:19), where "all the world" is brought under the judgment of God. If a man escapes in spirit from God's pronouncement of "guilty," he will never truly rely upon the shed blood of the Guilt-Bearer, Christ!

Now there are three Jewish questions raised in this passage:

Question I Romans 3:1-4 : What advantage [52] or preeminence has the Jew and circumcision?

[52] We know that in this dispensation of Grace some Jewish "advantages" become actually a hindrance to one desiring to enter all Divine blessing wholly on grace grounds. This is set forth by Paul in Php 3:4-7 ff. There he enumerates seven natural advantages, of which, curiously, circumcision is the first mentioned, zealous persecution of the Church the sixth, and outward legal blamelessness the seventh! These were on the profit side (Greek, literally, "gains" side), of Paul's ledger, but he transferred them to the "loss" side: "What things were gains to me, these have I counted loss for Christ."

Answer: That nation was entrusted with the oracles of God--inestimable, eternal advantage! despite their unfaithfulness. Every writer of the Bible is, we believe from this, an Israelite. Jewish faithlessness could not annul God's faithfulness in carrying out those oracles (whether of promise, prophecy, or judgment). God must be found true, though every man be false (to whatever God entrusts to him). Paul instances David's most humble confession and ascription of righteousness to God, after David's own great sin had shown David himself faithless to the royal covenant

Jehovah had committed to him.

Alford well says: "Because they have broken faith on their part, shall God break faith also on His? Rather let us believe all men on earth to have broken their word and troth, than God His. Whatever becomes of men and their truth, His truth must stand fast." The "faithlessness" here of the Jew is not his failure to believe God's oracles. (That subject Paul takes up in Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36.) What is here before us, is the Jew's attitude toward the great primary privilege and responsibility of that nation as the depositary of the Divine oracles. In Romans 3:5, Paul makes the Jews call their conduct "our unrighteousness." It consisted in:

1. National disobedience to God's oracles from Sinai onward.

2. Such neglect of these oracles, that at times (as in Josiah's day), a single copy of the Law was a rarity!

3. Pride, however, over their position as the possessors of these oracles, [53] even to the despising of nations that had them not, instead of ministering them to others (as Psalms 67:1-7 shows was Israel's real business).

[53] "As to the expression, "God's oracles" (Gr. logia) we quote: Olshausen: "No doubt in the first place the promises (Acts 7:38; 1 Peter 4:11, etc.), and indeed especially those of the Messiah and the kingdom of God, to which all others were related . . . but the whole Word of God is also indicated by this expression. The Divine promises were confided to the Jews, since in what follows it is just this faithlessness (apistia) in the possession of these promises which is spoken of. The mention is made of Divine faithfulness (pistia) only in connection with this faithlessness." Tholuck; "Oracles (logia) here are primarily, Divine declarations; hence, particularly, promises and prophecies." Alford: "Not only the law of Moses, but all the revelation of God hitherto made of Himself directly, all of which had been entrusted to Jews only." Meyer: "Paul means the Holy Scriptures and especially the prophecies of the Messiah and the kingdom. These are not destroyed by the Jews' unbelief."

4. Appalling ignorance of the spiritual meaning of the Divine oracles, and of the "voices of their prophets," so they even killed the Righteous One! (Acts 13:27).

Question II

Romans 3:5-6 : If God makes use of human sin to set forth His glory (as He will) would it not be unrighteous to punish that sin with wrath? Here Paul enters into the Jewish consciousness: "If our unrighteous Jewish history has commended the righteousness of God, what shall we say? God went right on fulfilling what His oracles said, despite the unfaithfulness of us to whom they had been committed, and, in fact, by means of our sinful Jewish history God's prophecies concerning our disobedience were fulfilled before the whole world, from Moses on."

Read here Deuteronomy 31:14-30, Deuteronomy 32:1-47. For it is about Israel that Deuteronomy 32:35-47 is written. The Jew, knowing well his past disobedient history, yet holds fast to his national place of outward favor, resisting Paul's word of Chapter Two, "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly"; and daring to regard God as "unrighteous" who would "visit with wrath" individuals of His favored nation--for they had only carried out God's predictions!

Paul, in even bringing up such a question as God's acting unrighteously in visiting disobedient Israelites with wrath, instantly puts in the reverent parenthesis: "I speak after the manner of men"; as, "putting himself in the place of the generality of men, and using an argument such as they would use."

Answer: "Far be such a thought! for then (if God should be unrighteous in visiting a Jew with wrath) how shall God judge the world?" The Judge of all the earth will do right, and He will judge the whole world (Acts 17:31) which involves the infliction of wrath upon any and all impenitent, as all Scripture shows.

Note that Paul assumes, and so do even these cavillers, that there will be a day of judgment: "God who visiteth with wrath." What the apostle is attacking is the false hopes of men to evade that judgment. Christ has been judged and smitten in our stead. But, alas, how a man hates to come to the cross as one "to whom that stroke was due" (Isaiah 53:8). But if you manage to escape conviction of sin, and thus miss personal faith in the Crucified One, you will go to hell forever.

Question III

Romans 3:7-8 : "If God's truth (as to His warnings and promises) was enhanced through my falsity--if He got glory through my (Jewish) sin, why does He find fault with me as a sinner?" Here the very words of the resisting Jew are, as it were, quoted.

Answer: While such cavilling Paul will not deign to answer (for it answers itself!) Paul does return into the gainsaying Jews' teeth the constant slander against salvation by grace,--that it led to license: "The condemnation of such trifling is just! For it is evident both to the hearer and to the asker of such a question that doing evil that good may come, does not change the character of the evil, nor take away its guilt from him who commits it."

"Slander" against the gospel of grace is still going on, and will go on until the Lord comes in righteousness. Moule well says, "The mighty paradox of justification (without works) lent itself easily to the distortions, as well as to the contradictions, of sinners. Let us do evil that good may come' no doubt represented the report which prejudice and bigotry would regularly carry away and spread after every discourse and every argument about free forgiveness. It is so still: If this is true, we may live as we like'; If this is true, then the vilest sinner makes the best saint.'" [54]

[54] "Godet says: "God cannot become guilty of any wrong toward any being whatever. Now this is what He seems to do to the sinner, when He at once condemns and makes use of him." The Jews, deluded by pride, and falsely basing God's favor to their nation upon their own deserts, absolved themselves from judgment. Judgment they relegated to the "goyim," the "ethn," the Gentiles. Paul himself shows the Jewish consciousness in his rebuke to Peter in Galatians 2:1-21 : "We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." And the Pharisees said even of the common, non-religious sinners of the Jewish nation: "This multitude that knoweth not the Law, are accursed!" (John 7:49). But if we, professing Christians, consign this whole passage to the Jew, we fall directly into the same terrible trap. Whole multitudes today in Christendom, sheltered in their imagination by the fact that they have "joined" some church, resent the very doctrines that Paul here insists on. Thousands of so-called "church-members" not only have never been brought under real conviction of sin and guilt and personal danger, but rise in anger like the Jews of Paul's day when one preaches their danger directly to them!

Now if God paid no attention whatever to the claim of the Jew to be exempt from judgment because he was a Jew, neither will He pay any attention to the claim of the "Baptist" or "Presbyterian," "Episcopalian" or "Methodist,"--as such. For all men are alike guilty, common sinners! What avails before a holy God the special religious names sinners may call themselves? This book of Romans will do you and me no good if we apply it to Jews or Mormons only!

9 What then? are we [Jews] superior? Not at all! For we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; 10 as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none that understandeth [divine things], There is none that seeketh after God; 12 They all abandoned the way [of God], together they became unprofitable; There is none that practiseth goodness, no, not so much as one: 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; With their tongues they have used deceit: The venom of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Revelation 3:9 : What then?--in view of all said of the Jews from Romans 2:17-29, Romans 3:1-8. Are we Jews superior (as we generally think ourselves to be to them--that is, to the Gentiles?) Not at all! Paul here speaks as a Jew,--in sympathy with the Jewish nation, indeed, but rejecting wholly their boast of superiority, in view of the great general indictment of the whole human race, that began in this Epistle at Romans 1:18 and continues to Romans 3:20. This is what he means by having before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin. "To be under sin means to be under the power of sin, to be sinners, whether the idea of guilt, just exposure to condemnation, or of pollution, or both, be conveyed by the expression" (Hodge).

Now this expression "under sin" is a remarkable and unusual one. We need to note the same expression and context in Galatians 3:22 : "The Scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." "All things under sin" is a larger expression than "guilty of sin," or, "in bondage to sin." It is a general state described, as of convicts in a prison, or disease-stricken people "under quarantine." An even stronger expression concerning human beings, Gentiles or Jews, asserts: "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32); and the words, "The Scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise . . . might be given," bear out this fact. Moule says, "Being brought under sin, (as the Greek bids us more exactly render), giving us the thought that the race has fallen from a good estate into an evil." That the Jews and Greeks alike, that is, the whole world, are "under sin," is next abundantly shown by Paul from seven Old Testament Scriptures. It will not do to say, as do some, that since the Scriptures were given only to the Jews, therefore the Jews only are in view here, in verses 10 to 18. For we read in Psalms 14, the very first Scripture here quoted:

"Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there were any that did understand."

"Children of men" is a wider term than Jews. Furthermore, Romans 3:9, which begins this great arraignment, includes both Jews and Greeks as being "all under sin." This, therefore, is a world-wide indictment.

FOURTEEN HORRIBLE THINGS ABOUT ALL MEN

We shall find God speaking, in these fourteen counts, [55] first, as a Judge: Romans 3:10-12; next, as a Physician: Romans 3:13-15; and third, as a Divine Historian: Romans 3:16-18.

[55] This awful list of fourteen facts about the human race, quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures, describes, of course, humanity as it is by nature. Therefore if we have believed the gospel, and are thus righteous before God in Christ, we have double reason to study these truths: first, that we may by understanding the facts, as God sees them, about ourselves, have a correct estimate of humanity, which, of course, unenlightened men never gain; and, second, that we may be constantly moved to give praise to God for His measureless grace that reached even such as we were! Meyer's outline of Romans 3:10-18 is: "(1) A state of sin generally (Romans 3:10-12); (2) practices of sin in words (Romans 3:13-14); in deeds (Romans 3:15-17); and (3) the sinful source of the whole (Romans 3:18)." Haldane thus sums them up: "The first of them, Romans 3:10, prefers the general charge of unrighteousness; the second, Romans 3:11-12, marks the internal character, or disorders of the heart; third, Romans 3:13-14, those of the words; the fourth, Romans 3:15-17, those of the actions; the last, Romans 3:18, declares the cause "of the whole."

First, then, as a Judge God describes man's condition:

Romans 3:10 : To begin with, There is none righteous [before God], no, not one (Psalms 14:1; Psalms 53:1; Job 9:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20). No human being has in himself ever been righteous. Even Adam was not righteous: he was innocent--not knowing good and evil. Let us put far from our minds the fond falsehoods of philosophy, science, and human "religions," that there have been men of our race who have attained to a standing before God in righteousness.

Romans 3:11 : Next, There is none that understandeth [Divine things]. We have added the words "Divine things" even in the Scripture text, because this verb (suni mi) translated "understandeth" is one of those words which God reserves in Scripture unto a peculiar meaning. (See footnote on Romans 1:31.) Note its use in Matthew 13:13; Matthew 13:14; Matthew 13:15; Matthew 13:19; Matthew 13:23; Matthew 13:51, as, for instance, Matthew 13:19 : "When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth It not." It is used twenty-six times in the New Testament, the last time in Ephesians 5:17 : "Understand what the will of the Lord is." Now humanity, by nature, "understands" nothing of God. Men think they do, and write vast books on the subject; but God's sentence remains: "There is none that understandeth." "In the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God." Believe just that: it is true. The third of these solemn counts is, There is none that: seeketh after God. You say, How can this be possible in view of pagan lands filled with temples, and worshipers thronging them? God's answer is: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God" (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Adam, sinning, turned his back and fled from a holy God. God had to take the place of the seeker: "Adam, where art thou?" So it has ever been. No human being has ever sought the holy God. Conscious of his creature weakness, and also of responsibility and guilt, and filled with terrors of conscience, or terrors directly demon-wrought; or perhaps under the delusion that some "god" (really, demon) might grant him this or that favor, man has built his temples and conducts his worship. Banish from your mind the idea that any human being has ever had a holy thought, or love for a holy God, in his natural heart! Grace "praeveniens et efficax" (grace "prevenient and efficacious") is the old phrase expressing the truth that God Himself takes the place of the seeker, convicter, persuader, giver, and final perfecter of all man's salvation. His sovereign grace goes

ahead of, and brings into being, all human response to God. The fourth solemn count is that of universal human apostasy: They all abandoned the way [of God]. The same Greek word is used only twice elsewhere in the New Testament: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" says Paul (Chapter Romans 16:17). The separation was to be absolute, and of choice. And in 1 Peter 3:11, the saints are told (quoting Psalms 34:1-22): "Turn away from evil, and do good,"--again a direct choice. In Psalms 14:3 it is: "They are all gone aside"; and in Psalms 53:3 : "Every one of them is gone back." To Israel it was said: "Ye shall observe to do therefore as Jehovah your God hath commanded you" (Deuteronomy 5:32). But Isaiah speaks of them (and we know the application becomes universal): "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6); while Malachi in the closing sad message of the Old Testament bewails: "Ye are turned aside out of the way" (Malachi 2:8). To understand Romans 3:12, we must conceive of a race of creatures turned out of God's way, as really as are Satan's angels, or the demons. The whole race of man is by nature in that awful case! As a result you have the fifth count: They are together become unprofitable. [56] The human race is useless, and worse than useless, to God. This word translated "unprofitable" was used by the Greeks concerning rotten fruit, or whatever was utterly, irrevocably bad, and therefore useless. Ask any housewife what can be done with rotten fruit! In Psalms 14:3; Psalms 53:1, from which this is quoted, it is translated "become filthy." Unless we hold firmly in mind these statements of truth concerning humanity, we shall fail to see what man is, and so what God's grace sets before him.

[56] It is striking how God uses the aorist tense here and in the previous count. The race is looked at from Adam down, and as partaking of his guilt, and wilfully in his path. Note also hemarton of Romans 3:23 : "all sinned, and are [as a result] falling short," We shall note this word further, in Chapter Romans 5:12. The sixth count is, There is none that practiseth goodness, no, not so much as one. Corruption rather than holiness, selfishness rather than goodness, cruelty rather than kindness, is the way of apostate mankind everywhere. Thus declares the Judge who looks upon men as they are.

II

Romans 3:13 : Next, God speaks as the all-wise, holy Physician, in diagnosis: Their throat is an open sepulchre. Doctors always insist first on looking down our throats: and we all know that the throat and tongue denote the state of health. There could be nothing more horrible than what we have here: death, decay, moral stench, and that not hidden, but open! Unhidden, unashamed putridity:--thus a holy God describes the throat of every one of us by nature! As Bishop Howe says: "Emitting the noisome exhalations of a putrid heart." We must remember we are here seeing man through God's all-holy eyes. With their tongues they have been using deceit [since man's fall]. The verb is in the imperfect tense, which denotes the habitual practice of the human race. This includes your tongue and mine, reader. But the case is still worse; for the Physician continues: The venom of asps is under their lips: The fangs of a deadly serpent lie, ordinarily, folded back in its upper jaw, but when it throws up its head to strike, those hollow fangs drop down, and when the serpent bites, the fangs press a sack of deadly poison hidden "under its lips," at the root, thus injecting the venom into the wound. You and I were born with moral poison-sacks like this. And how people do claim the right to strike others with their venom-words! to use their snake-fangs!

Romans 3:14 : Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness (Psalms 10:7) : To prove this, you need only take your stand upon any street, and strike upon the mouth a passerby. As well strike a hornets' nest! How men do curse others! Bitterness is ever ready! What fearful folly for a race speaking thus to imagine that by "being baptized," and "joining the church" they are ready to "go to heaven," and be in the holy company on high, with the meek and lowly Son of God and the holy angels,--and all this without a thought of being forgiven, washed, born again!

Romans 3:15 : Their feet are swift to shed blood (Isaiah 59:7): I saw a child under two years raise its puny fist against another, crying, "I'll kill 'oo!" Murder is so common, now, that new hideous expressions are invented: "I'll get him"; "Bump him off"; "Put him on the spot"; "Take him for a ride"; or, as the awful Communistic phrase puts it, "Liquidate him." When the restraining grace of God is withdrawn, it will be given to the Red Horse Sitter "to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another" (Revelation 6:4). Men's feet, like tigers', are ready and swift for blood-shedding: "For further details, read your daily papers!"

III Third, God speaks as the All-seeing Historian of fallen man:

Romans 3:16 : Destruction and misery are in their ways (Isaiah 59:7). What an epitome of human history. It is said that the ancient Troy of which Homer sang was built upon the ruins of an earlier Troy,--and that seven other Troys, each constructed upon the ruins of a former, have been found! As Meyer vividly renders: "Where they go is desolations (fragments) and misery (which they produce)." Those who so loudly proclaim that the human race is "improving," "progressing," are blind deceivers,--blind to history, blind to present day facts, blind to the rising tide of human violence. "As it was in the days of Noah," our Lord said, "so shall be the coming of the Son of Man." In those days of Noah the earth became "full of violence" (Genesis 6:11).

Romans 3:17 : And the way of peace they have not known. (Isaiah 59:8). It is a terrible thing God here reveals, that not one of the human race knows, or is by nature pursuing, the path of peace. It does not seem to me that the Spirit of God speaks here of that peace with God on the ground of accepted sacrifice which Romans 5:1 describes (and which is always a direct revelation of God to the soul), but rather in consistence with the context and with the passage in Isaiah 59:8 from which it is drawn: "The way of peace they know not; [57] and there is no justice in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace." The unregenerate man does not know, follow, or really desire to know the way of wisdom, all whose paths are peace (Proverbs 3:17). Thomas Scott well says: "They know not the ways in which godly men walk, at peace with God and their neighbors; and so they go on in those paths which lead to misery and ruin both to themselves and to each other."

[57] This ignorance, of course, is itself a matter of guilt, as is abundantly shown in Leviticus 4:2; Leviticus 4:13; Leviticus 4:22; Leviticus 4:27 : "If any of the people of the land sin unwittingly in doing anything . . . and be guilty."

Romans 3:18 : There is no fear of God before their eyes (Psalms 36:1). This last is the most awful count of all, and explains all the others. "To fear God consists in having such a due sense of the majesty and holiness and justice and goodness of God, as shall make us thoroughly fearful to offend Him. For each of these attributes of God is proper to raise a suitable fear in every Christian mind." A friend once pointed out to me a champion prize-fighter of America, and I heard another

man remark, "How I'd hate to be hit by him!" He could fear a fellow-man. But in a few moments the same man's mouth was using the name of God, and even of Jesus Christ, in profanity! There was "no fear of God before his eyes." It meant nothing to him that God had said, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." But what will it mean when that man steps out of this life into the realities of eternity! Bengel aptly notes, "The seat of reverence is in the eyes." Godet says: "The words before their eyes' show that it belongs to man freely to evoke or suppress this inward view of God on which his moral conduct depends." Haldane comments: "They have not that reverential fear of Him which is the beginning of wisdom, and which is connected with departing from evil. It is astonishing that men, while they acknowledge that there is a God, should act without any fear of His displeasure. They fear a worm of the dust like themselves, but disregard the Most High!" And Calvin says: "Out of the contempt of God cometh all wickedness. Seeing that the fear of God is the fountain of wisdom, when we are once departed from it, there abideth nothing right or sincere. If it be wanting, we are loosed unto all kind of licentious wickedness." This great passage then, (Romans 3:9-18) needs to be pondered, prayed over, thoroughly believed, and preached continually, in these last days, when God-consciousness is dying out. It is no kindness, but a terrible wrong, to hide from a criminal the sentence that must surely overtake him unless pardoned; for a physician to conceal from a patient a cancer that will destroy him unless quickly removed; for one acquainted with the hidden pitfalls of a path he beholds someone taking, not to warn him of his danger!

Romans 3:19-20 concern particularly that nation to whom the Law was given, for Paul plainly in Romans 3:9-18 to "both Jews and Greeks" as "all under sin." But now he turns directly to those who had the Law:

19 Now we know that whatsoever the Law says it is speaking to them that are under the Law [i.e., to the Jews]; in order that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world [Gentile and Jew"] may come under the judgment of God; 20 because out of works of law no flesh shall be declared righteous before Him; for through law comes knowledge of sin [not righteousness]. In Romans 3:19, we repeat, and not till then, does Paul turn again to the Jews as those who were under law [58] to shut off their possible escape from that general arraignment by Scripture of "both Jews and Greeks" beginning at the ninth verse. Thus every mouth was "stopped." Men's mouths keep talking of their own goodness or of someone else's badness, or of both,--as, for example, the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. But the moral history of mankind delineated in Chapter One; and the stern principles of God's judgment which considered neither man's high notions of himself, nor his religious professions, as shown in Chapter Two; and now, in Chapter Three, the fourteen sweeping statements of Scripture concerning the whole guilty human race, with the double conviction of the Jews as not only sinners, but also transgressors of the very Law they gloried in,--all this stops men's vain mouths! For they are all brought into the presence of their Judge, and the sentence of guilty is upon them all. Not that they are brought in to have their just penalty executed upon them; but that they may be silent while God their Judge announces--astonishing thing!--that He has himself already dealt with the world's sin upon a sin-offering, Jesus, His Son; whom, we shall soon see, He set forth at the cross as a righteous meeting-ground between Himself in all His holiness and righteousness; and the sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, in all his guilt,--through simple faith in the shed blood of this Redeemer!

[58] Many insist that the words "the Law" of Romans 3:19 include only all the quotations from Scripture from Romans 3:9-18; and they would apply it only to the Jews, as alone possessing that Law, But God in Romans 3:9 applies to both Jews and Greeks what is "written" in the following Scriptures (of Romans 3:10-18). We would regard "the Law" in Romans 3:19, then, in a stricter and more confined sense,--as when our Lord said to the Jews, "Did not Moses give you The Law?" Our Lord's general division was "The Law and The Prophets" (Luke 16:16); and in Luke 24:44 He speaks of "the things that are written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Me." In John 10:34 He uses the term "Your Law," covering even the Psalms. And yet, as we said above, the quotation from Psalms 14:1-7, includes the whole human race. And if it be argued that this psalm uses God's name Jehovah, His special name for Israel, we reply that in the parallel psalm, the Fifty-third, the name used is God, Elohim, the Creator of the whole earth.

Romans 3:20 : Now Paul declares what the law cannot do, and what it can do. First, no one shall be declared righteous [justified] in God's sight by works of law ["doing right"]; and second, the business of God's Law is rather to make known to men their sin, and therefore, their need of a salvation which the Law cannot supply. In this verse we meet by far the most difficult Divine utterance for the human heart to yield to, that we have met in the entire Epistle. Even those "without law,"--"Gentiles that have not the Law" (of Moses-- Romans 2:14), we find throughout history so committed to their own ideas of what is "right," and what will propitiate the demons that they worship, that they will desperately fight for their convictions. (See Paul at Lystra, and at Ephesus, in the Acts.) And how much more difficult the task becomes in dealing with those who, as the Jews, know that they have had a direct revelation from God,--"Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," and, "He that doeth these things shall live by them." When Paul told the Athenians that he acknowledged them to be "very religious" (their city indeed being filled with idols), but that they were ignorant of God, the Creator, who had raised up from the dead One who would be Judge in righteousness: "Some mocked: others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again." Now, we say, if men are brought off only with great difficulty from the follies of idolatry, how much greater the task to persuade men to abandon their trust in a holy Law they know to have been given by the true God, from heaven, and on the fulfillment of which all their hopes for eternity have been dependent! [59] In just the same way Christendom has become fixed in its defense of its "religious" convictions. Scripture names, doctrines and ordinances--falsely explained--have seized hold upon the convictions of men, so that it is more difficult to dislodge them from their position than the heathen themselves. We know from Scripture, for example, that "days, seasons, months and years," do not belong to the Christian position in the least degree, but are Jewish or pagan in origin. Christmas, Lent, Easter, the whole "church calendar," forms, ritualism, the confessional, the mass, clergy,--where are these found in the Epistles of the New Testament? They are not found! Yet try once to dislodge them from those in whose hearts they have been planted! For their heart-hopes are bound up with these false traditions.

[59] Someone says, "It is not the good works men have done so much as the good works they persuade themselves they some time will do, in which they hope." For almost all know themselves to have failed; yet they promise themselves that they will be "better"; and the thought of being declared righteous by a work altogether outside of themselves, never once occurs to them!

None but those taught of God, and they with extreme difficulty and constant watchfulness, escape legal hope. For the question ever before the conscience is, If keeping God's Law avails me nothing

for righteousness in His sight, why did He give it? WHY DID HE GIVE IT? And this difficulty becomes all the greater, the more the excellency of the Law is discovered! For our judgment sees these things of the Law to be "holy, and righteous, and good." And we know (if we are honest) that "God spake all these words"--of the Law.

Therefore, the heart's only relief is to hear God's own Word concerning seven questions; to all of which the coming chapters of Romans will give answer: (1) To what nation did He give the Law; (2) Why He gave the Law; (3) What the Law's ministry was; (4) How it was set aside, or "annulled," for another principle entirely; (5) What is meant by the words "under grace"; (6) How the walk "in the Spirit" takes the place of walking by external enactments; and, (7) How that only in those not under law is "the righteous state" (dikaioma) of the Law fulfilled!

Now it is apparent that to bring men off from their false hopes in their law-obedience, three things must become evident to them:

(a) That law, having been broken, can only condemn.

(b) That even were men enabled now to begin keeping perfectly any law of God, that could not make up for past disobedience, or remove present guilt.

(c) That keeping law is NOT God's way of salvation, or of blessing. In connection with Romans 3:20, we will emphasize only the third of these points, for that is what is insisted upon in this verse. We quote in the footnote below Romans 3:20, and then a number of plain statements of Scripture to the same effect, that we may compare Scripture with Scripture: [60]

[60] By works of law shall no flesh be Justified in his sight; for through law cometh the recognition of sin (Romans 3:20). A man is justified by faith, apart from works of law (Romans 3:28). To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness (Romans 4:5). Not through the Law was the promise made to Abraham . . . but through the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:13). For if they that are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect (Romans 4:14). Through the obedience of the One shall the many be constituted righteous. And law came in alongside, that the trespass might abound (Romans 5:19-20). Ye are not under law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). Ye were made dead to the Law through the body of Christ (Romans 7:4). We have been discharged from the Law (Romans 7:6). Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Romans 10:4). Until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14). A man is not justified by works of law but through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16) If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law (Galatians 5:18). Law is not made for a righteous man (1 Timothy 1:9). For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment [by Him who gave it] because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, [Christ's work] through which we draw nigh unto God (Hebrews 7:18; Hebrews 7:19). The knowledge (or recognition) of sin comes through law,--by (1) its revealing what God approved in man, and what God disapproved and forbade; (2) causing man to undertake obedience; and (3) condemning him for failure to obey. To all seven of the questions above, the coming chapters of Romans, compared with other Scriptures, will, as we have said, fully give the answers. But it will be wise, perhaps, to look a moment more, in this place, at questions 2, 3 and 4: As to Question

Two, Why God gave the Law, we call attention now, as elsewhere, to the fact that in His dealing with Abraham, and, in fact, in all His ways with the patriarchs, there was not the Law, but simply and only the promise. We plainly see in Romans 5:14 that they were not under law. They walked by simple faith, which is, of course, the only principle according to which God has saving relations with man since he became a sinner. But (and this is important) God must show man his sinnerhood and this could not be done but by His revealing His holiness and righteousness, and asking man to conform his life and ways to that holy and righteous rule. God knew he would not and could not do this; but man did not know it, and must discover it through failure. Therefore and thereunto did God give the Law. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin."

We have now partly answered Question Three, as to what was the appointed ministry of the Law. But the matter needs to be further emphasized. God names the Law a "ministration of condemnation and death" and not of righteousness. As Paul says in Chapter Seven, "Sin, that it might be shown to be sin, wrought death to me through that which was good" (the Law). As to Question Four, the Law was set aside or "disannulled." We have God’s oft-repeated and most emphatic assertion, that this has been done: "There is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, [Christ’s death, burial and resurrection], through which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:18; Hebrews 7:19). We repeat this over and over, because that is the way God does--He asserts and re-asserts this great fact: knowing man’s self-righteousness will hardly suffer the Law to be taken away.

Now it was not that God changed His plan, though to the thoughtless mind He might seem to have done so: (1) by beginning with man on the faith principle--from Abel onward; then (2) conditioning Israel’s relationship and blessing upon their legal obedience; and then (3) "changing back" again, since the cross, to the way of simple faith apart from law. No, there has been no "change" in God. God’s way with man has always been that of faith. Neither was the Law a thing additional to faith to secure God’s favor; nor was God’s "disannulling the foregoing commandment" an evidence that He had been seeking and expecting righteousness in man by the Law; and that now since the Law had failed He resorted to grace, apart from works of the Law. Not at all! The Law came in simply that the trespass might abound,--that is, that by breaking it man might discover his guilt and sinfulness; and his helplessness to relieve himself. Moses had prophesied in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that Israel would utterly fail, and that they would be provoked to jealousy by God’s bringing in the Gentiles, "a foolish nation"; and that the remnant of Israel finally, its whole legal hope cut off, would be restored by God in sovereign mercy (Romans 11:31; Romans 11:32).

We know we are saying these things over and over. An old German educator said: "The first principle of teaching is repetition; and the second principle of teaching is repetition; and the third principle is repetition." So we come to the next great section of the Epistle, Romans 3:21-31. This will describe God’s righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

02.05. Chapter 3B

CHAPTER 3B JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST

21 But now apart from law, God’s righteousness hath been manifested,--borne witness to by the Law and the Prophets: 22 God’s righteousness, moreover, through faith concerning Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction [between Jew and Gentile]; 23 for all sinned, and are falling short of the glory of God; 24 being reckoned righteous gift-wise by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: 25 whom God set forth a propitiation [mercy-seat] through faith in His blood, unto showing forth His [God’s] righteousness in respect of the passing over of the foregoing sins in the forbearance of God: 26 for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time,--unto the being Himself righteous, and the One declaring righteous-the person having faith in Jesus. 27 Where then is the [Jewish] boasting? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith. 28 For we reckon that a man is accounted righteous by faith apart from law-works. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? [who had the Law]. Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: 30 if so be that God is one! And He shall declare righteous the circumcision on the principle of faith [instead of law], and the uncircumcision through their [simple] faith. 31 Do we then annul law through faith? Far be the thought! on the contrary, we establish law!

We now come to the unfolding of that word which Paul in Romans 1:1-32 declares to be the very heart of the gospel,--the reason it is "the power of God unto salvation": namely, "therein is God’s righteousness on the faith-principle revealed to any having faith" (Romans 1:17). The first work of the apostle, as we have seen in studying Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20, was to bring the whole world under the judgment of God, guilty, helpless. His second task (and it is a blessed one!) is to reveal God’s coming out in rightousness at the cross unto us. Let us most diligently read, ponder, yea, and commit to memory Romans 3:21-26; for it is God’s great statement of justification by faith. Its first announcement is:

Romans 3:21 : But now apart from law God’s righteousness hath been manifested,--borne witness to by the Law and the Prophets--The first words, "But now," should be hailed by us joyfully, as beginning an account of something heavenly different from our guilt and helplessness, detailed in the preceding part of the Epistle (Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20). The next phrase is: "apart from law" [61] --lay it to heart! Unfortunately, the King James Version misses the emphasis here. For the Greek puts to the very front this great phrase "apart from law" (ch ris nomou), and thus sets forth most strongly the altogether separateness of this Divine righteousness from any law-performance, any works of man, whatsoever. Luther’s rendering was, "without accessory aid of law." In this revelation of God’s righteousness, law was left out of account. Righteousness is on another principle than our right-doing!

[61] The absence of the definite article, the, before the word law, in Romans 3:21, Romans 3:28, Romans 3:31; Romans 4:13, etc., shows that it is the abstract principle of law that is before us rather than the specific, concrete, thing--the Law of Moses, the ten commandments. It will become

evident to us that God is dealing with men now upon a different principle altogether than that of law: for grace confers the blessing, and lets the fruit flow from "faith working through love" by the power of the Spirit. Law demands fulfilment of conditions before blessing: grace announces that Christ has fulfilled all conditions.

Now the great and most common error in setting forth God's righteousness here, is, to allow law at least some place. Men cannot, it seems, get over reasoning thus: that since God once promulgated the dispensation of law, which called for human righteousness. He must thereafter be bound by it forever. And this despite Divine assurance, over and over and over, that the present dispensation proceeds on an altogether different principle; that there has been a "disannulling of a foregoing commandment" (Hebrews 7:18); for He who had the right to command had also the right to disannul. It was "because of its weakness and unprofitableness--for the Law made nothing perfect,"--that the "foregoing commandment" was set aside. It had served its purpose--to make the trespass "abound" (Romans 5:20). [62]

[62] "The Law has no such office in the present state of human nature manifested in history and in Scripture as to render righteous: its office is altogether different, viz., to detect and bring to light the sinfulness af man" (Alford).

It is not that God has not the right to demand legal righteousness from us: but that He does not do it. "Righteousness which is of God" speaks in a way diametrically opposite to man's law--obedience, of any sort whatsoever.

Men who do not see or believe that the whole history of those in Christ ended at the cross (for they died there, with Christ) must hold that God is still demanding righteousness: for "the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth!" The "teachers of the Law" (1 Timothy 1:7) say: "Behind God, as He talks with you in grace' is His eternal Law. And He must carry out what He has expressed in that Law. But, because you are not able to perform it, He has graciously' given Christ, to perform all its requirements for you. And the positive, or active' requirements are, the observance of all the commands of the Law to the letter,--which (these teachers say) Christ has by His perfect life of obedience to the Law on earth, furnished for you. And the negative, or passive' obedience, as they call it--that is, the penalty of death for your sins which the Law (say they) demanded, Christ has paid on the cross. So that, now your debts cancelled by Christ's death, you have Christ's legal merits' as your actual righteousness before God: for God must demand (they say) perfect righteousness from you, as measured by His holy Law,"--etc., etc. This seemingly beautiful talk is both unscriptural and anti-scriptural.

God says that the believer is not under law, that he is dead to law,--to that whole principle, being in the Risen Christ; and Christ is certainly not under law in Heaven! Believers are "in Him"; they are "not in the flesh" (Romans 8:9). They were formerly in the flesh (in the old natural life of Adam); but are now "new creatures" in Christ Risen!

If you put believers under law, you must put their federal Head, Christ, back under law; for "as He is, even so are we in this world." To do this you must reverse Calvary, and have Christ back again on earth "under law." For law, we repeat, was not given to a heavenly company, but to an earthly nation. Scripture says it was to redeem that earthly people (Israel) who were under law, that Christ was "born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). You must thus, if you are "under law," be joined to a

Christ belonging to Israel, a flesh and blood Christ; and must consent to be an Israelite--to which nation He was sent. But alas! You find that such a Christ is not here! That He said He must "abide alone,"--like the grain of wheat unless it "fall into the ground and die." To an earthly, Jewish Christ, you therefore cannot be united. And so your vain hope of having Moses and Christ is wholly gone. Therefore you must be united with a Risen Christ, or with none at all! But if to a Risen Christ, it is unto One who died unto sin (Romans 6:10); and those (Jewish) believers who were under the Law died with Him unto it (Romans 7:4). And you, if you are Christ's, are now wholly, as Christ is, on resurrection ground. This truth will be brought out fully in chapters Six and Seven; we can but note it here. [63]

[63] Your body--you are waiting for the redemption of that. But your body is only the "tabernacle" in which you dwell,--it is not yourself. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). The words hath been manifested (Romans 3:21) Conybeare lucidly paraphrases, "not by law but by another way, God's righteousness is brought to light." God had always dealt righteously, although His way was not as yet plain. He pardoned many, and He did not seem wholly to judge sin even in the unsaved world. But at the cross "He spared not His own Son." Here was revealed, indeed, righteousness to the uttermost!

Borne witness to by the Law and the Prophets--by the Law, in its sacrificial offerings; by the Prophets, in direct statements: "This is His name whereby He shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6); and again, "Thy righteousness"--21 times in the Psalms! as, "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psalms 71:2, Psalms 71:15, Psalms 71:16, Psalms 71:19, Psalms 71:24); and Isaiah: "By the knowledge of Himself shall my righteous Servant make many righteous" (Isaiah 53:11). [64] Yet it was not brought to light how this should be, until "the fulness of the time" came, and God sent His Son to "suffer for sins, the just for the unjust," to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," that God's righteousness might be "manifested," both in His dealing with sin, and in glorifying His Son in heaven, who had glorified His Father on earth.

[64] Peter indeed declares that "God had foreshawed by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ should suffer" and "to Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 3:18; Acts 10:43. It is well to remember that Paul reminds his hearers in Pisidian Antioch that it is possible to hear the prophets read and really not undrstand "the voice of the prophets" nor Him of whom they spake (Acts 13:27.

It would have been righteous for God to smite Adam and Eve as He did the angels that sinned. He could have revealed Himself in righteousness of judgment in accord with His holiness and justice. He was not obliged to save any man. But it was God's will to reveal Himself: for He is Love.

Therefore He now comes forth at the cross in love,--albeit He must there come forth also in righteousness,--for He Himself must righteously and fully judge sin upon the person of His own provided Lamb. The sword "awakened against His Shepherd, the Man who was His Fellow,"--the "fellow" of Jehovah of hosts! The Shepherd was smitten: "He was bruised for our iniquity, the chastisement of our peace [that would procure peace for us] was upon Him." God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up, and the penalty for our sin was visited upon Him, Jesus, God's provided Sacrifice (Zechariah 13:7; Isaiah 53:5; Isaiah 53:6).

God is able to come forth to us now in absolute GRACE, sending out His messengers "preaching peace by Jesus Christ";--nay, preaching much more than peace. In effect, God says, "Utter and infinite oceans of grace shall roll over the place where judgment and condemnation were!" Forgiving us all our trespasses, He goes further: having raised up Christ from the dead. He says, I will now place you in my Son. I will give you a standing fully and only in Him risen from the dead! Not only did He bear your sins, putting away your guilt, but in His death I released you from your standing and responsibility in Adam the first. You who have believed are now new creatures in Christ: for I have created you in Him.' And because this is so, it is announced further: "Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." These astonishing words state the present fact as to all believers,--of all those in Christ: they are the righteousness of God in Him! [65]

[65] "The resurrection of Christ was not only Divine power in life; there was another truth in it. Divine righteousness was shown in it. His Father's glory, all that the Son was to Him, was concerned in His resurrection; Christ having perfectly glorified God in dying, and having finished His Father's work, Divine righteousness was involved in His resurrection. And He was raised, and righteousness identified with a new state into which man, in Him, was brought; and more than that, indeed, for more was justly due to Him--He was set in glory as man at the right hand of God. Not only did the blessed Lord meet for us who believe all our sin as children of Adam, by His death, so as to clear us according to the glory of God from it all in His sight; but He perfectly glorified God Himself in so doing. Man, in the person of Christ, then entered into the glory of God. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him, . . . and shall straightaway glorify Him.' But all Christ's work was wrought in us; our sin was put away by it. Christ, as having thus glorified all God is, is our righteousness. We are thus the righteousness of God in Him.' "Either Christ, in His own present perfectness, risen from the dead, is my righteousness, His place my place, and I myself absolutely dead and gone as regards the old man; or I am making Christ a completer of my standing, as alive in the old man. Scripture teaches me that I am not alive as a child of Adam in this world. If ye died with Christ . . . why as though alive in the world? says Paul. "And now I am in Christ, risen and ascended; and have no righteousness to make out, but to glorify God as His child, being the righteousness of God in Christ already. My defects have nothing to do with my righteousness. They have with respect to my living to God and enjoying communion with Him" (Darby). In the book of Romans, Paul is describing God's action toward a believing sinner in view of the shed blood of Christ. It is as if God were holding court with the infinite value and benefit of the propitiatory sacrifice and resurrection of Christ only and ever before Him. No other apostle will be called upon to set this forth fully as does Paul. Of course it could not be stated by the Old Testament writers in its fulness and clearness; for our Lord had not then offered Himself, and all the Law and Prophets could do was to declare sin temporarily "covered" (Heb., kaphar) from God's sight; and so the Old Testament believer was one who rested on what God would do, in view of these types and shadows and promises.

John the Baptist, however, pointing to Christ, said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," something that had never before been! Therefore, after the cross, it is written, "Once in the consummation of the ages, hath He [Christ] been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" In the Old Testament, we repeat, sin is covered,--which is the meaning of the word kaphar, "atonement,"--used only in the Old Testament, and there constantly (some 13 times

in one chapter-- Leviticus 16:1-34), to express the covering from God’s sight of sin: though the sin remained untaken away until Christ died. In the New Testament, therefore, sin is said to be put away by Christ’s sacrifice. [66]

[66] We call attention to the error in the King James Version at the end of Romans 5:11 where those translators render "atonement" when it should be "reconciliation" (katallange). Therefore, properly speaking, the idea of covering up sin ("atonement," kaphar, of the Old Testament) is entirely absent in any mention in the New Testament of the effect of Christ’s sacrifice, which does not cover up but puts away sin from God’s sight forever.

God can, therefore, not only forgive the sinner, but also proceed to declare the believing sinner righteous, not at all meaning that he has any righteousness of his own, or that "the merits’ of Christ are imputed to him" (a fiction of theology); but that God, acting in righteousness, reckons righteous the ungodly man who trusts Him: because He places him in the full value of the infinite work of Christ on the cross, and transfers him into Christ Risen, who becomes his righteousness.

We may look at the term God’s righteousness from God’s own side; then from that of Christ; and, finally, from that of the justified sinner.

1. From. God’s side, the expression "God’s righteousness," must be regarded as an absolute one. It is His attribute of righteousness. It can be nothing else. He must, and ever will, act in righteousness, whether it be toward Christ, toward those in Christ, or toward those finally impenitent, whether angels, demons, or men.

2. From Christ’s side, it is His being received by God into glory according to God’s estimation of His mediatorial work. Our Lord had said that when the Spirit would come, He would "convince the world . . . of righteousness, because I go unto the Father, and ye see me no more" (John 16:1-33); and He had said, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work Thou gavest me to do. And now, Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:1-26). In answer to this prayer Christ was "raised from the dead through the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4), and was "received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). Now our Lord was man, as well as God. And when the Father glorified Him "with His own self," with that glory Christ "had with Him before the world was," it was as man that God thus glorified Him. So that, at God’s right hand, Christ set forth publicly the righteousness of God; for (a) as the slain Lamb He shows the holiness of God and God’s righteousness fully satisfied,--since God had "spared not His own Son" when sin had been laid upon Him. The truth of God as to the wages of sin had been shown in Christ’s death; thus the majesty of the insulted throne of God had been publicly vindicated, so that Christ’s being raised and "received up in glory" set forth the righteousness of God; for it were unrighteous that Christ should not be glorified! And (b) Christ not only thus set forth the righteousness of God, but being God the Son, as well as man, He was that righteousness! Christ dead, risen, glorified, is the very righteousness of God!

3. From the believer’s side, the justified sinner’s side, what do we see? The amazing declaration of God concerning us is, "Him who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The saints are said to be the righteousness of God, in Christ. Of course self-righteousness simply shrivels before a verse like this! All is in Christ: we are in Christ--one with Him! The expression "God’s righteousness" then

signifies:

1. God Himself acting in righteousness (a) toward Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him as a man in the place of absolute honor and glory; (b) in giving those who believe on Christ the same acceptance before God as Christ now has, inasmuch as He actually bare their sins, putting them away by His blood, and also became identified with the sinner--was "made to be sin for us" and, our old man was thus "crucified with Him." Just as it would have been unrighteousness in God not to raise His Son after His Son had completely glorified Him in His death; so it would also be unrighteous in God not to declare righteous in Christ those who, deserting all trust in themselves, have transferred their faith and hope to Christ alone.

2. Thus Christ, now risen and glorified, is Himself the righteousness of believers. It is not that He acted righteously while on earth, and that that is reckoned to us. This is, we repeat, the heresy of "vicarious law-keeping." He was indeed the spotless Lamb of God; but He had no connection with sinners until His death. He was "separate from sinners." "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone." It is the Risen Christ who is our righteousness. "Christianity begins at the resurrection." The work of the cross of course made Christianity possible; but true Christianity is all on the resurrection side of the cross. "He is not here, but is risen," the angel said.

3. Thus Christians find themselves spoken of as the righteousness of God in Christ. Not as "righteous before God," for that would be to think of a personal standing given to us, on account of Christ's death, rather than a federal standing, as in Him, united to Him,--which we are! John Wesley said a wise thing indeed: "Never think of yourself apart from Christ!"

Now to be or become "righteous before God"; to have or obtain a standing that will "bear God's scrutiny," is the fond dream of very many earnest Christians. But however stated, and by whomsoever stated, that idea of our obtaining a "standing before God" falls short, and that vitally, of Paul's gospel of our being made the righteousness of God in Christ. It denies that we died with Christ; and that we have been made dead to the whole legal principle in Christ's death (7:4). Thus it leaves us under the necessity of "obtaining a standing" before God; whereas believers federally shared the death of Christ, and Christ Risen is Himself now our standing!

Negatively, then (as Paul begins to declare in his first recorded discourse. Acts 13:39), "Every one that believeth on Him is justified from all things";--"justified in His blood" (Romans 5:9); and

Positively, Christ was "raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25): that we might receive a new place, a place in a Risen Christ,--and be thus the righteousness of God in Him, as one with Him who is that righteousness.

God declares that He reckons righteous the ungodly man who ceases from all works, and believes on Him (God), as the God who, on the ground of Christ's shed blood, "justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5). He declares such an one righteous: reckoning to him all the absolute value of Christ's work,--of His expiating death, and of His resurrection, and placing him in Christ: where he is the righteousness of God: for Christ is that! Does Christ need something yet, that He may stand in acceptance with God? Then do I need something,--for I am in Christ, and He alone is my righteousness. If He stands in full, eternal acceptance, then do I also: for I am now in Him alone,--having died with Him to my old place in Adam.

Earnest and godly men, wonderfully used of God, have brought out, as did the Reformers, that we are justified by faith, not works: without, however, going on to show, as does Paul, our complete deliverance, in Christ, from our former place in Adam, and from the whole principle of law. The Reformation statements were as follows:

Luther: "The righteousness of God is that righteousness which avails before God." This means a "substantive righteousness,"--a quality bestowed which "avails." But I am not in these words seen as dead, and now in Christ only.

Calvin: "By the righteousness of God I understand that righteousness which is approved before the tribunal seat of. God." Here again is a quality, not Christ Himself, who is made righteousness unto me, and I myself "of God," in Him (1 Corinthians 1:30). And according to Calvin I must stand before God's "tribunal"! But Christ at the cross met all the claims of God's "tribunal,"--and that forever; and I am now in Christ Risen!

Again, Calvin, writing on 2 Corinthians 5:21, concerning our being made or becoming "the righteousness of God in Christ," says: "In this place nothing else is to be understood than that we stand supported by the expiation of Christ's death before the tribunal of God." Here is still the thought of a future (or present) "tribunal." Only the negative side--expiation of guilt, is brought out. But this text in II Corinthians is positive: we are God's righteousness in Christ! Believers are not seen by Calvin as having died with Christ, and having no connection at all with Adam's responsibility to furnish a righteousness and holiness before God's "tribunal." Believers, says Paul, are not now "in the flesh" in their standing,--they are seen by God in Christ only! (Romans 8:9). Calvin) and all the Reformers, and the Puritans after them, placed believers under the Law of Moses as a "rule of life"; because they did riot see that a believer's history in Adam ended at the cross. But Paul, in Galatians 6:15; Galatians 6:16, says that those in Christ are to walk as "new creatures": they are a new creation! "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them!" This is God's prescription for your walk, whatever men may teach!

We do quote Luther, that great man of God, in connection with Chapter Seven, in the expressions of his wonderful personal faith, as saying: "These words, am dead to the Law' (Galatians 2:19) are very effectual. For he saith simply, I am dead to the Law'; that is, I have nothing to do with the Law . . . Let him that would live to God come out of the grave with Christ." (Luther on Galatians; in which book is often shown a vigor and boldness of faith hardly to be matched since Paul!)

Dr. Scofield in his note on Romans 3:21, says that the righteousness of the believer "is Christ Himself, who fully met in our stead and behalf every demand of the Law." Yet Scripture says that the Law was given to Israel; and that Gentiles are "without law," as contrasted "with Israel," who were "under the Law." Paul's words to us in Romans 6:14 : "Ye are not under law, but under grace," do not mean that we were once under law (as were the Jews) and have now been delivered; but rather mean that we, having died with Christ (our old man crucified with Him, and our history in Adam closed forever before God), are not placed at all under law! It is unfortunate that Dr. Scofield goes on to quote beloved Bunyan: "The believer in Christ is now, by grace, shrouded under so complete and blessed a righteousness that the Law from Mt. Sinai can find neither fault nor diminution therein. This is that which is called the righteousness of God by faith."

Now it is at once evident that such a statement as Bunyan’s leaves "the Law from Mt. Sinai" master of the field, lord over us. According to this the Law remains Inspector General of those in Christ! We are not "discharged" from it. We are still on earth, under legal trial, men "in the flesh." The gospel, however, is that we are, in Christ, not under the law-principle at all! "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." Those who believe are not now under law, but under grace, being "in Christ." We are now in a Risen Christ, who as such "lives unto God"; and it is unthinkable that He is under law! The Word of God says that Christ was "born of a woman,"--thus reaching the whole race; and "born under the Law, that He might redeem them that were under the Law,"--that is, Israel. But to maintain that the Risen Christ is "under law" in Heaven, is both to deny Scripture (Romans 6:4) and also to close our eyes to the manner of His risen life (Romans 6:10). Christ in Heaven lives under no legal conditions, but freely, in love unto God. And God has sent forth "the Spirit of His Son"--mark that!--into our hearts. This means not only the witness that we are adult sons (huioi) of God, but that the very same emotions of relationship and nearness to the Father belonging to Christ, God’s Son, are ours--witnessed in our hearts by the Spirit of His Son!

We find hardly any writers except indeed certain devoted saints among the "Friends of God" of the fourteenth century; and later, certain among the mystics like Tauler, Ter Steegen, Suso and the "prince of German hymnists," Paul Gerhardt; together with many early Methodists; and in the nineteenth century, certain of those remarkable men whose followers were later called "Plymouth Brethren," who have seen or dared believe our complete deliverance before God from Adam the First: that is, from our former place "in the flesh," "under law." The last, the Brethren, indeed speak with more Pauline accuracy. But these earlier saints, though much persecuted, exhibit marvelously in their lives and testimony that heavenly freedom of those taught of God their place in Christ! Hear one of them singing:

"Thou who givest of Thy gladness Till the cup runs o’er-- Cup whereof the pilgrim weary Drinks to thirst no more-- Not a-nigh me, but within me Is Thy joy divine;

Thou, O Lord, hast made Thy dwelling In this heart of mine.

"Need I that a law should bind me Captive unto Thee?

Captive is my heart, rejoicing Never to be free.

Ever with me, glorious, awful, Tender, passing sweet, One upon whose heart I rest me, Worship at His Feet."

--Gerhard Ter Steegen. The Law was given to man in the flesh; not to those on resurrection ground. Our relationship now to God is that of standing in the same acceptance as Christ; and we have the same Spirit of sonship as Christ!

Now, Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, and the life that He now liveth, He liveth unto God. And He lives unto God as man. He is God; but He is also a Risen Man.

It is into this Risen Christ, thus glorified, that God has brought us. [67]

[67] The "righteousness of God" is the justification of the sinner, is His own attribute of righteousness; that is, His acting in accordance with His own holy nature; manifested, however, not in demanding righteousness from the sinner, but in setting the believing sinner in His own

presence, because of the righteous judgment of his sins already visited by God upon his Subtitute, Christ. And God is not only Himself righteous, in remitting the penalty of sin; but He sets the sinner in the very standing in which Christ is, with Him!

We do not need therefore a personal "standing" before God at all. This is the perpetual struggle of legalistic theology,--to state how we can have a "standing" before God. But to maintain this is still to think of us as separate from Christ (instead of dead and risen with Him), and needing such a "standing." But if we are in Christ in such an absolute way that Christ Himself has been made unto us righteousness, we are immediately relieved from the need of having any "standing." Christ is our standing, Christ Himself! And Christ being the righteousness of God, we, being thus utterly and vitally in Christ before God, have no other place but in Him. We are "the righteousness of God in Christ." Not to the cherubim, not to the seraphim, not to the elect angels, has been given such a place as this! They may be sinless,--they are. They may be holy,--they are. They may be glorious,--they are. But they are not "the righteousness of God"; for they are not in Christ. They were never cut off, as we have been, by a death that ended completely their former history and standing, and then placed in Christ! And so we come to a verse the very reading of which has been used to save and bring into the light thousands:

Romans 3:22 : God’s righteousness, moreover, through faith concerning Jesus Christ unto all them that believe--If it were man’s righteousness, it would be through something man accomplished. But it is God’s righteousness; it is apart from out right-doing--that is, law-keeping altogether; for keeping law would be the only way man could get a righteousness of his own. But the moment we mention righteousness here, people can hardly be restrained from the notion that they are to have a new quality bestowed upon them. Since they have themselves lost this quality of righteousness, they are anxious to get it back,--the consciousness of it. But this is really self-righteousness,--and that at its worst. For we read here the words, "through faith in [or concerning] Jesus Christ." And people rush to talking of Christ’s "merits" becoming theirs, being "imputed," or reckoned to them: so that they are, thereby, in a righteous state! But we shall see in Romans 4:5 that God accounts righteous the believing ungodly as such; not those who are first to be in any wise "changed," and then reckoned righteous; not those to whom certain "merits" of Christ are to be given, so that they are thereby righteous--not at all. But the believing ungodly are to be reckoned righteous--while they are still ungodly: it is that fact that makes the gospel!

Justification is God’s reckoning a man righteous who has no righteousness,--because God is operating wholly upon another basis, even the work of Christ. If Christ fully bore sin for man, and has been raised up by God, a believing man has reckoned to him by God all that infinite work of Christ!

Thus, no change in the ungodly man is necessary for justification. [68] He believes, certainly. But faith is not a "meritorious" work. It is simply giving God the credit of speaking the truth in the gospel about Christ. It is Christ’s shed blood, and that alone, which is the procuring cause of God’s declaring an ungodly man righteous: while God’s grace is the reason for it. Our faith is simply the instrumental condition. God counts our faith for righteousness, because by it we give God and Christ the full glory of our salvation. Faith in God also brings the heart into His light; for, when "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," the heart, in thus believing, is turned to God directly, in the simplicity of a little child. When Adam sinned, he fled from God; when a sinner believes, he

comes back!

[68] Of course, God will--does--give him life: it is "justification of life," in Christ. But he is justified, accounted righteous, while ungodly; and only by the blood of Christ. God will also finally, indeed, present him faultless. But he declares him righteous upon believing--while he is ungodly! If God changed him first, he would not be "ungodly."

Now concerning this chiefest revelation of Romans, we must go to Scripture only. It will never do to accept men's writings as "authorities'" or as "standards,"--as men call them. For to do this is not to interpret the Scriptures, but to proceed along Romish lines. Nor will it do to rely on men's devotedness to God, however real, as proof of their reliability in statements of Divine truth.

Take the Reformers: God brought them back, in principle, to the Scriptures as their only guide. (Would that there were the same devotedness and zeal today!) But, after mounting up to Heaven as it were, in personal grasp and use of the truth of justification by faith apart from all works, yet the Reformers put Christians back under Moses as a "rule of life," under law I "What is required? and what is forbidden?" in this Mosaic commandment, or that, is the burden of Christian living, according to this theology.

Godly and earnest men have thus held; but the only question is, what are the words of Scripture? We must "prove all things" men write, in the light of Scripture: for God says we are not under law: and that the "rule of life" is, that we are a new creation (Galatians 6:15; Galatians 6:16). Is the Pauline revelation that we died with Christ from all earthly "religious principles" (Colossians 2:20), (such as God declares the Mosaic system now to be: Galatians 4:9)--is this glorious fact once set forth in all the reformed "standards"? By no means! Believers were not seen by the Reformers as having had their history ended at the cross, and being now wholly in a new creation. Neither did the Puritans enter into this truth. This Pauline doctrine was not fully recovered until God wrought,--again in a reviving, almost a Reformation power, through godly and devoted servants of His, 300 years after Luther and Calvin. Truth is truth: and those seeking God's truth welcome it wherever they find it! Revealed Truth belongs to the whole Church, to every believer. Those attached to, and entrenched in tradition, will always be found fighting for that. [69]

[69] We are glad to note, in Sanday and Headlam's Romans, this word regarding William Kelly's Notes on Romans: "His Notes are written from a detached and peculiar standpoint; but they are the fruit of sound scholarship, and of prolonged and devout study, and they deserve more attention than they have received." This is a fair and honest admission. For its irrefutable setting forth of truth, its Christian fairness and love, and its brevity, make Kelly's Notes invaluable. Men prefer "belonging" to a system: (1) Because where faith is not vigorous it comforts the flesh to find oneself among a party.(2) Where direct personal knowledge of Scripture is lacking it is a comfort to the heart to be told "authoritatively" what to believe--what the party to which one belongs, holds, (3) It is abhorrent to the flesh to walk by the Spirit. It is infinitely easier to be occupied with the "Christian duties" practiced or prescribed by your sect. (4) The flesh cannot bear to be little, despised, but desires to be of those that have the regard of "the Christian world" (an awful phrase!). (5) Even among the most earnest Christians the temptation and the tendency have always been to seize upon those truths emphasized by the leaders of the sect they follow and claim those truths and principles as their own! But this in effect denies the unity of the Body of Christ, and that all truth belongs to the whole Church of God. Now all this is of the very essence of

Sectarianism. If your Christian consciousness is of anyone but Christ as Head over all things to the Church, and of any body but the Body of Christ, of which all true believers are members, and you members of them--then you are on forbidden, sectarian, "carnal" ground: "For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men . . . are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men?"

Simple faith, then, receives "God's testimony concerning His Son," and rests there. They used to say of Marshall Field in Chicago, "His word is as good as his bond." It was no credit to the merchants that trusted Mr. Field, but it was a great credit to him! It gave him the public honor of his integrity.

God's righteousness, moreover, through faith concerning Jesus Christ--Here we must study carefully. The King James Version reads, "by faith of Jesus Christ." "Through faith" is more accurate, as the preposition is, dia, "through,'" as the Revised Versions, both English and American, read. Concerning the form, "of Jesus Christ," see Mark 11:22, Acts 3:16, Galatians 2:16, James 2:1 where the same Greek construction appears. The expression "faith concerning Jesus Christ," literally, "faith of Jesus Christ" must be regarded either as:

1. Faith in the gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ, as set forth at the beginning of the Epistle, involving of course appropriation of Christ with all His benefits for oneself; or,

2. Trust in Christ. But Christ has already died for sin, for the world; and trust, here, would mean relying on Christ to do something for the soul; either to put forth power to deliver; or, as they say, to become one's "personal Saviour"; or, "to see one through to the end," or the like. This is in accordance with man's gospel: "Jesus Christ will save you if,"--rather than in accordance with Paul's gospel of believing God's Word concerning Christ as having accomplished for us a work that was finished once for all on the cross.

3. The rendering received by many today in certain circles which would make "the faith of Jesus Christ" mean Christ's own believing on our behalf! which, they explain, is "exercising His own mighty faith," instead of calling upon the strengthless hearts of men to believe. But this avoids our responsibility to believe God. They quote here Mark 11:22 : "Have faith in God," as, "Have the faith of God"; a grotesque, unbiblical, impossible meaning! Our Lord said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." He did not say, "I will believe for you." Again He did say, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He [the Father] hath sent" (John 6:29).

4. Finally, some have thought to render, "the faith of Jesus Christ" as His faithfulness to us; which is not the meaning of the Greek, is out of place, and is contrary to the apostle's usage.

We believe that the first meaning we have indicated--that is, faith in the gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ as set forth at the beginning of the Epistle, is the true one here; for it accords perfectly with this first great expansion in Chapter Three, of the announcement of Chapter 1:1-3(Romans 1:1-3), "the gospel of God concerning His Son": the power of which is that "therein is revealed God's righteousness on the principle of faith."'

Faith is not trust, and must be carefully distinguished therefrom, if we would have a clear conception of the gospel. Faith is simply the acceptance for ourselves of the testimony of God as true. Such faith, indeed, brings one into a life of trust. But faith is not "trusting," or "expecting God

to do something," but relying on His testimony concerning the person of Christ as His Son, and the work of Christ for us on the cross. So faith is "the giving substance to things hoped for." After saving faith, the life of trust begins. In a sense that will be readily perceived by the spiritual mind, trust is always looking forward to what God will do; but faith sees that what God says has been done, and believes God's Word, having the conviction that it is true, and true for ourselves. In saving faith, then, you do not trust God to do something for you: He has sent His Son, who has borne sin for you. You do not look to Christ to do something to save you: He has done it at the cross. You simply receive God's testimony as true, setting your seal thereto. [70] You rest in God's Word regarding Christ and His work for you. You rest in Christ's shed blood.

[70] I often quote 1 Timothy 1:15 to inquiring sinners: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." In response to my question, they confess that "came" is in the past tense. Then I say, "How sad that you and I were not there, so that He might have saved us, for He has now gone back to heaven!" This shuts them up to contemplate the work Christ finished when He was here; upon which work, and God's Word concerning it, sinners must rest: that is faith.

It is GOD that justifieth (Romans 8:33), as it is God against whom we sinned. And it is God whom we find in Romans 3:25 setting forth Christ on the cross as a righteous meeting-place (between the sinner and God) through faith in His blood. And again: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him [God] that justifieth the ungodly" (on the ground, of course, of the blood of Christ). "Righteousness shall be reckoned unto us who believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Romans 4:5 and Romans 4:24). This, it seems, is what the Lord meant in His last public message to the Jews, John 12:44 : "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me." Faith, indeed, lays claim to Christ and possesses Him, but it is through believing the testimony of God the Father concerning His Son. And this seems to me the meaning of the words in Romans 3:22, "through faith concerning Jesus Christ." Peter also says not only that we have "the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21), but: "through Him [Christ] ye are believers in God, that raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1:21). Thus also, he says, "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

We must remember that it is the "gospel of God" (Romans 1:1) in its general aspect, which we are now studying; and that it is "concerning His Son." Christ says also in John 5:24, "He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and cometh not into judgment."

02.06. Chapter 3C

CHAPTER 3C

Now we believe concerning Jesus Christ: (a) that He is the Son of God, (b) that He has put away sin by His blood (as Paul will soon show); and (c) that He is and has become through simple believing our very own, so that what He has done was really done for us.

You may say, this is simply "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ." Yes; but it is believing God concerning Christ. In Chapter Four we find that Abraham believed God, and righteousness was reckoned unto him. We also "believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification." Here the faith is in God, and is made possible by His raising Christ, upon whom He had placed our sins. Sanday says: "By faith of Jesus Christ': that is, by faith which has Christ for its object." In the gospel of God concerning Christ, God announces not only Christ's person as Son of David, and Son of God; but also His finished work, that He has been set forth by God as a propitiation, a righteous meeting-place between the sinner and God. It is therefore God whom the sinner believes; and in believing God he appropriates Christ, and His saving work.

There is another question in Romans 3:22 which must be answered. The King James Version adds, after "The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all," the words "and upon all them that believe." The Revised Version omits "and upon all." This, we believe, is the correct reading. The righteousness of God is not put "upon" any one. That is a Romish idea,--still held, alas, among Protestants who cannot escape the conception of righteousness as a something bestowed upon us, rather than a Divine reckoning about us. But the best authorities omit these words "and upon all," as do the oldest manuscripts, and both the English and American Revised Versions. The words, "God's righteousness through faith concerning Jesus Christ unto all them that believe," describe it all, and fully.

I know people argue that "unto all" describes the "direction of the blessing"; and "upon all" those who (as they put it) have the blessing actually "conferred upon them." But please notice the present passage is setting forth the fact of a new, present revelation--God's righteousness by faith in Christ, as over against man's legal righteousness. Since we find this righteousness is God's accounting or holding righteous a man who believes, rather than a conferment of a quality upon a man, we must read the passage thus. It sets forth this present by-faith righteousness. It is God accounting a man (even as he is, "ungodly"-- Romans 4:5) righteous in His sight. Do not destroy the gospel by adding to Romans 3:22 words which evidently have been supplied by some one ignorant of the truth. It is simply "God's righteousness through faith about Jesus Christ." [71]

[71] I have found Mr. Darby's explanations of "God's righteousness" more clear and illuminating than those of any other. It is therefore unfortunate, as it seems to me, that he adds to Romans 3:22 the confusing phrase, "and upon all." I ask, what is "upon all"? If, as Mr. Darby holds, the act of justification is a forensic one, a declaration about a sinner who believes, accounting him

righteous (although he is not intrinsically so), then why add that this righteousness is "upon" him? For the human mind is unable to conceive of a meaning for such a phrase other than something that a man does not possess being placed upon his person. But this is the exact meaning that Mr. Darby so constantly and justly wars against! The very thing Mr. Darby so assiduously avoids, that is, the bestowal on a person of a quality, (or of, as he says, "a quantum of righteousness"), he opens the way to, in retaining the phrase "and upon all." Bishop Moule, for example, remarks: "As to unto all and upon all,' the Greek phrases respectively indicate destination and bestowal. The sacred pardon was prepared for all believers, and is actually laid upon them as a robe of righteousness.'" We would expect such a comment as this from a churchman, or any one of the Reformation theologians, but it is the very thing that Paul does not say; and it darkens all counsel concerning justification. The expressions "the righteousness of Christ," "the merits of Christ," though not in Scripture, are continually in the mouths even of earnest men, who do not see that our history in Adam ended at the cross, that we died with Christ, and now share His risen life; and that we therefore do not need to have anything whatever put upon" us, nor any qualities or "merits" of Christ made the basis of God's blessing us. We were in Adam: we are now in Christ, standing in the full, the infinitely complete acceptance of Christ's own Person! We gravely fear that some brethren, in their resentment against the Revised Version (which we well know is not perfect, though incomparably more accurate than the King James), have kept this phrase "and upon all," in spite of the fact that the earliest manuscripts do not have it. Bishop Gore well remarks, "It is not an exaggeration to say that, in this and very many places of the epistles, the Revised Version for the first time renders the thought of the apostles again intelligible to the English reader. And if the Revised Version is not popular, this is, I fear, only a sign that the majority of English Christians do not really care to understand the meaning of the message with which, as a matter of words, they are familiar." Mr. Darby himself says that neither the Reformers nor any other human teachers, are an authority for him, so we, agreeing, say that Mr. Darby is in no sense an authority for any Christian. "Prove all things," said the Apostle. F. W. Grant admits that the earliest manuscripts omit "and upon all." He then says, "The earliest of all is corrected." But why was the earliest manuscript "corrected"? Some hand of legal unbelief "corrected" that manuscript, we certainly believe. Sanday frankly says: "These words, and upon all,' are wanting in the best manuscripts, and should be omitted." As also agrees an excellent Plymouth Brother: "The best Uncial mss. omit and upon all.' The context confirms the correctness of this, for the Apostle is writing of those who are justified (Romans 3:24)" (C. E. Stuart).

Righteousness is a court word. Righteousness is reckoned by God to them that believe. The faith of the ungodly man who believes is "counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). The words that close Romans 3:22, "for there is no distinction," should be joined with Romans 3:23 : "for all sinned, and are falling short of the glory of God." Pridham well says, "The all-important point to be regarded here is the complete setting aside of the creature-title." That there is no difference as to the fact of sin, between Jews and Gentiles, is, of course, primarily before us in the words "no distinction." Exactly the same expression is found as to the availability of salvation in Romans 10:12 : "no distinction between Jew and Greek." We may well apply it to everybody, as does Pridham in his "no creature title." There is no distinction between sinners--between great offenders and small, with respect to this matter of sinnership. Not the degree of sin, but the fact of sin is looked at here. If you should visit a penitentiary, you would find some imprisoned for terrible crimes, and others for lesser offences, but you would find, in the eyes of the law, no innocent men!

Romans 3:23 : for all sinned, and are falling short of the glory of God--Note the difference in the tenses: "all sinned" is in the past tense, while "falling short" of God's glory is stated in the present tense. When Adam had once sinned, in Eden, he continually fell short, outside of Eden, as did all his race, by him and after him.

While it is true, as both the old Version and the Revised translate, that "all have sinned"; yet I am more and more persuaded that inasmuch as the Spirit of God uses in Romans 3:23 the same Greek word and tense as in Romans 5:12, h marton: that is, "all sinned" (aorist, not perfect, tense), God is looking back even here at Adam's federal headship involving us all. He looks at the race as fallen and lost and gone, in their federal head; and then as individually continuing in sins. [72]

[72] Godet remarks, "The aorist hemarton, sinned,' transports us to the point of time when the result of human life appears as a completed fact, the hour of judgment." With this Burton agrees, calling it a "collective aorist." See Sanday. This word is a verb, second aorist tense, meaning, in Paul's epistles to miss the mark; then, to err, to wander from the path of righteousness; then, to do or go wrong; then, to violate God's law,--to sin. As we all know, the aorist is a statement of past fact, not of present condition or fact; neither does it have the force of the perfect,--that is, of the finishing of prolonged action. The King James version translates the same verb-form in Romans 5:12 also: "all have sinned," It is our contention that this too is an incorrect translation, beclouding the meaning of Scripture. It is remarkable in Romans 3:23 that a past tense should be used for the verb sin, and a present tense for the universal consequent result! As we find throughout Scripture, the sin of Adam is evermore in the Divine view. "Thy first father sinned," is God's continual testimony. The consequent translation of this aorist hemarton in Romans 5:12 is, "all sinned"--that is, in Adam's act; and also in Romans 3:23; "all sinned [in Adam] and [consequently] are falling short of the glory of God": the history of the whole race since. Of course it will be objected that individual sins and transgressions are treated in the first three chapters of Romans, and federal sin not until the second part of Chapter Five, where the two federal men, Adam and Christ, are set forth, and the effects of their representative acts contrasted. This is true, but why the same aorist form in both Romans 3:23 and Romans 5:12? Even if Paul used hemarton in Romans 3:23 as summing up in one word the actions of both Gentiles and Jews as detailed in Romans 1:18-32, Romans 3:1-29, Romans 3:1-18, we must still note that it is the aorist and not the perfect tense that he uses. It would then resemble the use of the same aorist, hemarton, in Romans 2:12 : "as many as sinned without law,"--the aorist here expressing the life-choice, looked at in the day of judgment as a past act (as see Godet above). This would make Romans 3:23 say: all made the life-choice of sin,--which we know is not true of those whom God saves and delivers. So that it seems best to read "all sinned,"--as God's view of men looked at as being sinners, indeed; but their sin a past fact--soon to be connected definitely with Adam' (Romans 5:12, ff.) As a natural consequence, all that race "are falling short" of His glory. This "falling short" may mean (1) to fail to earn God's holy approbation (compare John 12:43); or (2) to come short, because of the loss of all spiritual strength through sin (Romans 5:6), of that estate God prescribed for and must demand of man; or (3) guilty inability to stand before Him or in His glorious holy presence. Probably all these and more are included in the thought. We know that those now justified by faith in Christ "rejoice in hope of the glory of God,"--meaning that state of being glorified together with Christ, which is the high, heavenly hope of the Christian. It is in and through Christ alone that sinners ruined in Adam, and daily falling short of the glory of God, find redemption from sin's guilt and deliverance from its

power.

How sad and awful, then, man’s condition! Suppose I should say, for example, to a New York audience, "Let us all go down to the Battery and jump across to England." Some vigorous young man might jump over twenty feet, but he would "fall short" of England. And some little old lady might not jump one foot. But all would "fall short" of the coast of England. And, for that matter, the one who leaped the farthest would be in the deepest water! Paul, the chief of sinners, leaped to the farthest distance of self-righteousness, only to cry, "Wretched man that I am" and to find he must put his faith only in Christ!

We now come to the greatest single verse in the entire Bible on the manner of justification by faith: We entreat you, study this verse. We have seen many a soul, upon understanding it, come into peace.

Romans 3:24 : Being declared righteous giftwise by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus--God having brought the whole world into His courtroom and pronounced them guilty (Romans 3:19),--"under sin," now exhibits Himself in absolute sovereign grace towards the guilty! Being declared [or accounted] righteous--Justification, or accounting righteous, is God’s reckoning to one who believes the whole work and effect before Him of the perfect redemption of Christ. The word never means to make one righteous, or holy; but to account one righteous. Justification is not a change wrought by God in us, but a change of our relation to God.

Declared righteous giftwise--The Greek word dorean means, for nothing, gratuitously, giftwise, as a free gift. Paul, for example, uses the same word in reminding the Corinthians of his labors to make the gospel "without charge." "Freely [dorean] ye received, freely give," said the Lord to the twelve (Matthew 10:8). "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (dorean),--for nothing (Revelation 21:6); and it occurs in almost the very last verse of the Bible:

"Let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Perhaps the most striking use of this word, dorean, is by our Lord: "They hated me without-a-cause" (dorean) (John 15:25). The cause of the hatred was in them, not in Christ. Turning this about: the cause of our justification is in God, not in us. We are justified dorean--freely, gratis, gratuitously, giftwise, without a cause in us! This great fact should deliver just now some reader who has been looking within, to his spiritual state, or feelings, or prayers, as a ground of peace. By His grace--We get our word "charity"--from the Greek word translated "grace" here (charis). True, our word "charity" has been narrowed down in our poor thought and speech to handing out a dole to the needy. But as used by God, this word grace (charis), means the going forth in boundless oceans, according to Himself, of His mighty love. who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The grace of God is infinite love operating by an infinite means,--the sacrifice of Christ; and in infinite freedom, unhindered, now, by the temporary restrictions of the Law.

Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus--Remember that everything connected with God’s salvation is glad in bestowment, infinite in extent, and unchangeable in character. Christ’s atoning work was the procuring cause of all eternal benefit to us. Concerning the Greek word translated "redemption" here (apolutr sis) Thayer says: "Everywhere in the New Testament this word is used to denote deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of a holy God and the merited penalty of sin." The effect of redemption is shown in Ephesians 1:7 : "In whom we

have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." Otherwise we were unpardoned and exposed to Divine wrath for ever. Compare Colossians 1:14 : "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins"; as also Hebrews 9:15 : "A death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant." Here Thayer's interpretation of this word "redemption" is again excellent: "Deliverance from the penalty of transgressions effective through their expiation."

Before you leave Romans 3:24, apply it to yourself, if you are a believer. Say of yourself: "God has declared me righteous without any cause in me, by His grace, through the redemption from sin's penalty that is in Christ Jesus." It is the bold believing use for ourselves of the Scripture we learn, that God desires; and not merely the knowledge of Scripture.

Romans 3:25 : Whom God set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood, unto showing forth His [God's] righteousness in respect of the passing over of the foregoing sins in the forbearance of God--This verse looks back to the whole history of human sin before it was judged at the cross,--the vast scandal (so to speak) of the universe!--a holy God letting sin pass for four thousand years, from Adam to Christ. God had been righteous in thus passing over [73] human sin, both in pardoning without judgment, the sins of the Abels, Enochs, Noahs, and the patriarchs,--even all whom He knew as believing Him; and not only so, He was righteous in forbearing with the impenitent. His enemies: for He purposed both sending Christ to become the propitiation for the whole world; and He would also deal in due time in righteous judgment with those rejecting all His goodness.

[73] "Passing by or over"; Xenophon uses this word thus: "A trainer of horses should not let such faults pass by unpunished"--Hipparchus 7.10. But now, in the gospel, His righteousness in all this is publicly shown forth; and the ground of it all seen--even the Lamb "foreordained, indeed, from the foundation of the world, but now manifested," and sacrificed. At the cross was sin seen at its height; and also the righteousness of God in dealing in judgment [74] with it. It was not until the gospel that all this was manifested. Although God had been dealing righteously in the past ages, it was first seen clearly when He judged human sin openly in the Great Sacrifice: where His own Son was not spared!

[74] There are, respecting human sin, three judgment-days: (1) of the human race, in Eden; (2) of human sin, at the cross; and (3) of human rebels, at the Great White Throne of Revelation 20:1-15. Whom God set forth a propitiation--Let us consider now this word "propitiation," concerning the meaning of which there is much uncertainty in many hearts.

Inasmuch as Christ died for our sins "according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3), we must go to those Scriptures (Old Testament, of course) to find what is there set forth concerning His death.

Now the two goats, on the Great Day of Atonement, represent two great effects of Christ's sacrifice. To quote: "Aaron shall take the two goats, and set them before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for Jehovah, and the other lot for Azazel" ("removal"--the goat of removal of sins) [75] (Leviticus 16:7; Leviticus 16:8).

[75] Azazel, the Hebrew word, means goat of dismissal, or departure, figuring most vividly the effect for Israel of the blood shed by the first goat: for the two goats are one in representing Christ's work in its double effect. First, as answering all the claims of the being and throne of a

holy, righteous God; and, second, in removing the transgressions from the people "as far as the east is from the west." On the great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-34) the high priest presented before Jehovah these two goats: one was slain, and its blood brought by the high priest into the tabernacle, through the holy place, and past the second veil into the holy of holies. There the high priest sprinkled the blood upon "the mercy-seat" (the covering of the ark of the covenant, where the Shekinah glory of God's presence was above the cherubim), and also before the mercy-seat, seven times. This was the blood of the goat upon which the lot fell "for Jehovah"; therefore we have here first the holy and righteous claims of the throne of God as to sin completely met. The golden covering of the ark was called the "mercy-seat" (Hebrew, kapporeth). In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, this golden covering of the ark is always called by the same Greek word, hilast rion, [76] which we find translated "propitiation" here in Romans 3:25; and "mercy-seat" in the only other New Testament occurrence of the word, Hebrews 9:5.

[76] The meaning of the Greek word hilasterion, translated "propitiation" in Romans 3:25 plainly is, propitiatory sacrifice. How else could it be for "the showing of God's righteousness"? If we translate it only "mercy-seat," we forget that it was the propitiatory sacrifice, in its death, which made a mercy-seat possible. It was the slain goat, on the Day of Atonement, (in Leviticus 16:15), the blood of which was brought in to be sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. The righteousness of Jehovah was proclaimed in the offering's death, and in the meeting, on the ground of this shed blood, of Jehovah and man, at the mercy-seat. Therefore righteousness is set forth in the death of the victim; mercy in its effect at the "mercy-seat." It will he noticed that all explanations (of hilasterion) rest on the thought that "Christ's death was sacrificial and expiatory; a real atonement, required by something in the character of God, and not merely designed to effect moral results in man. We may not know all that this propitiation involves, but since God Himself was willing to instruct His ancient people, by types, of this reality, we ought to know something positive respecting it. The atoning death of Christ is the ground of the reconciliation,' since it satisfies the demands of Divine justice on the one hand, and on the other draws men to God. Independently of the former, the latter could not be more than a groundless human feeling" (Schaff and Riddle). "All that God was in His nature, He was, necessarily, against sin. For, though He was love, love has no place in wrath against sin, and the withdrawal of the sense of it--consciousness in the soul of the privation of God, is the most dreadful of all sufferings, the most terrible horror to him who knows it: but Christ knew it infinitely. But God's Divine majesty, His holiness, His righteousness. His truth, all in their very nature bore against Christ as made sin for us. All that God was, was against sin, and Christ was made sin. No comfort of love enfeebled wrath there. Never was the obedient Christ so precious; but His soul was to be made an offering for sin, and to bear it judicially before God" (Darby). Does "propitiation" (hilast rion), here in Romans 3:25, then mean that the death of Christ made expiation for human sin? Or does it mean also that Christ, having thus died, therefore becomes to the soul the "mercy-seat" where God in all His holiness, and the sinner in all his guilt, may meet? The latter may be included; for the type is thus carried out; inasmuch as the blood was sprinkled upon the mercy-seat (Leviticus 16:14), the covering of the ark of the covenant, which was called the mercy-seat; the "mercy-seat" thus calling attention to the effect of the sacrifice as affording a righteous meeting ground between the sinner and God. But in Romans 3:25 it was to show forth God's righteousness that Christ was "set forth,"--the fact that God, though forbearing 4000 years, had not forgotten or abated His wrath against sin: so that it is

Christ'?, actual death as an expiation of human sin that is seen here as showing God's righteousness. We may well read, "God set forth Christ propitiatory": thus showing Himself righteous, and also a gracious Justifier of sinners. The other question connects itself with what we have just said: Should we regard our faith as making the propitiation actual? Of course, the expiatory death of Christ becomes effectual only for those who believe, who rest upon it. But the expiation was made to God for human sin and the propitiation effected, apart from any man's faith therein! This is a plain fact of revelation. Christ "tasted death for every man." "He gave Himself a ransom for all"--whether any avail themselves of it or not. Faith does not have any part in the propitiation, though it avails itself of it. Propitiation is by blood alone.

It is forgotten that our God is a consuming fire. Many there are who, in the blindness of unbelief of the last days, proudly say, "We reject the Jehovah of the Old Testament." It is "the Jesus that loved little children," and "went about doing good," who "taught us to call God, Father":--this is the one in whom people say they believe. But will you remember that this same Jesus is called in the Old Testament Jehovah's Servant, and that under Jehovah's smiting hand of wrath He poured out His blood on Calvary and was laid in a tomb, dead, and that it is this Jesus, the Son of God, dead and risen, upon whom you are called to believe?

Now, why did He thus die? or, if you wish, Why must He die, at all? Death is the wages of sin, and He had none! Why should He die? The answer to this question, false teachers crowd to give you. But we must find the answer in what Scripture says, or risk our eternity! For Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and His death is His one saving act. Concerning His person, therefore, and His death, you must learn what God says from His own Word, and believe it. I find thousands of people ready to say, "Christ died for us, to save us"; thousands, I say, who speak thus, but who are able to give no account whatever of salvation; who exhibit, upon being questioned, the most awful ignorance of the character and attributes of God, and of where lay the necessity for Christ's death, and what it really accomplished. The shed blood on the Day of Atonement witnessed that a death had taken place. The person for whom the blood was shed could not approach or stand for a moment in the presence of the infinitely holy God. When the high priest came in before Jehovah on the Great Day of atonement, carrying the basin containing the poured out life blood of the slain goat, he swung the censer, and the cloud of incense filled the holy of holies, covering from all human sight or approach, the mercy-seat where dwelt, upon the cherubim, the Shekinah Presence of God. He approaches and sprinkles the blood upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat seven times, and retires.

Now, what does this witness? Not an angry, vengeful God, [77] but infinitely the opposite--One who would send the Son of His bosom as the spotless Lamb to pour out His blood for us sinners, and then ascend to His God and Father,--and, unspeakable grace, now our God and Father also!

[77] The doctrine of atonement produces in us its proper effect when it leads us to see and feel that God is just; that He is infinitely gracious; that we are deprived of all ground of boasting; that the way of salvation, which is open for us, is open for all men; and that the motives to all duty, instead of being weakened, are enforced and multiplied. "In the gospel all is harmonious: Justice and mercy, as it regards God; freedom from the Law, and the strongest obligations to obedience, as it regards men" (Hodge).

But, this laid-down-life witnesses that all approach to God on our personal part is impossible forever! To be made nigh unto God in the blood of Christ means that we come as those whose Substitute has been smitten unto death,--and that under forsaking and wrath by God Himself. There is peace through this blood, but a peace that leaves for us in our own right, no place whatever. Herein is the "offense" of the cross. Shall Christ be smitten for my sin? Then I deserve such smiting. Shall Christ be forsaken? Then I should have been forsaken. Shall Christ give up the ghost? Then all my hopes in myself have perished forever; for He who stood in my place has been smitten, forsaken; has died.

All this men hate and will not hear. The essence of the truth concerning what men call "atonement," is that God's wrath fell upon Christ bearing our sins. Man's unbelief has sought in every way to avoid or mitigate this awful truth. But if Divine wrath fell not upon Christ, it must fall upon us; for God can not let sin pass. The preacher must study the Scriptures until he sees for himself from God's Word this most solemn of all Divine revelations: in the coats of skins--obtained by death as a covering for Adam and Eve in God's presence; in Abel's accepted sacrifice; in all the offerings of the patriarchs; and afterwards in those prescribed to Israel in Leviticus,--where neither remission of the penalty of sin to the offender nor the bringing of man into God's presence was possible except through blood-shedding; and alike strikingly in the Psalms of Christ's sufferings,--as Psalms 16:1-11, Psalms 22:1-31, Psalms 40:1-17, Psalms 69:1-36, Psalms 88:1-18, Psalms 102:1-28, Psalms 109:1-31; and in the prophets: "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him," "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him"; "Awake, O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man Who is My Fellow, saith Jehovah of Hosts"; and in the gospels--"The Son of Man must be lifted up"; "The cup [of what but wrath?] that my father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" "My God, My God Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Throughout the New Testament, as in the Old, this is taught, that God's wrath for sin fell upon Christ upon the cross.

It has ever been the first step to heresy--the denial that Divine wrath for sin fell on Christ. It was, indeed, certainly not anger at Christ's Person--He was obediently drinking a cup His Father had given Him. Nor was it anger at the sinner: "God so loved that He gave." But it was wrath against sin,--the going forth of the infinitely holy nature of God against sin. Alas, how little we feel its awfulness! How poor our knowledge of it; how weak our hatred of it! But wrath against it fell full on Christ. We beseech you, hold this fast. "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

God is holy in His being: He is righteous in His character. Righteousness appears in His dealings with others. The term righteousness is a relative one; it assumes the existence of others. It is a word of relationship: whether in attitude or in government, God will ever be righteous. But holiness is not a word of relationship, but of nature, of being. God is holy: if there were no creatures He would yet be holy, the Holy One, "Whose Name is Holy."

It is in this holiness of God that we must look for the necessity of propitiation. That there must be propitiation does not indicate, primarily, that God is offended and must be appeased; but that God is holy and cannot by sinful creatures be approached. Only holy beings (like the seraphim, the cherubim of glory, and the elect angels) can possibly abide in His presence. Sin cannot come nigh Him. It is not that He hates sinners (He gave His Son to ransom them!) but it is that He is holy and cannot look upon sin. And if there be sin, there must be wrath against it: not merely the vindication

of God’s offended government, but the infinite abhorrence of His holy nature! He "dwelleth in light unapproachable." It is death to draw nigh: not because God is vindictive,--He is love: but because He is holy, and we are sinful, unclean, unholy.

True, we are also guilty: the penalty of sin is upon us. And that means judgment, and the infliction of wrath. But behind this, and deeper than even our guilt, is the abhorrence of a holy God of our sin itself. It is the abominable thing His holy being hates. We must be banished under wrath from His sight! Let all those who think to stand in the day of judgment before God think on this. The atonement arises out of a necessity in the nature of God Himself.

Now in the type of the great Day of Atonement of Leviticus 16, we have the two goats setting forth two great facts, which we must not confuse: First (and most important) the blood of the slain goat brought into God’s presence in the holy of holies: the sprinkled blood being the witness that there has been death, a life laid down: [78] and no effort to come otherwise into God’s presence,--no Cain-way, which does not recognize sin, or that holiness of God which was wrath and death toward sin. The blood of the goat sprinkled on the mercy-seat was the witness that all the claims of God, His holiness, His truth, His righteousness, and the majesty of His throne, had been admitted and met by a substitute which had laid its life down.

[78] "The great idea in all these offerings (of Leviticus) was that the life of the victim was accepted for the life of the offerer" Angus-Green.

Then, second, there was the transferring in type of the actual sins,--all of them, to the head of the scape-goat (the "goat of dismissal"), which was then led to the wilderness, never to be found again: thus setting forth the result of the death of the first goat,--for the two are really one, in that the two set forth the effect of Christ’s death: (1) toward God; and (2) toward sinners.

It is this latter phase of Christ’s work,--His taking away our sins forever, that we so constantly find in our hymns (and rightly). But it is the first phase that the Word of God calls "the lot for Jehovah" (Leviticus 16:8; Leviticus 16:9; Leviticus 16:15). It is of first importance that God should be glorified where sin had so dishonored Him! Sin outraged His holiness, insulted His Majesty, defied His righteous government. And the cross made good all this, and publicly, before the universe. This was first. And second, God could now let sinners, in all their guilt, turn to Him! And we should learn to look at the cross as first of all glorifying God; and not solely from the viewpoint of the blessed and eternal benefits accruing to us thereby!

It is the character of God and the character of sin that are before us in Leviticus 16:1-34, in the Great Day of Atonement. "That I die not" was upon the mind of the high priest as he swung the censer when entering the presence of Jehovah, the Holy One, to sprinkle the blood, "to make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins." Note here that it is "uncleannesses" that are mentioned, even before "transgressions" or "sins"! Read carefully Leviticus 16:1-34,--especially Leviticus 16:15, Leviticus 16:16.

Taking the blood in before God, in the holy of holies, was not a gift to God! Nor was it that God "delighted in bloodshed"--the monstrous claim of God’s enemies. Christ’s blood witnesses that a life has been laid down (though that of a Substitute, a Lamb, God Himself in love has provided). So that a sinner, unable to be in God’s presence at all, and guilty, might, in the Name and Person

of that Substitute, be in God’s presence, pardoned and justified. So that the blood witnesses at once the infinite holiness and righteousness of God, and also His fathomless love! The words "made nigh in Christ’s blood" should be in the constant consciousness of every Christian!

Now in order that these things may be impressed on our hearts, we quote a few of the ever recurring references in Scripture to the holiness of God: its effect in godly fear upon the saints, and also its effect upon the wicked. We have placed these passages in a footnote. We beg you to stop and humbly read them; for the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New. Indeed, that great passage in the Sixth of Isaiah in which the seraphim veil their faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts," is directly declared in the Twelfth of John to have been spoken of the Lord Jesus Christ: "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory [Christ’s] and he spake of Him" (John 12:39-41). The fact that the Son of God has come, sent by a God of love, and has borne sin for us, so that we who believe shall not come into judgment, but draw near to God by Christ’s blood, does not at all change the character of the holy God; but, on the contrary, reveals His holiness as nowhere else! [79]

[79] Exodus 3:5 : Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Exodus 19:22 : And let the priests also. that come near to Jehovah, sanctify themselves, lest Jehovah break forth upon them. Exodus 24:1-2 : Worship ye afar off, and Moses alone shall come near unto Jehovah; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him. Exodus 24:17 : And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. Leviticus 9:7 : And Moses said unto Aaron, Draw near unto the altar, and offer thy sin-offering, and thy burnt-offering, and make atonement. Leviticus 10:1-3 : Nadab and Abiliu offered strange fire before Jehovah . . . And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that Jehovah spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. Deuteronomy 4:24 : For Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a Jealous God. Deuteronomy 5:4-5 : Jehovah spake with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire . . . ye were afraid because of the fire, and went not up into the mount. Isaiah 33:14 : The sinners in Zion are afraid: trembling hath seized the godless ones: Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? Hebrews 12:29 : For our God is a consuming fire.

Therefore we see m the word translated "propitiation" a propitiatory sacrifice that has expiated guilt; and therefore the "mercy-seat" where God is in all His holiness, and the effect of Christ’s expiatory sacrifice, in the bringing into God’s holy presence sinners, the defiled and guilty,--whose Substitute has borne their defilement and guilt, His blood becoming the witness thereto before God.

We know that we read in Hebrews 9:8 concerning the sacrifices in that first tabernacle: "The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing." Besides, we also read in Hebrews: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way . . . let us draw near with a true heart, in fulness of faith" (Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 10:22). God’s being and character do not change. The cross is the deepest witness of all to that fact! In every great revival in church history, as in the Old Testament, there has been a

coming back into the consciousness of being guilty, lost sinners, dependent on the shed blood of a Redeemer. If the world has gotten past being recalled to that blessed sinner-consciousness in the presence of a God of mercy at the cross--there is nothing left but judgment!

Romans 3:26 : For the showing forth of His righteousness at this present season: that He might be Himself righteous, while declaring righteous the person having faith in Jesus.

Both in Romans 3:25 and Romans 3:26 it is the effect of Christ's sacrifice, as displaying the Divine righteousness, that is before us. From Adam to Christ God had "passed over," not judged and put away, sin. The word translated "passed over" (paresis) in Romans 3:25, is not the word for "remission," of Matthew 26:28, which is used fifteen times for the active pardon of sins; whereas the present word (paresis) is used in Romans 3:25 only. This word carries, in a sense, almost the same thought as the word "overlooked," in Acts 17:30. Of course there had to be, before the cross, such displays of Divine government as the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues in Egypt, and the dispersion of rebellious Israel. Nevertheless, God did not take up man's sin for judgment according to His own being, until the cross. There He held the public Judgment Day of human sin, displaying His absolute righteousness in not sparing His own Son. Before the cross, as Bengel says, "the righteousness of God was not so apparent, for He seemed not to be so exacting with sin as He is, but to leave the sinner to himself, to regard not." But in the atoning death of Christ, God's righteousness was fully exhibited in His wrath against sin as it was in His holy sight. He was shown righteous, at the very moment He was, in love, working out the deliverance of the sinner from the wrath due. He was the Justifier, and yet just! In the words, "at this present season," God directs our gaze back to the cross, where Christ was publicly set forth and judged for our sin; and also He covers this whole "season" of mercy the present dispensation. Old Testament believers looked forward: they were forgiven on credit. But "this present season," is better. It is characterized by a righteousness already displayed in God's judging our sin at the cross; and therefore by God as the righteous Justifier of all who believe.

Now our faith is that one act of our hearts that appropriates the work of Christ; and we stand, by virtue of that work alone in the immediate presence of the infinitely holy God. The words "most holy" occur about forty times in describing the sanctuary matters of the Old Testament; but faith in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ who fulfills all those shadows, takes the place of all this: therefore, in the New Testament, our faith is called "our most holy faith"! (Jude 1:20).

Romans 3:27 : Where then is the [Jewish] boasting? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith. Where then is the [Jewish] boasting? It is plain all through this discussion that Paul has the religious position and opposition of the Jews in mind. Boasting "was excluded at the moment when the law of faith, that is, the gospel, was brought in." [80]

[80] As one has quaintly said, "The Feast of Mercy was on, and the damsel Grace was at the door, admitting everyone who came on the ground of mercy alone. Old Mr. Boasting, in a high hat and fine suit, presented himself. Oh,' said Grace, as she quickly shut the door in his face, There is no room for you here! The people here are feasting on the free gifts of God.' So Mr. Boasting was shut out!" In view of this new gospel-revelation of the finished work of Christ, who did the whole work for us on Calvary, and that by God's appointment, everything is seen to be of God, and not at all of man. Therefore, even the Jews, to whom the Law had been given, had their mouths completely stopped, "because there was no work done," and no ground for boasting! By what

manner of law? of works? Not at all! but by a law of faith. "Law" in this instance is rule, or plan. This "law," or principle, of faith, applies not only to our justification, but to every aspect of the believer's life thereafter,--"building up yourselves on your most holy faith." "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God."

Romans 3:28 : For we reckon that a man is declared righteous by faith, apart from Works of law--This verse is not a conclusion arrived at, but a reason given why boasting is excluded.

Romans 3:29-30 : Or is God [the God] of Jews only? [who alone had the Law]. Is He not [the God] of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: since it is one God who shall declare righteous the circumcision on the principle of faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. To paraphrase: "Or is God the God of the Jews only? (as He must be, if justification is by the Law: for only to the Jews did God give the Law). Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: since God is One (in His being, and alike to all nations). And He shall justify the circumcision (Jewish believers) out of simple faith (and not by their keeping Moses' Law though they had it from God), and the uncircumcision (Gentiles, who had nothing) through their faith (apart from His giving them the Law)."

Romans 3:31 : Do we then annul law through faith? Banish the thought! on the contrary, we establish law.

It is the constant cry of those who oppose grace, and most especially that declaration of grace that our justification is apart from law--apart from works of law--apart from ordinances, that it overthrows the Divine authority. But in this verse Paul says, "We establish law" through this doctrine of simple faith. To illustrate: In the wilderness a man was found gathering up sticks to make a fire on the Sabbath day. Now, the Law had said, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day." How, then, was this Law to be "established"? By letting the law-breaker off? No. By securing his promise to keep the Law in the future? No! By finding someone who had kept this commandment always, perfectly, and letting his obedience be reckoned to the law-breaker? No, in no wise!

How then, was the Law established? You know very well. All Israel were commanded by Jehovah to stone the man to death. We read:

"And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it had not been declared what should be done to him. And Jehovah said unto Moses The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him to death with stones; as Jehovah commanded Moses" (Numbers 15:33,ff).

Thus and thus only was the commandment of Jehovah established--by the execution of the penalty.

Paul preached Christ crucified: that Christ died for our sins, that "He tasted death for every man." And that Israel, who were under the Law, He redeemed from the curse of that Law by being made a curse for them. Thus the cross established law; for the full penalty of all that was against the Divine majesty, against God's holiness. His righteousness, His truth, was forever met, and that not according to man's conception of what sin and its penalty should be, but according to God's

judgment, according to the measure of the sanctuary, of high heaven itself! The Jew, prating about his own righteousness, went about to kill Paul, crying that he spake against the Law; whereas it was that very Jew who would lower the Law to his own ability to keep it, instead of allowing it its proper office; namely, to reveal his guilt, curse him, and condemn him to death, and thus drive him to the mercy of God in Christ, whose expiatory death established law by having its penalty executed! [81]

[81] As to the "modernist," being more shallow by far than even the Sadducees of our Lord's day, he is not even exercised in his conscience concerning the Law, or the difference between law and grace as a means of righteousness,--of righteous standing with God. For, forsooth, the "modernist" has already a "character," an "innate nobility," though where the poor fellow gets these things, alas, who can discern? We know from Scripture that his first father was Adam; and that this "modernist," was, like David, "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin." We have immeasurably more respect for a Jew, who is at least endeavoring by his imagined law-keeping to attain righteousness,--which presupposes that he knows he has it not! Even the Seventh Day Adventists, with their unscriptural bondage to law, are worried in conscience: the "modernist" is smugly secure, for what means Thus saith the Lord to him? But wait--till he faces the Great White Throne!

RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS

If God announces the gift of righteousness apart from works, why do you keep mourning over your bad works, your failures? DO you not see that it is because you still have hopes in these works of yours that you are depressed and discouraged by their failure? If you truly saw and believed that God is reckoning righteous the ungodly who believe on Him, you would fairly hate your struggles to be "better"; for you would see that your dreams of good works have not at all commended you to God, and that your bad works do not at all hinder you from believing on Him,--that justifieth the ungodly!

Therefore, on seeing your failures, you should say, I am nothing but a failure; but God is dealing with me on another principle altogether than my works, good or bad,--a principle not involving my works, but based only on the work of Christ for me. I am anxious, indeed, to be pleasing to God and to be filled with His Spirit; but I am not at all justified, or accounted righteous, by these things. God, in justifying me, acted wholly and only on Christ's blood-shedding on my behalf.

Therefore I have this double attitude: first, I know that Christ is in Heaven before God for me, and that I stand in the value before God of His finished work; that God sees me nowhere else but in this dead, buried, and Risen Christ, and that His favor is toward me in Christ, and is limitless and eternal.

Then, second, toward the work of the Holy Spirit in me, my attitude is, a desire to be guided into the truth, to be obedient thereto, and to be chastened by God my Father if disobedient; to learn to pray in the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit, and to be filled with a love for the Scriptures and for the saints and for all men.

Yet none of these things justifies me! I had justification from God as a sinner, not as a saint! My saintliness does not increase it, nor, praise God, do my failures decrease it!

02.07. Chapter 4A

CHAPTER 4A Abraham and David, in Whom the Jews Specially Gloried, Accounted Righteous by Faith, not by Law or Works. Romans 4:1-8.

Righteousness is also Apart from Ordinances (as Circumcision). Romans 4:9-12.

Abraham’s "Heirship of the World," not at All by Law but by Promise; and So, Only, Believers Are All Made Certain of its Blessings. Romans 4:13-17. The Way and Walk of faith Wondrously Exemplified in Abraham the Father of All Believers. Romans 4:18-22. The Connection of Our Justification with Christ’s Resurrection. Romans 4:23-25.

1 What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh hath found? 2 For if Abraham was justified on the principle of works, he hath whereof to boast. 3 But [we find] he is unable to boast before God: For what saith the Scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it [his faith] was reckoned unto him as righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace but, on the contrary, as a matter of debt. 5 But to one not working, but believing upon the God that justifieth the ungodly, --his faith is reckoned for righteousness. THE JEWS ESPECIALLY gloried in Abraham and David,--just as we all naturally glory in the assumed personal righteousness of great saints, as the ground of God’s favor to them. But whatever blessing, says Paul, Abraham obtained, Scripture forbade the thought that he could glory before God; because he simply believed what God told him, that his seed should be in number like the stars of heaven. (Read Genesis 15:6) Abraham gave God His proper glory as the God of truth. We cannot conceive of Abraham as boasting before his house and before the Hittites that he had performed an act creditable to himself in believing God!

Paul now answers Jewish objectors to the doctrine of justification by simple faith; and he uses as examples those two great men of faith whose names were constantly on Jewish tongues,--Abraham and David. The question about Abraham, What has Abraham our fleshly forefather found? is practically the same as in Chapter Three, "What advantage, then, hath the Jew?" We do well, while standing absolutely with Paul, to understand with sympathy the state of mind of the Jew, who had the Old Testament Scriptures, and a national history of marvelous Divine instruction and providence, and also remarkable religious prominence everywhere, in Paul’s day. "To Israel pertained the fathers" (Romans 9:5); Paul here in Romans 4:1, places himself, therefore, among the Israelites, and says, "Abraham our forefather according to the flesh." [82]

[82] The doctrine of Abraham as being the "father of all that believe," has yet to be announced,--as is done later in this same chapter.

Romans 4:2-3 : Now argues Paul, if Abraham had been declared righteous before God on the works principle, he would indeed have had something to boast of! But the Scripture record showed there was nothing of which he could boast before God. For concerning Abraham more definitely and directly than of any other human being, God’s word was specific: Abraham believed God, and

it [his faith] was reckoned [83] to him as righteousness.

[83] (1)"It was reckoned unto him as righteousness"; here the word "reckoned" is logidzomai, a great word with Paul, used 41 times in the New Testament, 35 of which are in Paul's epistles, 11 of these here in Romans 4:1-25. Where it is used as in Romans 4:3, here, of God, it is always a court word, God acting as Judge and accounting or holding as righteous those who, as Abraham, believe in Him; or the contrary, as is implied in Romans 4:8; "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin,"--implying that there are those to whom He will reckon sin and its guilt. In Romans 4:5, we see what is reckoned by God as righteousness: "his faith is reckoned as righteousness," This does not mean that faith is a meritorious act, as indeed it could not be,--being simply extending credence to One who cannot lie! Therefore, without being itself righteousness, it is reckoned as righteousness; the ground of such reckoning being of course the work of Christ on the cross. (Compare on this (Compare on this word the note on Romans 5:11) To discover that the greatest saints have no other standing than the weakest saints, is a lesson that is difficult for all of us! So now for the Jew to find that great Abraham has nothing in the flesh, but must be justified by simple faith, like any sinner, is a great shock. There was no honor, no "merit," in Abraham's believing the faithful God, who cannot lie. The honor was God's. When Abraham believed God, he did the one thing that a man can do without doing anything! God made the statement, the promise; and God undertook to fulfill it. Abraham believed in his heart that God told the truth. There was no effort here. Abraham's faith was not an act, but an attitude. His heart was turned completely away from himself to God and His promise. This left God free to fulfill that promise. Faith was neither a meritorious act by Abraham, nor a change of character or nature, in Abraham: he simply believed God would accomplish what He had promised: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Romans 4:4-5 : Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as a matter of grace, but, on the contrary, as a matter of debt. But to one not working, but believing upon the God that justifieth the ungodly,--his faith is reckoned for righteousness.

Here Paul writes two verses which every believer should commit to memory: for they state what no mind of fallen man ever imagines; for do not people naturally believe that the way to be saved is to "be good"? To him that worketh--To a man that works for wages, the wages are due as a debt. That is a simple enough principle. But do not seek to apply it to salvation! No one ever got righteousness by work or worth! Righteousness is not by doing right, strange and impossible as that may seem. But to him that worketh not--to him who "casts his deadly doing down"; who, seeing his guilt, and his entire inability to put it away, ceases wholly from all efforts to obtain God's favor by his own doings, or self-denyings,--even by his prayers: but believeth on the God that declareth righteous the ungodly--not the godly or the good! But, you say, God cannot do that! God cannot declare a man godly if he is really ungodly. Now God did not say "godly," but He said righteous,--"declareth righteous those ungodly who believe." God can do that! For God can reckon to an ungodly man who dares cease trying to change himself, and relies on God just as he is, a sinner,--God can and does reckon to such a one the glorious benefit of Christ's death and resurrection on behalf of sinners. And of such a believing sinner, God declares his faith is counted as righteousness.

It cannot be too much emphasized that the words, "the ungodly," in Romans 4:5, wholly shut out any other class from justification. If we say, God, indeed, has in some special cases justified notoriously, openly, evidently ungodly ones; while His general habit is, to justify the godly (which is what human reason demands), then we at once deny all Scripture. For God says, "There is no distinction; for all sinned; there is none righteous,--not one." And if you claim that God justifies the godly, we ask, on what ground? If you say on the ground of their godliness, you have left out the blood of Christ,--on which ground alone God can deal with sinners; and you have really denied this so-called "godly" man to be a sinner before God at all, since he is to be justified on another ground than is the openly ungodly sinner,--the shed blood of Christ. Do you not see that all this distinction between sinners is an abomination before a holy God? What does it matter whether you are a nobleman or a knave, if God has said He declares sinners righteous by Christ's blood? What matter whether you are an honorable woman or a harlot, if God says you are a sinner (and He does!) and that the only ground of being declared righteous is the blood of His Son? The burning question is, have you and I been so really convinced of the fact of our sinnerhood and guilt, and of our utter helplessness, and lost state, as to be able to believe on a God who can and does "declare righteous the UNgodly--those who believe, as ungodly, on Him? A child, without Christ, is "ungodly," in this sense. "Ye were by nature children of wrath," is an awful word, but a true word,--going back to our mother's womb, who, "in sin conceived us!" We were born into a lost, guilty race,--we were born part of that race! And it was written of all of us, concerning Adam's sin: "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."

We are all ungodly! And when we place our faith in the God who is in the business of declaring righteous the ungodly--who trust Him as they are,--on the sole ground of the shed blood of Christ,--then we are justified,--accounted righteous, by God.

No, it is not the regenerate, the born again man, who is declared righteous,--it is the ungodly. It is not the penitent man or the praying man, as such, but the ungodly. It is not the professing Christian who has "escaped the defilements of the world" (2 Peter 2) through certain spiritual experiences (it may be of a high order), but the ungodly, who believes, as such, on the God who declares righteous the ungodly who believe on Him--AS SUCH! And of course it is not the "church-member,"--Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, or Plymouth Brother, as such,--but, the ungodly. This is not, either, putting a premium on ungodliness, but telling the truth! If you have not relied on God as an ungodly one, you have yet to be declared righteous; for He is the God who declares righteous the ungodly who believe on Him. [84]

[84] (1)We beg the reader's permission to relate below an experience of our own, as illustrating "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that declares righteous the ungodly": Years ago in the city of St. Louis, I was holding noon meetings in the Century Theater. One day I spoke on this verse,-- Romans 4:5. After the audience had gone, I was addressed by a fine-looking man of middle age, who had been waiting alone in a box-seat for me. He immediately said, "I am Captain G--," (a man very widely known in the city). And, when I sat down to talk with him, he began: "You are speaking to the most ungodly man in St. Louis." I said, "Thank God!" "What!" he cried. "Do you mean you are glad that I am bad?" "No," I said; "but I am certainly glad to find a sinner that knows he is a sinner." "Oh, you do not know the half! I have been absolutely ungodly for years and years and years, right here in St. Louis. I own two Mississippi steamers. Everybody knows me. I am just the most ungodly man in town"' I could hardly get him quiet enough to ask him: "Did you hear me

preach on ungodly people' today?" "Mr. Newell," he said, "I have been coming to these noon meetings for six weeks. I do not think I have missed a meeting. But I cannot tell you a word of what you said today. I did not sleep last night. I have hardly had any sleep for three weeks. I have gone to one man after another to find what to do. And I do what they say. I have read the Bible. I have prayed. I have given money away. But I am the most ungodly wretch in this town. Now what do you tell me to do? I waited here today to ask you that. I have tried everything; but I am so ungodly!" "Now," I said, "we will turn to the verse I preached on." I gave the Bible into his hands, asking him to read aloud: "To him that worketh not." "But," he cried, "how can this be for me? I am the most ungodly man in St. Louis!" "Wait," I said, "I beg you go on reading." So he read, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." "There!" he fairly shouted, "that's what I am,--ungodly." "Then, this verse is about you," I assured him. "But please tell me what to do, Mr. Newell. I know I am ungodly: what shall I do?" "Read the verse again, please." He read: "To him that worketh not,"--and I stopped him. "There," I said, "the verse says not to do, and you want me to tell you something to do: I cannot do that." "But there must be something to do; if not, I shall be lost forever." "Now listen with all your soul," I said. "There was something to do, but it has been done!" Then I told him how God had so loved him, all ungodly as he was, that He sent Christ to die for the ungodly. And that God's judgment had fallen on Christ, who has been forsaken of God for his, Captain G----'s, sins there on the cross. Then, I said, "God raised up Christ; and sent us preachers to beseech men, all ungodly as they are, to believe on this God who declares righteous the ungodly, on the ground of Christ's shed blood." He suddenly leaped to his feet and stretched his hand out to me. "Mr. Newell," he said, "I will accept that proposition!" and off he went, without another word. Next noonday, at the opening of the meeting, I saw him beckoning to me from the wings of the stage. I went to him, "May I say a word to these people?" he asked. I saw his shining face, and gladly brought him in. I said to the great audience, "Friends, this is Captain G----, whom most, it not all of you, know. He wants to say a word to you." "I want to tell you all of the greatest proposition I ever found," he cried: "I am a business man, and know a good proposition. But I found one yesterday that so filled me with joy, that I could not sleep a wink all night. I found out that God for Jesus Christ's sake declares righteous any ungodly man that trusts Him. I trusted Him yesterday; and you all know what an ungodly man I was. I thank you all for listening to me; but I felt I could not help but tell you of this wonderful proposition; that God should count me righteous. I have been such a great sinner." This beloved man lived many years in St. Louis, an ornament to his confession. So we have seen in verses four and five the working method and the believing method contrasted. What a place heaven would be if men were allowed to pay their way! They would boast all through eternity, one about this, another about that. But the works method and the grace method are mutually exclusive. Each shuts out the other. Men must cease even seeking; they must cease all works--weeping, confessing, repenting, even earnest praying, and simply believe God laid their sins, their very own sins, all of them, on Christ at the cross. There comes a moment when a man ceases from his own works, hearing that Christ finished the work, paid the ransom, at the cross. Then he rests! Such a soul believes,--knowing himself to be a sinner, and ungodly,--but he believes on God, just as he is, and knows he is welcome!

Note that Scripture does not say that God justifies the praying man, or the Bible reader, or the church member, but the ungodly. Have you yourself believed on the God that accounts righteous the ungodly? Have you ever really seen yourself in the ungodly class, a mere sinner, and as such trusted God, on only one ground, the blood of Christ?

6 Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom

God reckoneth righteousness apart from works [saying], 7 Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, And whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin.

Romans 4:6-7 : Now David also, in the Spirit, sets his seal to this blessed doctrine with great joy: saying twice in the beautiful Hebrew of Psalms 32:1-11 : Oh, the blessednesses of the man! Of what man?

First, of the man whose iniquities are forgiven--Forgiveness is more than mere remitting of penalty. Even a hard-hearted judge might remit a man's fine if it were paid by someone else, but forgiveness involves the heart of the forgiver. God's forgiveness is the going forth of God's infinite tenderness toward the object of His mercy. It is God folding the sinner, as the returning prodigal was folded, to His bosom. Such a one is blessed indeed!

Then, whose sins are covered--"Covered" is the Old Testament word, (Heb. kaphar); for those sacrifices could never "take away" sins, but only "cover" from sight. "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance made [not a removal] of sins year by year" (Hebrews 10:11; Hebrews 10:3). There was a type of Christ's coming work, but the sins were yet there before God till Christ took them away on the cross. If then, one like David could pronounce blessed the man whose sins were "covered," out of God's sight in His mercy (though not yet removed), much more should we rejoice to know that Christ has been manifested "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"! (Hebrews 9:26).

Romans 4:8 : The third element David here describes, in "righteousness without works," is the inflexible purpose of God never to bring up again the sin of the "blessed" man: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin. (Again the Hebrew repeats "Oh, the blessednesses!"--Psalms 32:2). Many believers indeed, like David and Peter, have sinned deeply. But, as Nathan said to David on the very occasion of the announcement of both the King's sin and its being "put away," celebrated in this Psalms 32:1-11 : "Jehovah hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." So have many been forgiven. High offences were David's indeed: adultery, hypocrisy and murder. But they were not "reckoned" against David. True, the king was chastened: "The sword shall never depart from thy house." At Nathan's parable David's indignation (how righteously indignant we can become at our own sins when we see them in others!) called for a four-fold payment by the rich man who took the poor man's lamb (2 Samuel 12:5; 2 Samuel 12:6). And God allowed four sons of David's to be smitten: the child of Uriah's wife, then his first-born, Amnon; then fair Absalom; and, last, goodly Adonijah. Nevertheless, God had not "reckoned" the guilt against him! No wonder he pronounces blessed the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works! [85]

[85] This world hates the God of David, because it hates grace. The world rather likes David's taking Uriah's wife (for that is the world's manner of life!). But for Jehovah not to reckon this sin as damning guilt, and freely to forgive David,--and that so fully as to give "her that had been the wife of Uriah" another son, and bestow His special love on him (Solomon) to the extent of giving him a personal name, Jedidiah "for Jehovah's sake" (2 Samuel 12:24; 2 Samuel 12:25) and placing this woman Bathsheba in the official genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:6); and, above all, for God to call David a man "after His own heart,"--all this rouses the ire of a vile, self-righteous, neighbor-judging, blind, grace-ignorant, impenitent world,--a world that has neither repented, nor

means to repent, of the very sins, into which David fell, and of which he repented most deeply. God's record of David is "a man that will do all my purposes" (Acts 13:22, margin). How about it, critic of David's God? Have you repented? Do you desire to do all God's purposes? If not,--well, you will shortly meet the God of whom your false mouth has prated!

Next we have the fact that even Divine ordinances like circumcision have nothing to do with righteousness,--any more than have good works; that even Abraham's circumcision was merely a seal of the righteousness of a faith he before had.

9 Is this blessing [of righteousness without works] pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, To Abraham [a circumcised man] his faith was reckoned as righteousness. 10 Under what circumstances, then, was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision,or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but, on the contrary, in uncircumcision! 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision: that he might be the father of ALL them that believe, though they be in uncircumcision,--that righteousness might be reckoned unto them; 12 and the father of circumcision to them who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had in uncircumcision.

Romans 4:9-10 : Paul had to have Jews in mind, just as we today have to have "professing Christians" in mind. The Jew relied upon and boasted in the outward mark of circumcision (which God, in Genesis 17:1-27, prescribed to Abraham and his fleshly seed), entirely forgetting that God, fourteen or fifteen years before circumcision (Genesis 15:6), had accounted Abraham righteous wholly apart from circumcision. [86] Circumcision was an outward sign or symbol, both to Abraham and to the world about him: to Abraham, that God was his God; to the world, that Abraham was separated from the world unto God. Just so baptism today is an outward sign that we are Christ's in faith and identification, and that we no longer belong to the world: but how deadly is the delusion that baptism in itself amounts to anything before God! [87]

[86] "Paul has turned the Jew's boast upside down. It is not the Gentile who must come to the Jew's circumcision for salvation; it is the Jew who must come to a Gentile faith, such faith as Abraham had long before he was circumcised . . . When Isaac was saved, he was not saved by his circumcision any more than was his father before him. God never promised salvation except to faith. He never promised a perpetual nationality except to circumcised men who believe"--Stifler.

[87] "The sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, useful when viewed in their proper light, become ruinous when perverted into grounds of confidence. What answers well as a sign, is a miserable substitute for the thing signified. Circumcision will not serve for righteousness, nor baptism for regeneration"--Hodge.

After the same manner with the Jews, the vast majority of those calling themselves Christians place reliance, alas, today, on some ordinance (or, as it is called, "sacrament"), saying, "Christ told us to repent and be baptized, did He not? Christ commanded us to take the Lord's supper." But remember that God justifies NOT those observing ordinances, but the ungodly who believe. If you are still regarding baptism, or the Lord's supper, or "the mass," or "christening," or "confirmation," as having anything whatever to do with God's declaring you righteous, you do not understand being declared righteous as an ungodly one. And in the gospel, since the cross, you are not told

first to cease being ungodly, and then believe; but, as ungodly, to believe!

Neither baptism nor the Lord's supper (upon both of which, in distorted form, thousands have rested, as "sacraments" commending them unto God), has power to give any standing whatever before a righteous God: that belongs only to the shed blood of the Redeemer of guilty and hopeless ones such as are we all!

Note that here, first, human works are set aside as a ground of righteousness; and then Divine ordinances also are just as fully set aside. Circumcision had been commanded to the Jew. The Jew trusted in it, and became utterly blind to the fact that even Abraham, "the father of circumcision," had been declared righteous on another principle,--by simple faith, years before his circumcision! Uncircumcised, then, a common sinner (a "Gentile"--if there had been at that time "Jews"), Abraham just believed God: gave Him the honor of being a God of truth. And be it so that God saw that one day He would make Abraham as righteous in glory as He in that past day reckoned him in grace; yet it remains that God reckoned him what he was not, as yet, in experience; and that Abraham stood before God thus righteous the moment he believed! And not what Abraham would become, but what Christ would do on the cross for him was the ground of God's reckoning!

Each year I live I become more impressed with the solitary grandeur of this great friend of God. Behold him! Late come from the very home of idolatry, he walks among the Hittites as a "Prince of God"--their name for him (Genesis 23:6). Behold him, to whom "the God of glory" had appeared in his old place, Ur of the Chaldees; and to which blessed God he is so drawn by the cords of trust and love, that his whole life is as God's friend--walking with Him, ever learning of Him more and more; taking a mark of absolute separation to Him; ever building altars to Him, and calling on His name. Behold him, called to part with Isaac, his only son, readily giving him up to God!

Romans 4:11-12 : It was in order to become the father of ALL them that believe that Abraham received the sign of circumcision: that is, he would have been the father of uncircumcised believers apart from his own circumcision (for he himself believed while uncircumcised); but God desired a circumcised separate nation, and so would have Abraham also the father of circumcision to those who not only had circumcision, but also (rare thing among the Jews!) should walk in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham which he had--while yet uncircumcised. [88] How few Jewish teachers or preachers can challenge Gentiles with the freedom and truth of the apostle Paul; "I beseech you, brethren, become as I, for I also am as ye" (Galatians 4:12). The Galatians were raw Gentiles, "without law." Paul cries, "I am as ye are: I have no reliance on circumcision; if ye Gentiles receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing!"

[88] These "steps of faith" of the uncircumcised Abraham would embrace all Abraham's story from his "call" in Genesis 12:1-20 to his circumcision in Genesis 17:1-27,--when he was 99 years old: (1) The revelation of the God of glory to Abraham, while yet in Ur of the Chaldees, and his evident turning from idols to Him. (2) Obedience to the command to get out of his country, from his kindred, and from his father's house (Genesis 12:1-4); tarrying indeed at Haran on his way until his father died (Acts 7:4; Genesis 11:31). (3) The altar-worship of Jehovah in Canaan (Genesis 12:7; Genesis 12:8). (4) Choosing his portion with God: Lot's separation from Abraham (Genesis 13:1-18), and Abraham's arrival at Hebron ("fellowship"). (5) The victory over the kings (Genesis 14:1-24), (6) Accepting through Melchizedek the new revelation of "God Most High, Possessor of

Heaven and Earth," and the rejection of riches from men (Genesis 14:1-24). (7) Believing God's bare word concerning his seed, and being thus "accounted righteous" (Genesis 15:1-21). "Notice that in the seventh of these steps, there is the peculiar element of counting on God, as God, to do the impossible. On the God who calleth the things not being, as being! No doubt, there were further walkings and testings until the offering of Isaac in Genesis 22:1-24, after which we find no more testings: Abraham's faith had become perfected. So James writes (see above), "The Scripture was fulfilled that saith, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." This word "fulfilled" is deeply significant. There was and always is, the prophetic, as well as the declarative element in justification, (that is, in God's accounting a sinner righteous). It is "the God who calleth the things that are not as though they were," (Romans 4:17) who acts in justification. The moment He declares sinners righteous, they are so, having immediately the standing of being in Christ before Him. But they will also be manifested, by and by, and be glorified with Christ. "Glorified" they are already in God's mind (8:30). What James insists on is that there will be a living walk, fulfilling the Divine declaration that the man is righteous. This living walk also is before Him whom we believe, even God (Romans 4:17). It has no reference whatever to men. The explanation by some that Abraham was "justified by faith before God and by works before men" is trivial! Both in Genesis 15:6, when God accounted him righteous, and in Genesis 22:15-18, Abraham was alone with his God. When James says, "By works was faith made perfect," he is expanding the statement, "Faith wrought with his works." Paul has almost the same Phrase: "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). Of course saving faith is a living, acting thing, as against mere opinion or profession; and this again is what James is insisting on. Works are the result of a true faith; but they are not, like faith itself, a condition of salvation. What "works" did the dying thief perform? You say. None: he cast himself on Christ as he was. Good. So must you and I: only that! The blessing of righteousness, then, comes not only without works, but also without ordinances, whether Jewish or Christian. And we see that only those Jews are really accounted circumcised in God's sight, who have heart-belief, as mere sinners, in the Redeemer. Faith, like true circumcision, is "that of the heart" (Romans 2:29; Romans 10:10). According to this, there are very few real Jews on earth; yea, and relatively few true Christians, also; if righteousness be wholly by faith, apart from works, and apart from ordinances.

13 For not through law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, but, on the contrary, through righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of law be heirs, faith is made empty, and the promise is made useless: 15 for law works out wrath [to sinful man]; but where there is not law [to transgress], there is no transgression [of it]. 16 On this account the inheritance is on the principle of faith, in order that it may be according to grace: so that the promise [which could not be broken], might be made sure to all the seed [of Abraham]: not to that which was of the Law only, but also to that which [although not having had Moses' Law] was yet of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of all of us [believers] 17 (as it is written, I made thee father of many nations) in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God [the God], who makes alive the dead, and calls things not existing, as existing.

Romans 4:13-17 : Here the further question of Abraham's "inheriting the world" is considered, and this again is only through the righteousness of faith: this expression not meaning that faith is a righteous, meritorious thing, but that, as explained before faith, not law, is the Divine mode of

blessing.

Romans 4:13 : For not through law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, but, on the contrary, through righteousness of faith. "Heir of the world": Behold, then a new order of all things! Adam had failed, and his fleshly seed were fallen. Abraham has succeeded, to become the father of spiritual seed,--"of all them that believe": it will be a believing seed, not a natural seed. This man and that seed shall enter into the inheritance Adam forfeited for headship! What can "heir of the world" [89] mean? Nay, what shall it not mean? "The meek shall inherit the earth." And who are they? Not Adam's but Abraham's seed. Bishop Moule beautifully says: "Then and there, perhaps side by side with his Divine Friend manifested in human form, Abraham is told to count the stars under the glorious canopy, the Syrian night of stars'; and he hears the promise, 'So shall thy seed be.' It was then and there, that as a man uncovenanted, unworthy, but called upon to take what God gave, he received the promise that he should be heir of the world.' In his seed,'--that childless senior was to be a King of Men, Monarch of continents and oceans. All nations,' all the kindreds of the earth' were to be blessed in him, as their patriarchal Chief, their Head, in covenant with God."

[89] Dean Alford with his usual clearness says: "The inheritance of the world then is not the possession of Canaan merely, either literally, or as a type of a better possession,--but that ultimate lordship over the whole world which Abraham, as the father of the faithful in all peoples, and Christ, as the Seed of Promise, shall possess: the former figuratively indeed and only implicitly,--the latter personally and actually."

How hardly do we banish the thought of human "merit" in God's great saints! ("Merit" is a Romish term: away with it!) Faith is the ground of God's blessing. Abraham was a blessed man, indeed, but he became heir of the world on another principle entirely--simple faith. [90]

[90] 2.Now Paul completely shuts out the legalists from heirship with Abraham's seed. Because, as Weiss says, "If those persons were the possessors of the promise, who on the basis of a law had entered upon this inheritance of their father Abraham, (on the ground that it had been offered to them as a reward for the fulfillment of this law), then faith, which according to its essence is a confidence in the attainment of salvation, would be rendered void, and the promise, which has full assurance of that which is promised, would be made of no effect. For the law, in view of the sinful condition that prevails, can be completely fulfilled by none, and necessarily produces wrath. But the bestowal of that which is promised pre supposes the continuation of the graciousness of Him who made the promise; and this graciousness becomes equally impossible, as does the believing confidence--if law must be fulfilled to secure it!" When law comes in, it conditions everything upon obedience to it. It had to be "disannulled" when a better hope was brought in! (Hebrews 7:18; Hebrews 7:19)

Romans 4:14 : For if they which are of law be heirs, faith is made empty, and the promise is annulled--Here Paul enlarges, that for God to bless the merit-folks, [91] would make God's promise-method impossible, and so our faith in His promises, empty and void. [92] Faith and law are contradictory principles, the apostle shows: absolutely diverse means of blessing.

[91] The reason God hates your trust in your "good works" is, that you offer them to Him instead of resting on the all-glorious work of His Son for you at the cross. Reflect: 1. What it cost God to give

Christ. 2. What it cost Christ to put away sin,--your sin, at the cross. 3. What honor God has given Him "because of the suffering of death." 4. What plans for the future God has arranged through Christ's having made peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile "things upon the earth and things in the heavens, unto Himself." Now, by that uneasiness of conscience on account of which you keep doing "dead works," you neglect all God is, has done, and desires, for you; and substitute your own uncertain, fearful, trifling notions of "works that shall please God." You would make God come to your terms, instead of gladly accepting His great salvation and resting in the finished work of Christ. It is ominously bold presumption, when God is calling all to behold His Lamb, to be found asking God to behold your goodness, your works!

[92] Greek, katargeo, from kata, "down from"; and ergon, "work"; literally, therefore, to put out of work, or out of business, to render ineffective; a word often used by Paul, and most important in his exposition. Its uses in Romans are seen in Chapters Romans 3:3, Romans 3:31; Romans 4:14; Romans 6:6; Romans 7:2, Romans 7:6. It occurs in his epistles 26 times, and elsewhere only once, but that once is illuminative: "Cut it down: why doth it also cumber (katargei) the ground?" (Luke 13:7). The ground was unchanged, but rendered wholly unproductive through the shade of, and the use of all the moisture by, the fig tree. This is the exact meaning: a result otherwise to be expected is by some hindering power annulled. Remember this word!

Romans 4:15 : Law, Paul explains, given to sinners, simply brings forth God's wrath,--for sinners in the nature of the case will transgress. Law gives no life, and has no power over the flesh. So Paul calls law a "ministration of death and condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 3:9). Alford well says, "From its very nature, law excludes promise,--which is an act of grace, and faith, which is an attribute of confidence." Where law is not, neither is there transgression. This brings out several things: First, that it takes law to bring forth transgression of it,--though sin may be present. There can be no transgression of a law which exists not. The absence of law is the absence of transgression. The entrance of law (in the case of a fallen being) is the entrance of transgression. Second that there may be Divine dispensations where law is not the principle of relationship with God. Third, that to come into a spiritual place where there will be "no transgression," men must be removed completely from under the principle of law. (This will appear in Chapters Six and Seven. God indeed has an entirely different manner of life for those in Christ than being under the principle of law!) Fourth, that only the place of freedom from law is the place of the inheritance.

Romans 4:16 : Here we see anew God's great kindness. He desired that all the seed of Abraham, whether Jewish or Gentile believers, might have security,--that the promise might be sure to all the seed. Now if you introduce man's works (for man always says, "I must do my part"), you introduce an element of insecurity and uncertainty. For no man, trying to "do his part," is ever certain that he has done, or will do, his "part." Salvation is of God, not of man. It is of faith, and so, of grace; and thus, of God. For faith is unmixed with the vain promises and hopes of man to accomplish "his part"; but looks to what God has done, in sending His Son, to do a finished work on the cross; and to the fact that God has raised up Christ; and that Christ is our unfailing High Priest in heaven.

Abraham is declared to be "the father of us all,"--of all who believe. Believers will come from all nations of the earth, and Abraham is called "the heir of the world"; which he will be openly seen to be in the millennial kingdom that is shortly coming: "Ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28).

Romans 4:17 : (as it is written, I made thee father of many nations) in the sight, of Him whom he believed, even God [the God], who makes alive the dead, and calls things not existing, as existing. The words "Abraham, who is the father of us all" in Romans 4:16, are to be connected with "before Him whom he believed" in Romans 4:17, the intervening words being a parenthesis. There is a great household of faith! Whether believers realize it or not, they are sharing Abraham's inheritance. The mighty promises of God to Abraham and to His Seed, Christ (Galatians 3:16), should be studied deeply and often by all Christians. "For if ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29). God lodged the promises in Abraham: Christ fulfilled the conditions (of redemption), and we share the benefits! Abraham got us by promise; Christ bought us by blood. Abraham is the "father of all them that believe," whether his earthly seed, Israel; or his heavenly seed, the Church; or any who shall ever believe. As to our regeneration, of course, God is the Father of all believers. But as to our relation in the household of faith, Abraham is our father: Abraham believed for us all. That is, he believed a promise that included us all.

Believers may indeed be said to have a three-fold fatherhood: (1) that of Abraham, of the whole household of faith; (2) that of the teacher of the gospel who was used to win them to Christ ("For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel"-- 1 Corinthians 4:15); (3) that of God, who is our actual Father, who begat us by the Holy Spirit through His Word. The first two fatherhoods, of course, are fatherhoods of relationship, so to speak; the last only is of life and reality. Yet the first two fatherhoods are also real, and should be recognized, --especially that of Abraham.

02.08. Chapter 4B

CHAPTER 4B

Let us hold fast in our hearts the great revelation about God which closes Romans 4:17 : "God, who makes alive the dead, and calls the things not existing as existing." The translation in both the King James and the Revision Version surely comes short of the meaning here. The Greek literally is, God making alive dead ones, and calling things not being, being! It is as when God spoke to the darkness, back in Genesis One (Hebrew), the creative word, "Let light be!--and light was." It shone, too, "out of darkness"--not a ray that was projected from already existing light! His word was a creative fiat; and, answering it, "out of darkness" sprang the heretofore nonexistent, now created, light!

Note that it is the God who makes alive [93] dead ones;--not those with some faint and feeble existence, but actually dead ones, those utterly gone! It is the God who calls non-existent things existent,--not, "as though" they existed, a translation which, not reaching the Divine view, really involves doubt. "Not being, being," is what the text reads. It is as when God says of His words, "I make all things new,"--"they are come to pass!" (Revelation 21:5; Revelation 21:6). This is the God whose word Abraham trusted. It was in this character, that of Life-Giver to the dead, and the Caller of not-things existent, that he trusted Him. Thus Abraham was nothing (but dead), and the seed, non-existent! Yet Abraham believed God’s word that he should be "Father of a multitude"; and obediently changed his own name from Abram to Abraham!

[93] This remarkable compound word (zoe, life, plus poieO, make) is translated in the King James Version by the poor word "quicken." The Revised Version is right. The King James Version uses the same feeble word, "quicken" to translate the mighty word of Ephesians 2:5, a marvelous word of three components: a preposition, ("together with,"--sun)--plus our compound word, "make-alive," of Romans 4:17, above,--the whole really meaning, "made-alive-together-along-with"--Christ’ God enlifes us in Him,--us who once were in the other Adam, dead in sins! "Quicken" is not only pitiful, but lamentable in such a verse, as it hides the fundamental truth of a believer’s union with Christ in life and position.

Therefore the actual process and progress of Abraham’s life of faith in such a God, is vividly set before us as our pattern. We should study it over and over. The character of faith will be the same, with this consideration: Abraham believed on God in view of what He said He would do; we believe on Him who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

So, in His counsels and reckoning the believer, in Chapter Eight, is seen already glorified! Of course, in counting things not being as being, God is committed to bring into outward actuality all that He reckons; thus the believing ungodly not only is accounted righteous, but will one day be publicly manifested as the very "righteousness of God"! Indeed, justification involves God’s giving him life, as see Romans 5:18. But that is not the ground of his being reckoned righteous--that some day he will be in experience as righteous as he is now reckoned--any more than that he is

accounted righteous on the ground of his own good works. For justification is a sovereign, judicial--not creative-act of God, based wholly upon the death and resurrection of Christ. When a sinner is to be justified, then, righteous is that which he is not! But, he believing, God counts him, holds him as righteous. He has no more righteousness (as a quality) than when he a moment ago, believed. But he stands in all Christ's acceptance by the act of God, the Judge! Though we have said, God will make this standing good in glorious manifestation, yet no degree of sanctification or glorification is the basis of his being declared righteous, but the blood of Christ only, and His resurrection,--the sacrifice of Christ and God's sovereign act in view of it. For God to call the things not being as being; to extend to a man the complete value of Christ's atoning work and "reckon" him justified and glorified in His sight, although not yet so in manifestation, is God's own business. Let us praise Him for His grace!

18 Who against hope in hope kept on believing, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to what was spoken: So shall thy seed be! 19 And not at all weakened in his faith, he took full account of his own body, as in a dead condition (he being about a hundred years old), and also the deadness of Sarah's womb, 20 but, looking unto God's promise, he wavered not through unbelief, but on the contrary became inwardly strengthened through faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being full of assurance that what He had promised. He was able to perform. 22 Therefore also it [his faith] was reckoned to him as righteousness. 23 Now this was not written for his sake only, that it [his faith] was thus reckoned to him: 24 butfor our sakes likewise; for it [our faith] will be reckoned [for righteousness] to us also who are believing on Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justifying.

Here, then, in Romans 4:18-25 we have the difficult, though blessed and glorious, yea, and God-glorifying path of faith, exemplified in Abraham. He kept on in hope, believing contrary to all human hopes! There were many trials to his faith, the essence of the difficulty, however, always being to "look unto the promise of God" alone, and not to circumstances, or to the impossibility, according to the flesh, of the promise's being fulfilled.

We inherit what Abraham believed for and received. Mark down two points, naming the first "A" for Abraham; and the second, "C" for Christ. Now draw a line from "A" to "C" and then onward, and let that line represent the line of God's blessing. The promises of blessing were lodged in Abraham, and all conditions of blessing were fulfilled by Christ; and you and I merely step into the line of blessing from Abraham through Christ. It is good to be born into a good family on earth; how blessed to be in the great family of faith, the family of God, along with Abraham!

Satan hates active faith in a believer's heart, and opposes it with all his power. The world, of course, is unbelieving, and despises those who claim only "the righteousness of faith." The example of professing Christians generally is also against the path of simple faith. Among the "seven abominations" that Bunyan said he still found in his heart, was "a secret inclining to unbelief." "Against hope," against reason, against "feeling," against opinions of others, against all human possibilities whatever, we are to keep believing. This is the very article and essence of faith, [94] that it reckons as God does,--that is, upon God as described here, giving life not to the feeble, but to the dead, to those who cannot be "recovered" or "helped" or so wrought upon or patched up as to become something that they were not before; but who are absolutely hopeless,

dead!

[94] 1. I cannot refrain from quoting John Bunyan's Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ, in his contrasts of faith and unbelief: "Let me here give the Christian reader a more particular description of the Qualities of unbelief, by opposing faith unto it, in these particulars: 1. Faith believeth the Word of God, but unbelief questioneth the certainty of the same. 2. Faith believeth the word, because it is true, but unbelief doubteth thereof, because it is true. 3. Faith sees more in a promise of God to help than in all other things to hinder; but unbelief, notwithstanding God's promise, saith. How can these things be? 4. Faith will make thee see love in the heart of Christ when with His mouth He giveth reproofs, but unbelief will imagine wrath in His heart when with His mouth and word He saith He loves us. 5. Faith will help the soul to wait, though God defers to give, but unbelief will snuff and throw up all, if God makes any tarrying. 6. Faith will give comfort in the midst of fears, but unbelief causeth fears in the midst of comforts. 7. Faith will suck sweetness out of God's rod, but unbelief can find no comfort in the greatest mercies. 8. Faith maketh great burdens light, but unbelief maketh light ones intolerably heavy. 9. Faith helpeth us when we are down, but unbelief throws us down when we are up, 10. Faith bringeth us near to God when we are far from Him, but unbelief puts us far from God when we are near to Him. 11. Faith putteth a man under grace, but unbelief holdeth him under wrath. 12. Faith purifieth the heart, but unbelief keepeth it polluted and impure. 13. Faith maketh our work acceptable to God through Christ, but whatsoever is of unbelief is sin, for without faith it is impossible to please Him, 14. Faith giveth us peace and comfort in our souls, but unbelief worketh trouble and tossings like the restless waves of the sea. 15. Faith maketh us see preciousness in Christ, but unbelief sees no form, beauty, or comeliness in Him. 16. By faith we have our life in Christ's fulness, but by unbelief we starve and pine away. 17. Faith gives us the victory over the law, sin, death, the devil, and all evils; but unbelief layeth us obnoxious to them all. 18. Faith will show us more excellency in things not seen than in them that are, but unbelief sees more of things that are than in things that will be hereafter. 19. Faith makes the ways of God pleasant and admirable, but unbelief makes them heavy and hard. 20. By faith Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob possessed the land of promise; but because of unbelief neither Aaron, nor Moses, nor Miriam could get thither. 21. By faith the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, but by unbelief the generality of them perished in the wilderness. 22. By faith Gideon did more with three hundred men and a few empty pitchers than all the twelve tribes could do, because they believed not God. 23. By faith Peter walked on the water, but by unbelief he began to sink. thus might many more be added, which, for brevity's sake, I omit, beseeching every one that thinketh he hath a soul to save or be damned to take heed of unbelief lest, seeing there is a promise left us of entering into His rest, any of us by unbelief should indeed come short of it." That God should call the things that are not as being, is what faith rejoices in! Only God could call things thus. Abraham becomes before our eyes the particular shining example of this.

Romans 4:19 : His own body as in a dead condition--"he considered" [95] it, and knew it to be thus, and was therefore wholly hopeless in himself. Moreover, Abraham knew Sarah was "past age," unable to bear a child. He had before him, then, himself as dead, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. But he also had before him the promise of God: "Thou shalt become a father of many nations"; "So shall thy seed be."

[95] The King James Version along with certain commentators reads "considered not." William Kelly says: "There is excellent and perhaps adequate authority of every kind (mss., versions and

ancient citations) for dropping the negative particle." It is remarkable in this nineteenth verse that whichever reading we adopt, the resultant statement is not inconsistent with the context, though the two readings are opposite as can be.

Romans 4:20 : It was plainly and only a question of the veracity of God, and of His ability to carry out what He had promised. Abraham, therefore, believed [96] in Jehovah (Genesis 15:5; Genesis 15:6); and he wavered not through unbelief, but became inwardly strengthened through faith, giving glory to God; and also even Sarah herself "counted Him faithful who had promised; and received power to conceive seed."

[96] 1.The moral grandeur, yea, sublimity, of Abraham's position cannot be put into human description. Alone (except for Melchizedek) in a world that had left God, Abraham became by his faith, the silver thread that bound his seed to the God the world had deserted! Out from Eden man had gone, and then away from God's presence, to found, in Cain's city, a state of human affairs with God left out. Condemned and judged by the Deluge, they had built their proud Babel-tower. Scattered, again by Divine judgment, over the earth, they set up wood and stone "gods," and sacrificed to demons, glorifying the very lusts of their degradation: such was man's state, without God and without hope, in the world. And then--Abraham! Walking by a principle the world could not know, direct faith in God as He is,--as He reveals Himself step by step to this friend of His, Abraham comes quietly, but how wondrously, upon the scene. Even the Hittites, though they said of him, "Thou art a prince of God among us," yet knew him not,--neither Abraham, nor his blessed God. Faith in God cannot be understood, nor those who have it known, except by the men of faith. And because real faith in God enters into all the walk and ways of a trusting soul, such a one becomes, like Abraham, a "stranger and pilgrim on earth." The Lots, the Ishmaels, one by one, withdraw from Abraham. He dwelt at "Hebron," which word means "communion." Lot, though saved at last, walked as a worldling,--"by sight." Ishmael, as after him Esau, knew nothing of God. But Abraham knew, and progressed steadily in knowledge of his God, even to the ready offering of Isaac upon the altar. There was a seven-fold revelation of God to Abraham: First, it was as "the God of glory" that He appeared first in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:2). Second, He revealed Himself to him as Jehovah (Genesis 12:8; Genesis 14:22; Genesis 15:2; Genesis 15:8),--although not opening to him, as afterwards to Moses in Israel the meaning of that Name (Exodus 3:15); third, as El Elyon, God Most High, "Possessor of heaven and earth": and the Disposer of lands, and kings: (Genesis 14:19-22; Daniel 3:26; Daniel 4:2; Daniel 5:18; Daniel 5:21); fourth, as Lord (Adonai, Jehovah-- Genesis 15:2, Genesis 15:8); fifth, as El Shaddai, the Almighty God (Genesis 17:1); sixth, as "the Everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33); and seventh, as Jehova-Jireh" (Genesis 22:14): The God who will Provide,--Especially, a Lamb for sacrifice (Genesis 22:8). Christ, in His ministry on earth, said "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad!" And, finally, Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:1-40 that this great man of faith "looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Architect and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10),--that is, the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:1-27, Revelation 22:1-21. Thus Abraham was taken into God's complete confidence--as he himself had had complete confidence in God! "The Friend of God"--what a title! No angel or seraph had that name!

We find in Genesis 17:17 that Abraham not only considered the natural deadness of his body, but also brought up the question before the Lord: "Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" But, Jehovah having answered his

objection with a definite promise, Abraham thereafter refused to have his faith weakened by any natural thought of himself and Sarah, but set God’s promise only before his mind, without wavering, [97] as "double-minded" people, in their doubting, do (James 1:6-8, R.V.). Indeed, his constancy was such that it evidently wrought upon the doubting Sarah, who learned that He was "faithful who had promised." [98] Sarah’s incredulous but eager laugh (Genesis 18:12; Genesis 18:13; Genesis 18:15) Jehovah charged her sternly with; for He had before when Abraham laughed (Genesis 17:16-19), named the son whom she was to bear "Isaac"--which means laughter! Thus both Abraham and Sarah thought this thing "too good to be true"; but God in faithfulness brought it to pass. And we remember the happy laughter into which Sarah finally entered: "Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:5-7). Every time she spoke the name "Isaac" she could remember her doubt, and how gracious Jehovah had been to her.

[97] The word translated "wavered" (Romans 4:20), originally means to discriminate; then to learn or decide by discrimination; then to dispute or contend inwardly; then to be at variance with oneself, to hesitate, doubt. See Thayer’s Lexicon, where he finally translates: "Abraham did not hesitate through want of faith." Uncertainty, inward balancings and strugglings of faith with unbelief (as the father of the demoniac cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief") such was not the state of Abraham’s soul. Having committed himself to God’s promise, which was wholly beyond human possibility, he went steadily forward. This had the double result of giving glory to the God whom he believed, and of making Abraham himself stronger and stronger in faith. Two travelers on their way home came to a river frozen over, but evidently not as yet with thick ice. One said, "I am afraid that ice will not bear my weight," and he sat down in the cold. The other said, "I am going home," and strode forward over the ice with steady step. He had committed himself! He refused to look at circumstances; and every step strengthened his resolve to go ahead. He reached the other bank, and eventually his home. The other man stayed back in the cold. Mr. Moody used to say, "Unbelief sees something in God’s hand, and says, I wish I had that. Faith sees it, and says, I will have it!--and gets it." As one has said:

"The steps of faith fall upon the seeming void, And find the rock beneath!"

[98] God let Abraham wait many years, over thirteen at least (compare Genesis 16:16 with Genesis 17:1) before He began to let him realize the promises in the birth of Isaac.

Romans 4:21 : Being full of assurance that what He had promised. He was able to perform. What a blessed assurance of faith, resting wholly upon God’s performance of what He had promised,--how that puts us to shame! Since Abraham’s day we have the written Word; and Christ has come Yet how often we doubt! [99]

[99] "We have also a precious suggestion of some reasons (if we may say so) why God prescribes Faith as the condition of the justification of a sinner. Faith, we see, is an act of the soul which looks wholly away from self (as regards both merit and demerit), and honours the Almighty and All-graciousin a way not indeed in the least meritorious (because merely reasonable, after all), but yet such as to touch the hem of His garment.’ It brings His creatures to Him in the one right attitude--complete submission and confidence. We thus see, in part, why faith, and only faith, is the way to reach and touch the Merit (value and power) of the Propitiation"--Moule.

Romans 4:22 : Now God tells us that His word concerning Abraham, that "his faith was reckoned as righteousness," was written not for him only, but for us, also,--for all Abraham's children. There is no more striking description of the principle and process of faith than in this passage. Look at the "also" of Romans 4:22 : Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him as righteousness. That evidently looks toward Genesis 22:1-24; at the end of Abraham's testing time, when he offered up Isaac. Let us see what is here:

(1) We are not told that Abraham was reckoned righteous because of the vision of the God of glory that was vouchsafed to him in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:2). Nor do we read that he was reckoned righteous because he forsook his own land and was brought to the land of Canaan, nor because he built altars to Jehovah and worshipped him; nor because he had such high courage as to slaughter the kings and deliver Lot. All these things occurred before the amazing scene of Genesis 15:1-21 : where God proposed to him something absolutely impossible of accomplishment, except in God Himself.

(2) Abraham was reckoned righteous when he "believed in Jehovah," in His word, to bring about concerning Abraham something that could not humanly be--that he should be a "father of nations." God came to him years after this (Genesis 17:1-27), commanding him to change his name from Abram, "high father" (but desolate, like a lonely peak), to Abraham, "father of a multitude." And Abraham obeyed, and changed his name thus; although God had just rejected Ishmael, the only offspring he had in sight, from being the seed of promise and covenant!

(3) Abraham "gave glory to God," because he counted on God's bringing to pass His word, about that which only His glorious power could effect; a thing completely outside human possibility, but which all God's faithfulness and truth were pledged to accomplish. Thus Abraham let God in upon the scene, to act according to His own truth and power. Probably at that time he was the only man on earth who was giving God His due praise as the God of truth, who has "magnified His Word above all His Name" (Psalms 138:2). Our reason, yea, and our conscience also, keep telling us that right living is essentially better than right believing; but both conscience and reason are wrong! [100]

[100] Ernest Gordon in the Sunday School Times says, "A French Unitarian preacher, M. Lauriol, in speaking at the recent synod of Agen, said, Purity of heart and life is more important than correctness of opinion,' to which Dean Doumergue answers shrewdly, Healing is more important than the remedy, but without the remedy, there would be no healing.'" Faith is the only faculty by which we can lay hold of God. "Let him take hold of My strength," is God's command (Isaiah 27:5). But we cannot reach His greatness--we are dust. We cannot look upon His face, for He dwelleth in light unapproachable. We cannot apprehend His wisdom, for it is infinite, incomprehensible ,--"reasonings of the wise, (regarding God) are vain," Then how shall we lay hold of God at all? By believing Him! The weakest of men can believe what God tells him! Praise be to His Name! Faith, simple faith, connects us with the Mighty One! Paul says, "The faith of God's elect" involves "the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness" (Titus 1:1). "Purity of heart and life" without the correct, accurate, constant teaching of doctrine,--"the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:3)--is simply a philosopher's speculation or a Romanist's lie, or a "Modernist's" imagination.

(4) Jehovah reckoned Abraham righteous not because he was either righteous or holy, but acting absolutely, and entirely according to Himself--who "giveth life to the dead" (Abraham was dead: he could beget no seed); and "calleth the things that are not" (Abraham was a sinner, not righteous in himself) "as though they were."

(5) The purpose, then, of God concerning Abraham, Abraham thus allowed God to fulfil. Some day you will see Abraham just as righteous and holy in character and in evident fact, as His God, in that far day, reckoned him. It was not however, on the ground of what God would make him in the future that He reckoned Abraham righteous when he believed Him. The ground, as we see plainly in Romans 3:25, was Christ set forth as a propitiation,--through faith in Christ's blood. For "God set Him forth as a propitiation . . . because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime" (that is, by Abraham and by all who lived before Christ's death).

God had His own foreknown ground, Christ, as the Lamb "without blemish and without spot," foreknown "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 1:20). We keep repeating these things because of the continual tendency of our wretched hearts to find some cause in ourselves, or in our own faithfulness, for God's reckoning us righteous.

(6) Romans 4:23-24 : Now it was not written for his sake only, that it was reckoned unto him, but for our sakes likewise, for it [our faith] will be reckoned [as righteousness] to us also who are believing on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. This is a blessed and sweet revelation for believers, that we, like Abraham, have righteousness reckoned to us; and that the story in Genesis was "written for our sake." The Old Testament is a living book for God's real saints! But we must remember that God's methods with faith are always the same. Abraham's faith was tried: are not we also told to expect the trial of our faith? [101]

[101] Satan, our deadly foe, has one target at which he constantly aims,--the faith of a believer. We believe that Satan's whole effort is engaged directly against faith in Christ. Millions of demons--unclean spirits, dumb spirits, lying spirits--swarm the air of this earth to carry on, together with those angelic principalities and powers who fell with Satan, the terrible program, with its "lusts of the flesh" and "of the eyes," and "the vainglory of life," called in Ephesians 2:2 "the course of this world" (literally,--the aion of this cosmos, that is, the present stage of this world-order). But Satan himself, filled with hellish jealousy against the Son of Man who came and spoiled the strong man's house (in the wilderness temptation); and triumphed over all Satan's baits at Calvary, when He put away the sin of the world from God's sight (a fact which is true already, as Satan, and instructed saints, well know, and which will be made good openly soon, in the new heavens and new earth),--Satan himself, we say, is at present chiefly occupied blinding men to the redemption and glory that are in Christ, and in preventing and hindering the progress of every believer. Every one who confesses the Lord Jesus is openly challenged by the prince of this world. It is well that "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly!" But God meanwhile says, "Whom resist, steadfast in your faith!"

There is also a beautiful message in the literal rendering of verse 24(Romans 4:24), that can scarcely be supplied in English: It was on account of us also, unto whom it [righteousness] is about to be reckoned, to those who believe--as if God were eager (as indeed He is) to write down righteous those who believe His testimony concerning His Son!

Note two things here: First, it is upon God we believe. The very God who was, in the opening chapters of the Epistle, bringing all of us under His judgment, without righteousness and helpless to attain it, is here believed on; as our Lord Jesus indeed said in John 12:44 : "He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me."

But, second, it is upon Him as having raised Jesus our Lord from the dead that we believe on God in Romans 4:24. It is not merely on the God who set forth Christ to be a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, but it is on the God who has set a public seal to the truth of our Lord's last words, "It is finished," by raising Him from the dead. "He is not here, but is risen," was the angel's word that thrilled those saints early at His tomb. And since then He has been received up in glory, and the Holy Spirit has come, witnessing to the amazing fact that the One who hung on a Roman cross, numbered with transgressors by men, and forsaken of God in the just judgment of our sins, was raised and glorified by the same God who forsook Him on Calvary. This glorious fact should be held fast by our hearts. For not only does God's raising up Christ prove our sins to have been put away; but a Risen Christ becomes a new place for us! We were justified from all things by His blood; we are now set by God in Christ Risen! And thus we are prepared for the last great verse in this blessed chapter.

Romans 4:25 : Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justifying. Here we have Jesus our Lord delivered up for our offences. Now the Greek word for "delivered up" occurs again in Chapter 8:32(Romans 8:32): "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." The meaning is evident: on account of our trespasses, of what you and I have done, our Lord was delivered up by a holy God to bear our sin, with its guilt and penalty, even to God's forsaking His Son: for He must otherwise have forsaken us forever!--yea, to His smiting our Substitute instead of smiting us: "He was bruised for our iniquities." And was raised for our justifying--This must be the sense here: for we are not justified till we believe. Furthermore, if Christ's resurrection was merely to prove that we had been justified (as some teach), a verb-construction would have been used, which would signify, on account of our having been justified. But God uses the noun-construction (dikai sis) meaning, "the act of justifying"; showing that Christ's resurrection was for the purpose of justifying us, positively, in a Risen Christ, (Compare Romans 5:10)

Matthew Henry says: "In Christ's death He paid our debt; in His resurrection, He took out our acquittance." But Scripture goes much further in this matter of justification than the satisfaction of all claims of God's justice against us. We are set in a new place of acceptance, the Risen Christ, that has nothing to do with our old place. God will now go on to "create us in Christ Jesus." It will be "justification of life," as we shall see in Chapter Five.

Only, we repeat, let us always remember that we are justified as ungodly, and now we are "new creatures in Christ Jesus.' Here, indeed, is a great mystery. God does not declare us righteous as connected with the old Adam--old creatures, we might say. Nor does He declare us righteous because we are new creatures. But God that calleth the things not existing as existing, acts in justification, declaring the ungodly who believe on Him, righteous: not because of any process of His operation upon the creature, but by His own fiat, reckoning to the beliving one the whole work of Christ on his behalf. This involves God's giving this ungodly believing one a standing in Christ Risen; and God will go on by an act of creation, to cause him to share Christ's risen life, which is

justification of life. But it is as ungodly that he is declared righteous. We must hold fast to this, the first point of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3).

We are indeed said to be justified by or in His blood (Romans 5:9), but if there had been no resurrection, His death would have availed us nothing. So Paul says that both Peter and he were "justified in Christ" (Galatians 2:17): that is, in the Risen Christ, in view, of course, of His finished work on the cross. When our Lord said, "It is finished," He announced the penalty paid for every believer that shall be. But He lay under the power of death for three days and nights, His body in Joseph's tomb and His spirit in Paradise.

Now justification involves not only, negatively, the putting away of our guilt; but, positively, a new place and standing. For the old Adam was utterly condemned, as his history, and the law, and finally the cross, fully showed. If I am a sinner, and my sins are transferred to the head of Christ my Substitute, and He bears the penalty of them in death, then where am I, if Christ be not raised? His death and resurrection are one and inseparable as regards justification. Christ being raised up, God announces to me, "Not only were your sins put away by Christ's blood, so that you are justified from all things; but I have also raised up Christ; and you shall have your standing in Him. I have given you this faith in a Risen Christ, and announce to you that in Him alone now is your place and standing. Judgment is forever past for you, both as concerns your sin, and as concerns My demand that you have a standing of holiness and righteousness of your own before Me. All this is past. Christ is now your standing! He is your life and your righteousness; and you need nothing of your own forever. I made Christ to become sin on your behalf, identified Him with all that you were, in order that you might become the righteousness of God in Him."

I must here quote the vigorous, triumphant words of Martin Luther, from his commentary on Galatians, touching these words, "delivered up for OUR trespasses": "Christ verily is the innocent, as concerning His own person, and the unspotted and undefiled Lamb of God, and therefore He ought not to have been hanged upon a tree: but because, according to the law of Moses, every thief and malefactor ought to be hanged, therefore Christ also, according to the law, ought to be hanged. For He sustained the person of a sinner and of a thief: not of one, but of all sinners and thieves. For He being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person, but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor, a persecutor; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer and a murderer; and, briefly, Christ, who hath and beareth the sin of all men in His own body, not that He Himself committed them, but for that He received them, being committed or done of us, and laid upon His own body, that He might make satisfaction for them with His own blood. Therefore whatsoever sins I, thou, and we all have done and shall do, hereafter, they are Christ's own sins, as verily as if He Himself had done them. To be brief, our sin must needs become Christ's own sin, or else we shall perish forever.

"Also learn this definition diligently (Who was delivered for OUR trespasses'), that this one syllable being believed, may swallow up all thy sins: that thou mayest know assuredly, that Christ hath taken away the sins, not of certain men only, but also of thee. Then let thy sins be not sins only, but even thy own sins indeed.

"Thus may we be able to answer the devil accusing us, saying, Thou art a sinner, thou shalt be damned. No, say I, for I flee unto Christ who hath given Himself for my sins. Therefore, Satan,

thou shalt not prevail against me in that thou goest about to terrify me, in setting forth the greatness of my sins, and so to bring me into heaviness, distrust, despair, hatred, contempt, and blaspheming of God. Yea, rather, in that thou sayest, I am a sinner, thou givest me armour and weapons against thyself, that with thine own sword I may cut thy throat, and tread thee under my feet; for Christ died for sinners! Moreover, Satan, thou thyself preachest unto me the glory of God; for thou puttest me in mind of God's fatherly love toward me, wretched and damned sinner: Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). And as often as thou objectest that I am a sinner, so often thou callest me to remembrance of the benefit of Christ my Redeemer, upon whose shoulders, and not upon mine, lay all my sins; for the Lord hath laid all our iniquity upon Him' (Isaiah 53:6). Again, For the transgressions of His people was He smitten' (Isaiah 53:8). Wherefore, when thou sayest I am a sinner, thou dost not terrify me, but comfortest me above measure." So Paul closes his setting forth of this great resurrection side of our salvation, saying, He was raised for our justifying. Doubtless other and eternal ends were in view in God's raising up Christ; but lay fast hold of this, that in your case it was for the purpose of declaring you who believe righteous, that God raised Christ. And further, of giving you a hitherto unheard of place, to be in Christ, one with Him before God forever, loved as Christ is loved, seen in all the perfectness and beauty of Christ Himself, glorified with Him, associated with Him as companions, that He might be the First-born among many brethren!

There is no limit to God's favor toward those in Christ!

JUSTIFICATION--A REVIEW I. What It Is Not

1. It is not regeneration, the impartation of life in Christ; for although it is "justification of life"--meaning God will give life to the justified, he is justified as ungodly.

2. It is not "a new heart," or "change of heart,"--indefinite expressions at best, but having in them no proper definition of justification.

3. It is not "making an unjust man just," in his life and behavior. The English word justified, as we all know, comes from the Latin word meaning to make just or righteous; but this is exactly what justification is not, in Scripture.

4. It is not to be confused with sanctification; which is the state of those placed in Christ,--"sanctified in Christ Jesus"; and consequently the manner of their walk in the Spirit.

II What It Is.

1. It is a declaration by God in heaven concerning a man, that he stands righteous in God's sight.

2. God justifies a man, on the basis or ground of the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). See Romans 5:6 : We are "justified by [or in] His blood";--the blood the procuring ground, or means; God the acting Person.

3. God who has already acted judicially, in pronouncing the whole world guilty (Romans 3:19), now again acts judicially concerning that sinner who becomes convinced of his guilt and helplessness, and believes that God's Word concerning Christ's expiatory sacrifice applies to himself; and thus becomes "of faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26,RSV, margin): God's judicial [102] pronouncement now

is, that such a believing one stands righteous in His sight.

[102] "Wherefore as condemnation is not the infusing of a habit of wickedness into him that is condemned, nor the making of him to be inherently wicked who was before righteous, but the passing of a sentence upon a man with respect to his wickedness; no more is justification the change of a person from inherent unrighteousness by the infusion of a principle of grace, but a sentential declaration of him to be righteous" (i.e., in his standing before God)--John Owen.

4. Justification, or declaring-righteous, therefore, is the reckoning by God to a believing sinner of the whole value of the infiinte work of Christ on the cross; and, further, His connecting this believing sinner with the Risen Christ in glory, giving him the same acceptance before Himself as has Christ: so that the believer is now "the righteousness of God in Him" (Christ).

Negatively, then, God in justifying a sinner reckons to him the putting away of sin by Christ's blood. Positively, He places him in Christ: he is one with Christ forever before God!

Wondrous prize of our high calling!

Speed we on to this, Past the cities of the angels,-- Farther into bliss; On into the depths eternal Of the love and song, Where in God the Father's glory Christ has waited long;

There to find that none beside Him God's delight can be: Not BESIDE HIM, NAY, BUT IN HIM, O BELOVED ARE WE!

--C. P. C., in Hymns of Ter Steegen.

02.09. Chapter 5A

CHAPTER 5A The Glorious Results of Justification by Faith: Peace With God, a Standing in Grace, Sure Hope of Coming Glory, Present Patience, Joy in God. Romans 5:1-11. The Two Representative Men, Adam and Christ, Contrasted: Condemnation and Death by Adam to All in Him, Justification and Life by Christ to All in Him. Romans 5:12-19. By the Law, Sin Became Trespass; but GRACE TRANSCENDED ALL! Romans 5:20.

Grace Now Reigns, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:21. THIS GREAT CHAPTER naturally falls into two parts: In Romans 5:1-11 we have the blessed results of justification by faith, along with the most comprehensive statement in the Bible of the pure love and grace of God, in giving Christ for us sinners. In the second part, Romans 5:12-21, God goes back of the history and state of human sin, (which in Romans 1:2-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20 have been before us) to Adam, as our representative head, who stood for us, and whose sin became condemnation and death to us; and shows us Christ, as the other representative Man (whom Adam prefigured), by His act of death on the cross bringing us justification and life. The emphasis in this great passage will be in each case upon the fact that the act of the representative, and not of the one represented, brought the result to pass.

1 Therefore having been declared righteous on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 through whom also we have obtained access into this Divine favor wherein we are standing: and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we also exult in the tribulations [which beset us]: knowing that tribulation is working out endurance; 4 and endurance [a sense of] approvedness [by God]; and [the sense of] approvedness works out [a state of] hope: 5 and [our state of] hope does not make us ashamed: because God’s love [for us] is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. 6 For Christ, we being yet helpless [in our sins], at the appointed time died for ungodly ones. 7 For hardly for a righteous man will any one die: for perhaps for a good [generous] man some one might venture to die. 8 But God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us! 9 Much more then, having been now declared righteous by [means of] His blood, shall we be saved through Him from the [coming] wrath. 10 For if, being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His [risen] life.

11 And not only so, but we even exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Romans 5:1 : Therefore having been declared righteous on the principle of faith--We must note at once that the Greek form of this verb "declared righteous," or "justified," is not the present participle, "being declared righteous," but rather the aorist participle, "having been declared righteous," or "justified." You say. What is the difference? The answer is, "being declared righteous" looks to a state you are in; "having been declared righteous" looks back to a fact that happened. "Being in a justified state" of course is incorrect, confusing, as it does, justification and sanctification. "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever." The moment you believed, God

declared you righteous, never to change His mind: as David says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin" (Romans 4:8). If therefore you are a believer, quote this verse properly, and say, "Having been declared righteous on the principle of faith I have"--these blessed fruits and results which are now to be recorded. The Epistle takes on a new aspect in each chapter: in Romans 3:1-31, Christ was set forth as a propitiation for our sins; in Romans 4:1-25, Christ was raised for our justification; in Romans 5:1-21, we have peace with God through Christ, a standing in grace, and the hope of the coming glory.

We have three blessings, then, in this first part of our chapter: (1) peace with God, in looking back to Calvary where Christ made peace by His blood; (2) a present standing in grace, in unlimited Divine favor; and (3) hope of the glory of God--of being glorified with Christ when He comes.

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ--"Peace" means that the war is done. "Peace with God" means that God has nothing against us. This involves:

1. That God has fully Judged sin, upon Christ, our Substitute.

2. That God was so wholly satisfied with Christ’s sacrifice, that He will eternally remain so--never taking up the judgment of our sin again.

3. That God is therefore at rest about us forever, however poor our understanding of truth, however weak our walk. God is looking at the blood of Christ, and not at our sins. All claims against us were met when Christ "made peace by the blood of His cross." So "we have peace with God." [103]

[103] As to the Greek text having the subjunctive in Romans 5:1, we believe that the Authorized Version and the American Revised Version are correct in reading "we have peace" rather than the English Revised Version, "Let us have peace." See Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Darby, Meyer, Godet and many others. The whole context proves that "we have peace" is correct, for the passage is not an exhortation, but an assertion of facts and results, true of all those declared righteous or justified.

"If Thou hast my discharge procured, And freely in my place endured The whole of wrath Divine:

Payment God will not twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety’s hand, And then again at mine!" Our peace with God is not as between two nations before at war, but as between a king and rebellious and guilty subjects. While our hearts are at last at rest, it is because God, against whom we sinned, has been fully satisfied at the cross. "Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" does not mean peace trough what He is now doing, but through what He did do on the Cross. He "made peace" by the blood of His cross. All the majesty of God’s holy and righteous throne was satisfied when Christ said, "It is finished." And, being now raised from the dead, "He is our peace." But it is His past work at Calvary, not His present work of intercession, that all is based upon; and that gives us a sense of the peace which He made through His blood. [104]

[104] The Romanist will go to "mass" and "confession"; and the Protestant "attend church"; but neither will find peace with God by these things. Prayers, vows, fastings, church duties, charities--what have these to do with peace?--if Christ "made Peace by His blood"! This peace with (or towards) God must not be confused with the "peace of God" of Php 4:7, which is a subjective state; whereas peace with God is an objective fact--outside of ourselves. Thousands

strive for inward peace, never once resting where God is resting--in the finished work of Christ on Calvary. [105]

[105] The difference may be brought out by asking ourselves two questions: First. Have I peace with God? Yes; because Christ died for me. Second, Have I the peace of God in quietness from the anxieties and worries of life in my heart? We see at once that being at peace with God must depend on what was done for us by Christ on the cross. It is not a matter of experience, but of revelation. On the contrary, the peace of God "sets a garrison around our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus," when we refuse to be anxious about circumstances, and "in everything (even the most trifling' affairs) by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God." Every believer is at peace with God, because of Christ's shed blood. Not every believer has this "peace of God" within him; for not all have consented to judge anxious care and worry as unbelief in God's Fatherly kindness and care.

"I hear the words of love, I gaze upon the blood;

I see the mighty Sacrifice, And I have peace with God.

" 'Tis everlasting peace, Sure as Jehovah's name;

'Tis stable as His stedfast throne, For evermore the same.

"My love is oftimes low, My joy still ebbs and flows; But peace with Him remains the same, No change Jehovah know.

* * * "I change, He changes not, God's Christ can never die; His love, not mine, the resting-place, His truth, not mine, the tie."

--(Bonar)

Romans 5:2 : Look a moment at the second benefit: Through whom also we have had our access into this grace wherein we stand--The word "also" sets this blessing forth as distinct from and additional to that of peace with God. Through Christ, in whom they have believed, there has been given to the justified "access" into a wonderful standing in Divine favor. Being in Christ, they have extended to them the very favor in which Christ Himself stands. Notice that the words "by faith" (as in A.V.) here should be omitted. It is not by an additional revelation, and acceptance thereof, that believers come into this standing in grace. It is a place of Divine favor given to every believer the moment he believes. In Romans 6:14 we are to be told that we are under grace, not law. It is a glorious discovery to find how fully God is for us, in Christ. [106]

[106] Sanday quotes Ellicott's translation: "Through whom also we have had our access," and adds, "have had' when we first became Christians, and now while we are such." And Darby comments: "We are not called on to believe that we do believe, but to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, by whom we have access, and are brought into perfect present favor, every cloud that could hide God's love removed; and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Now, as to this third great matter: We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This is the future of the believer: to enter upon a glorified state, glorified together with Christ, as it is in Romans 8:17. It is not merely to behold God's glory, but to enter into it! "When Christ, who is our life, shall be

manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory" (Colossians 3:4). "The glory which thou has given Me I have given unto them" (John 17:22). We shall speak of this further, in its place in Chapter Eight. The translation "exult" rather than "glory," or "boast," suits Paul's meaning here. So in the next verse, we exult in our tribulations. It is an inner, joyful confidence, rather than an outward glorying or boasting before others, although this latter will often necessarily follow!

Romans 5:3-4 : And not only so, but we also exult in the tribulations [which beset us]: knowing that tribulation is working out endurance: and endurance [a sense of] approvedness [by God]; and [the sense of] approvedness works out a state of hope--So now we find that not only does the believer look back to peace made with God at the cross; at a God smiling upon him in favor; and forward to his coming glorification with Christ, but he is able also to exult in the very tribulations that are appointed to him. Paul constantly taught, as in Acts 14:22; 2 Thessalonians 3:3, that "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," and that "we are appointed unto afflictions." The word means pressure, straits, difficulties; and Paul had them! "Pressed on every side, perplexed, pursued, smitten down"; "in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by evil report, . . . as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful,--yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things!" (2 Corinthians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Corinthians 6:4-10). He regarded these as "our light affliction" said he, "which is for the moment, and is working for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory," (2 Corinthians 4:17); and so Paul "took pleasure" in them! (2 Corinthians 12:10).

We need to take a lesson from the martyrs, who lived in the freshness and strength of the early faith of the Church of God, who often sang in the midst of the flames! We hear today of Just the same courage where persecution and trial are greatest. We can but give here a testimony from Russia that will reach all our hearts. It is a classic on suffering for Christ's sake. [107]

[107] 1. A letter that lately came out of Northern Siberia, signed "Mary," reads: "The best thing to report is, that I feel so happy here. It would be so easy to grow bitter if one lost the spiritual viewpoint and began to look at circumstances. I am earning to thank God for literally everything that comes. I experienced so many things that looked terrible, but which finally brought me closer to Him. Each time circumstances became lighter, I was tempted to break fellowship with the Lord. How can I do otherwise than thank Him for additional hardships? They only help me to what I always longed for--a continuous, unbroken abiding in Him. Every so-called hard experience is just another step higher and closer to Him." Another recent letter from "Mary" reads, "I am still in the same place of exile. There is a Godless Society here; one of the members became especially attached to me. She said, "I cannot understand what sort of a person you are; so many here insult and abuse you, but you love them all" . . . She caused me much suffering, but I prayed for her earnestly. Another time she asked me whether I could love her. Somehow I stretched out my hands toward her, we embraced each other, and began to cry. Now we pray together. My dear friends, please pray for her. Her name is Barbara" In a letter a month later, "Mary" writes; "I wrote you concerning my sister in Christ, Barbara. She accepted Christ as her personal Savior, and testified before all about it. We both, for the last time, went to the meeting of the Godless. I tried to reason with her not to go there, but nothing could prevail. She went to the front of the hall, and boldly testified before all concerning Christ. When she finished she started to sing in her wonderful voice a well-known hymn, I am not ashamed to testify of Christ, who died for me, His

commandments to follow, and depend upon His cross!' The very air seemed charged! She was taken hold of and led away." Two months later, another letter came from "Mary": "Yesterday, for the first time, I saw our dear Barbara in prison. She looked very thin, pale, and with marks of beatings. The only bright thing about her were her eyes, bright, and filled with heavenly peace and even joy. How happy are those who have it! It comes through suffering. Hence we must not be afraid of any sufferings or privations. I asked her, through the bars, Barbara, are you not sorry for what you have done?' No,' she firmly responded, If they would free me, I would go again and tell my comrades about the marvelous love of Christ. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and counts me worthy to suffer for Him.'" The Divine process is as follows: God brings us into tribulations, and that of all sorts; graciously supplying therewith a rejoicing expectation of deliverance in due time; and the knowledge that, as the winds buffeting some great oak on a hillside cause the tree to thrust its roots deeper into the ground, so these tribulations will result in steadfastness, in faith and patient endurance; and our consciousness of steadfastness--of having been brought by grace through the trials,--gives us a sense of Divine approval, or approvedness, we did not before have; and which is only found in those who have been brought through trials, by God's all-sufficient grace. This sense of God's approval arouses within us abounding "hope"--we might almost say, hopefulness, a hopeful, happy state of soul.

Romans 5:5 : And [our state of] hope does not make us ashamed: because God's love [for us] is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Furthermore, then, no matter how much the world or worldly Christians may avoid or deride us, this hopefulness is not "ashamed," or is not "put to shame": because there is supplied the inward and wonderful miracle of the consciousness of God's love shed abroad in our hearts through that second mighty gift of God to us (Christ Himself being the first),--the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Paul now takes up this "love of God" in what is, as regards Gods sheer grace, the highest place in Paul's epistles. It is the greatest exposition in Scripture of God's love, as announced in John 3:16 : "For God so loved the world .that He gave--." Ephesians unfolds the marvelous heavenly calling into which God's grace has brought us. But, as to God's love itself, what it is, we must come to the present verses of Romans: as John says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

First of all, the indwelling Holy Spirit, given freely to all believers, sheds abroad in our hearts this love of God--making us conscious of it in a direct inner witness: and that especially in times of trial or need. A THREE-FOLD VIEW OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US--SINNERS

Next, we see three stages of our sinnerhood, each connected in a peculiar, fitting, and touching way with God's love.

1. Romans 5:6 : For Christ,--we being yet helpless [in our sins], at the appointed time died for ungodly ones--The fact of man's total moral inability is stated here in the gentlest possible terms. It is a bankruptcy of all moral and spiritual inclination toward God and holiness, as well as of power to be or do good. Yet into a scene of helplessness like this, God sends His Son,--for what? To die for the "ungodly." No return or response is demanded: it is absolute grace--for the ungodly.

Romans 5:7 : For scarcely for a righteous man will anyone die: though perhaps for a good man some one might even venture to die--Paul proceeds with his wonderful pean of praise concerning

God’s love: Among men, while for a sternly honest man no one would die, yet some one might be found to venture death for a "noble" person, one of generous-hearted goodness. But what of God’s love?

2. Romans 5:8. God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us--Now "sinning" is a stronger word than "strengthless": but it is strong in the wrong direction! Strengthless indeed toward God and holiness, we were all; yet vigorous and active in sin. And what did God do? What does God here say? It was while we were thus sinning that Christ died for us! And thus doth God "commend" [108] His peculiar love toward us. It is most astonishing, this announcement that God is "commending" this love of His for us,--a love "all uncaused by any previous love of ours for Him." [109] Salesmen "commend" their wares to those whom they deem able and willing to buy them. God "commends" His tender love to us; for He loved us as wretches occupied in sin, unable and unwilling to pay Him or obey Him. This is absolute grace.

[108] "Proves, as in Romans 3:5" (Meyer); "establishes" (Godet); "confirms" (Calvin); "manifests" (Haldane); "gives proof of" (Alford); "demonstrates" (Williams); "commendeth" (Sanday). The English word "commendeth" happily covers the double meaning of the Greek: (1) approving or establishing things, and (2) recommending persons (Romans 16:1).

[109] "In sovereign grace He rises above the sin, and loves without a motive, save what is in His own nature and part of His glory. Man must have a motive for loving, God has none but in Himself, and commendeth His love to us’ (and the His’ is emphatic as to this very point), in that, while we are yet sinners, Christ died for us; the best thing in heaven that could be given for the vilest, most defiled, and guilty sinners" (Darby).

3. Romans 5:10 : For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the DEATH of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved in His LIFE.

Now, "enemies" is a much worse word than either "strengthless" or "sinners"; it involves a personal alienation and animosity. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God . . . not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can it be." What a condition! And yet, while we were going about avoiding and hating God, that same God was having His Son, Christ, meet all the Divine claims against us by His death on Calvary!

Mark that, while we were enemies, He did this. No change of our hateful attitude was demanded by God before He sent His Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Grace, brother, grace,--unasked, undesired, and, of course, forever undeserved,--Divine kindness! "When the kindness of God our Savior, and His love toward man appeared, not by works which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy. He saved us."

Here, then, whoever you are, read your record: strengthless, sinning, hating: then you can begin to conceive of, if you will believe, this sovereign, uncaused love which God here in this great passage "commends" to you. Do not try to be "worthy" of it; for offers to pay, by an utter bankrupt, are not only worthless, but an insult to grace! Self-righteousness seeks to discover in itself some cause for that Divine favor that God declares has its only source in Himself and His love. "Strengthless"--"sinners"--"enemies"--such were we all, and God sent His Son to die for us as

such!

Now let us not dare try to get God to be reconciled to us through our prayers, our consecration, our works. We were reconciled to God while His enemies, through the death of His Son. One who has believed is overwhelmed to find that this reconciliation was effected while he himself was an enemy to God; and so the "much more" gets hold of his heart: I was reconciled by His death while I was an enemy: how much rather, now that I have accepted this reconciliation and share Christ's own risen life, shall God pour His salvation-favor upon me! I was an enemy then, and God gave Christ for me; now that I am God's friend, He cannot do less! [110]

[110] To illustrate reconciliation: Suppose I am the master of a school and I make a rule that there is to be no profane swearing. I write that rule on the blackboard, and the whole school sees and hears it. The penalty I announce, too: there is to be a whipping if any one breaks the rule. Now, there is a boy named John Jones in my school, a boy I am fond of. At recess-time he swears. Everybody hears him; I hear him; everybody knows I hear him. When I call the school to order, all the scholars are looking at me to see what I will do. I have a son of my own in that school room, a beloved son, Charles. I call him, and we go outside to counsel, while the school waits. I say, "Son, will you bear John Jones' whipping for him? He doesn't believe that I love him. He thinks I hate him because he has broken my rule. There must be a whipping. I must be true to my word, but you know how I love John." My son says, "Yes, father, I'll do anything for you that you wish. And I love John Jones, too." I bring my boy, Charles, out before the whole school, and I say, "This is John Jones whipping I am giving to my son Charles. The law of the school was broken by John Jones. I am putting the penalty on my boy. He says he will gladly do this for me, and for John." Then I whip my son Charles; and I do not spare him. I whip him just as if he were John Jones, just as if he had broken the rule himself. When the whipping is over, I say to some scholar, "Go and tell John Jones I have nothing against him,--nothing at all. And ask him to come and give me his hand." This breaks John Jones up, and he comes forward, in tears, and says, "I didn't know you loved me that much! I thank you from my heart!" Now he is reconciled from his side, to me. But you see I reconciled him to myself, first. I had to deal with his disobedience, or be myself unrighteous. This is the important thing to see, in the matter or reconciliation: it was necessary for us to be reconciled to God Himself, to that holiness and righteousness in God, that was infinitely against sin. This was brought about in Christ's death.

So, we read, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." All sin is contrary to God's holiness, righteousness, truth, and glory, but sin was put by God on Christ, and God "spared Him not." And now God says to His messengers: "Go be ambassadors on behalf of Christ. Tell sinners that I have smitten Him instead of them. Tell them I forsook Him on the cross, that I might not forsake them forever!" THE FOUR "MUCH MORES"

There are in this remarkable chapter four "much mores" which it is interesting and profitable to note. Two are in this first section; and two in the second. First, we have the two "much mores" of future safety; verses 9 and 10; then the two "much mores" of grace's abundance: verses 15 and 17, which are developed in the other section of the chapter.

Romans 5:9 : Much more then, having been now declared righteous by [means of] His blood, shall we be saved through Him from the [coming] wrath--God has done the harder thing: He will do the

easier thing. He has had Christ die for us while we were "yet sinners"; "much more" will He see that we, being now believers and accounted righteous in view of Christ's blood, shall be saved from the coming wrath through Him (Christ). [111]

[111] 1.Concerning Christ's bearing in our place God's wrath against sin, let us say: To regard God as "angry," or as demanding that Christ suffer "the exact equivalent of all the agonies the elect would have suffered to all eternity," is to miss the whole meaning of propitiation. 1. Remember it is God Himself who "loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." God held no enmity against us. God loved us. 2. Therefore, strictly speaking, it was not punishment which Christ bore on the cross, but wrath. Punishment is personal,--against the offender; but wrath upon Christ was against the thing--sin. Christ bore that wrath which God's being and nature always and forever sustains toward sin. The sinner cannot come nigh Him, but must die, must perish in His holy presence,--not because God hates him, but because God is the Holy One. Therefore did Christ die,--and that forsaken of God under wrath--because He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. So it was, that, sin being placed on Christ, judgment and wrath fell upon Him. So it is, also, that the believer has not been "appointed unto wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9): the wrath has fallen on Christ. 3. The conception that Christ on the cross was enduring all the agonies of the elect for all eternity grew directly out of the Romish legalism from which the Reformers did not escape,--to wit: that we still have connection with our responsibilities in Adam the first; that our history was not ended at the cross. But the shed blood brought in before God on the Day of Atonement simply witnessed that a life had been laid down, ended. "The sufferings of all the elect for all eternity" could never take the place of the laid down life of the great Sacrifice. God did not ask for agonies: sin simply could not approach Him! There must be banishment of the sinner from His presence--unless a substitute should come, who, taking the place of the sinner, and bearing his sin, could lay down his life. Such was Christ. He "laid down His life that He might take it again," But remember both parts of this great utterance: (a) "He laid down His life," bearing our sin, putting it away from God's presence forever. But even Christ, when bearing our sin, could not, as it were, come nigh God, but was forsaken, under holy wrath against sin. Not the agonies of Christ could avail, but that, bearing sin, He laid His life down, poured out His soul unto death. Thus He owned God's holiness to be absolute and infinite, and said, "It is finished." (b) Now in taking up His life again, it was not that life which, according to Leviticus 17:11, was "in the blood," because the blood was "all one with the life" (Leviticus 17:14), and therefore "given to make atonement for souls,"; "it was not the blood-life" which He took up, but newness of life" in resurrection! God indeed permitted man to inflict the terrible sufferings of crucifixion upon His Son. But those sufferings were not "the cup" that His Father had given Him drink. The cup was the cup of Divine wrath against sin, and it involved His being "cut off out of the land of the living" under the hand of Divine judgment.

Notice that shed blood is the justifying ground, the procuring cause, of our being accounted righteous; and that instead of our being uncertain of preservation from the wrath which is coming at the Last Judgment, the fact that Christ died for us while were were still sinners should give us a constant state of calm security!

Romans 5:10 : Much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His [risen] life--Again, God has done the harder thing--delivering Christ to death to reconcile us to Himself. He will certainly--much more! do the lesser thing for us: He will see that we share Christ's risen life forever; and thus, even

in the hour of visitation upon the wicked, we shall be "saved by His life." (This will more fully come out in Chapter Eight, where the blessed Spirit supplies that life which is in Christ to us, as a very "law of life.")

We were reconciled to God by God's having Christ meet in His death all the claims of His throne,--His majesty, His holiness, His righteousness, His truth. "Much more," being from our side reconciled, shall we be saved now and in the future by and in Christ's risen life which we now share! This "saved by His life" evidently looks forward to the coming Day of Judgment referred to in Romans 5:9 [112] as the coming wrath, into which judgment our Lord has told us we shall not come (John 5:24). Indeed, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 1:10,--"Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come"!

[112] The Greek preposition en in Romans 5:9, is not fully or exactly rendered by tht English word "in"; for the Greek en here includes: in the shed blood of Christ (Romans 5:9), as the ground before God of our justification; in view of that blood's power as seen by God the Justifier; in the eternal availingness of that blood before God; and the consequent eternal redemption it has procured. Likewise, in the same construction in verse 10, we translate, "in His life": meaning that the believer shares that risen life of Christ; that in the power of that endless life the believer will abide both now and forever: as John says, "we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, even so are we in this world," And now the apostle closes up this section of the Epistle with a note of highest exultation:

Romans 5:11 : And not only so, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation--He says. We exult in God. How great a change! Three chapters back, we were sitting in the Divine Judge's court, guilty--our mouths stopped, and all our works rejected! Now, "through our Lord Jesus Christ" and His work for us, we are rejoicing, exulting, in Him who was our Judge! This is what grace can do and does! And we see that it is simply by receiving the reconciliation that has been brought in by Christ. For the word here is not "atonement," which means to cover up, and is applied to the Old Testament sacrifices. The word reconciliation here (katallaga) is simply the noun form of the verb "reconcile," in verse 10. Compare "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses (2 Corinthians 5:19). To "receive" a complete, accomplished reconciliation,--how simple! We have seen men and women exult in God, thus! Every believer has this great right of exultation. This is a "song of the Lord" that lasts forever--"through our Lord Jesus Christ"

GOD'S PLAN: THE "REIGN OF GRACE" THROUGH CHRIST

Romans 5:12-21 THE TWO MEN ADAM CHRIST } Romans 5:14. THE TWO ACTS ADAM--one trespass: Romans 5:12, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17-19.

CHRIST--one righteous act (on the cross): Romans 5:18. THE TWO RESULTS By ADAM--Condemnation, guilt, death: Romans 5:15-16, Romans 5:18-19. By CHRIST--Justification, life, kingship: Romans 5:17-19. THE TWO DIFFERENCES In degree (Romans 5:15) { God the Creator's grace by Christ, abounds beyond the sin of the creature, Adam.. In kind or operation (Romans 5:16) { One sin, by Adam--condemnation and reign of death.

Many sins on Christ--justification and "reigning in life" for those accepting God's grace by Him. THE TWO KINGS SIN--reigning through Death: Romans 5:17.

GRACE--reigning through Righteousness: Romans 5:21. THE TWO ABUNDANCES OF GRACE OF THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS } Romans 5:17. THE TWO CONTRASTED STATES CONDEMNED MEN, SLAVES OF DEATH, BY ADAM JUSTIFIED MEN, REIGNING IN LIFE, BY CHRIST

12 Therefore it [salvation through Christ's work] is just as when through one man sin entered the world, and through the sin, death: and in that way death passed to all men, for that all sinned [in Adam]: for before the Law [of Moses] 13 sin was in the world: but sin is not put to account if there is not law [against it]. 14 Notwithstanding, death reigned-as-king from Adam until Moses, even over those not having sinned after the likeness of the transgression of Adam,--who is a type of the Coming One [Christ]. 15 But not as the trespass, so also is the grace-bestowal (charisma). For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the free-gift (dorea) of the One Man. Jesus Christ, abound unto the many! 16 And not as through one that sinned, so is the act of giving (dorema): for the judgment came out of one [trespass] unto condemnation; but the grace-bestowal (charisma) came out of many trespasses unto a righteous [or justifying] act (dikaioma) [at the cross]. 17 For if by the trespass of the one, death reigned-as-king through the one, much more those accepting the abundance of grace and of the free-gift (dorea) of righteousness, shall reign-as-kings in life through the One, Jesus Christ! 18 So then just as [the principle was] through one trespass unto all men to condemnation; even so also [the principle is] through one righteous [or justifying] act [dikaioma] unto all men to justification of life! 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were set down as sinners, even so, through the obedience of the One the many shall be set down as righteous. 20 Law, moreover, came in alongside, that trespass [of law] might abound. But, where the sin abounded, the grace overflowed! 21 In order that, just as sin reigned-as-king by means of death: grace might reign-as-king, through righteousness, unto life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. THE GREAT DOCTRINE OF THE TWO MEN

We have seen, in Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, the fact of universal human guilt, that all thus are "falling short of God's glory"; and we have seen Christ set forth by God as a "propitiation through faith in His blood." We also found that believers were declared righteous; and seen connected with a Risen Christ, in Romans 4:1-25. Then we saw, in the first part of Romans 5:1-21, the blessed results of this "justification by faith." When we come to Romans 5:12, a new phase or view of our salvation appears. (Although note our comments on Romans 3:23.) A general view of the passage will be helpful. The two men, Adam and Christ, with their distinct federal [113] or representative consequences, are before us. It is no longer what we have done--our sins, but the one trespass of Adam that is in view. And it is the work of Christ, also, looked at as an "Adam,"--His "righteous act" of death; with its effect of justification for us. So now we look back to the act that set us down as sinners, instead of to our own deeds; and to the act that sets us down righteous, apart from our own works.

[113] Federal: in this book we use this word as indicating the action of one for all in a representative manner; or for the consequences of such action.

There is no more direct statement in Scripture concerning justification than we find in Romans 5:19 : Through the obedience of the One shall the many be constituted righteous [before God]. It is true that up to Romans 5:11 the question has been one of sins rather than the thing sin itself. It is true

also that in Romans 5:18, in the expression justification of life, the resurrection-side of salvation is before us. But we need to mark that God, in the great passage from Romans 5:12-21, grounds our justification wholly in the work of Another than ourselves, even Christ; showing also the incidental place that the Law had--"that the trespass might abound"; thus opening the flood-gates of Grace! The key word of this great passage is "one." You will find it as follows (14 times in all)(Romans 5:12-19) :

"One man"--"one man"--"one man"-- Romans 5:12, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:19.

"The one"--"the one"--"the One"-- Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:19.

"One"--"one"--"one" (trespass) "one" (righteous act)-- Romans 5:16 (twice), Romans 5:18 (twice).

"Through--one act of righteousness"-- Romans 5:18. "Through--the obedience of THE ONE"-- Romans 5:19.

"Through { one trespass"-- Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17-18. one man’s disobedience"-- Romans 5:19 "Through { one act of righteousness"-- Romans 5:18. the obedience of THE ONE"-- Romans 5:19.

It will never do to go about counting ourselves justified in the sense merely of having our own trespasses, those we have committed, forgiven; for this would amount to counting ourselves as innocent before we personally sinned, and to have become guilty merely because we personally sinned. But this is to forget that we all were made sinners by Adam’s act,--not our own. Nor does this mean that we got a "sinful nature" from our "first parents": "By nature" we were, indeed, "children of wrath," Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1-22; and David declares: "In sin did my mother conceive me." But Romans 5:1-21 does not talk of a nature of sin received by us from Adam, but of our being made guilty by his act. We were so connected with the first Adam that we did not have to wait to be born, or to have a sinful nature; but when Adam, our representative, acted, we acted. Verse 19 plainly says, Through the one man’s disobedience the many were set down as sinners, while the preceding verse says the principle was, through one trespass--unto all men to condemnation.

"Condemnation" is a forensic word, it belongs to the court, not to the birth-chamber. The same Divine principle is illustrated in the fact that "through Abraham even Levi," Abraham’s great-grandson, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes, for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him" (Hebrews 7:9). God says of Levi, who was not yet born, whose father was not yet born, whose grandfather (Isaac) was not yet born: "LEVI PAID TITHES!" The great truth of Romans 5:12-21 is that a representative acted, involving those connected with him.

We see immediately how Paul in a seven-fold way insists on the fact that Adam’s act of sin affected his race:

1. Through one man sin entered into the world (Romans 5:12 a).

2. So in that way death passed unto all men, for that all sinned, [when Adam sinned] (Romans 5:12 b).

3. By the trespass of the one the many died (Romans 5:15).

4. The judgment came out of one [trespass] unto condemnation (Romans 5:16).

5. By the trespass of the one, death reigned-as-king through the one (Romans 5:17).

6. Through one trespass [the effect was] towards all men to condemnation (Romans 5:18).

7. Through the one man's disobedience the many were set down as [or made to become] sinners (Romans 5:19). On the other hand, as regards Christ, we find:

1. That He is also an Adam--a representative or federal Man who acts for all, and in whom all in Him are seen. Adam is called a figure [Greek: typos--type] of Him that was to come--Christ (Romans 5:14).

2. That by the One Man Jesus Christ, the grace of God, and the free-gift [by that grace] did abound unto the many much beyond the evil results of Adam's sin (Romans 5:15).

3. That through our Lord's one righteous act [His death on the cross] the free-gift goes out to all men to justification of life, just as through [Adam's] one trespass the judgment came to all men to condemnation (Romans 5:18).

4. That through the obedience [unto death] of the One [Christ] the many [those who received the gift] shall be set down righteous [before God] (Romans 5:19).

5. That those who receive the abundance of [God's] grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign-as-kings in life through the One, Jesus Christ,--much beyond death s reigning through the one [Adam] (Romans 5:17).

02.10. Chapter 5B

CHAPTER 5B We may now consider this passage briefly, verse by verse:

Romans 5:12 : This whole plan of salvation,--by Christ's work, not ours, which we have been considering in Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25 and Romans 5:1-21, gives rise to the "therefore" which introduces this verse: Therefore [this plan of salvation of all by a single Redeemer], is on the same principle as when through [the other] one man sin entered the world; and, with it, its wages, death. Paul proceeds to emphasize that it was in that way,--that is, by one man, that death passed to all men, because when Adam sinned, all sinned. It was a federal representative act. Evidently physical death is primarily in view. "Man's breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalms 146:4). And read carefully the note below. [114] So death passed unto all men, for that all sinned--The word "so" refers to the sin of the one man, but the words all sinned must not be read "all have sinned" (as the King James Version unfortunately mistranslates). The whole point is that all acted when Adam acted: all sinned. We have remarked on the aorist tense, "sinned" (Greek: h marton) in connection with its use in Chapter Three. To translate it here (Romans 5:12) "have sinned" is utterly to obscure the Scripture, making man's "sinnership" to depend on his own acts rather than on Adam's--which latter is the whole point of the passage.

[114] Death is a Divine decree: "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this cometh judgment," Death involves four consequences: First, the utter ending of what we call human life. Second, falling consciously into the fearful hands of that power under which men have during their lifetime lightly lived, unprotected from the indescribable terrors and horrors connected therewith. Third, being imprisoned in Sheol or Hades--in "the pit wherein is no water," as was Dives in Luke 16. Compare Zechariah 9:11. fourth, exposure to the coming judgment and its eternal consequences. Of course, the believer is rescued from all this--even physical death,--from bodily. "falling asleep," if Christ comes during his lifetime! while it is true of all saints, those who keep Christ's word, that they shall "never see death" (John 8:51). Death and judgment are past for the believer, Christ his Substitute having endured them. Nevertheless, in this day of mad pleasure-seeking, it certainly behooves all of us to reflect on the fearful realities connected with death! (See also Note on Chapter 6:23(Romans 6:23).)

Romans 5:13-14 : Now comes the remarkable statement that although sin was in the world during the first 2500 years, from Adam to Moses, it is not put to account when there is no law. The Greek word "put to account" used here occurs only one other time-- Philemon 1:18. It signifies to charge up something to anyone as a due. (The wholly different word "reckon" in Romans 3:24 and Romans 4:23, Romans 4:24 regards the person; this word in Romans 5:13 regards some item put to one's account.) It was to Adam, not to us, that God said: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was to Israel through Moses that God gave the ten commandments. The general argument of the apostle here is to show the effect of a federal or representative sin, in which an Adam acted, bringing an effect upon the individuals connected with him. Paul is about to

prove that death passed to all men not because they sinned, but because Adam sinned. He is also about to show (Romans 5:18) that all men were condemned by Adam's act,--were made to become sinners. To understand, therefore, the force of the words, sin is not put to account where there is no law,--or, as Conybeare enlighteningly paraphrases, "Sin is not put to the account of the sinner when there is no law forbidding it,"--we must remember:

1. That sin was in the world, between Adam and Moses.

2. That, according to Chapter One, the race had rejected light and were without excuse; though they were "without law" (anomos(G459)): for God's definition of sin is not "transgression of law" (1 John 3:4, A.V.), but anomia(G458), which means refusal to be controlled--self-will.

3. That there was a "work" (working) written in their hearts, to which their consciences bore witness, either accusing or else excusing them; and that this working necessarily corresponded morally to any law to be afterwards revealed by Jehovah.

4. That condign judgments, such as the Flood, and the overthrow of Sodom, and the destruction of the Canaanites, followed the "filling up of the cup of iniquity" at such times: for such sinners both trampled on their own consciences, and inherited the previous generations of guilt.

5. That, nevertheless, the sins between Adam and Moses did not bring about the sentence of death upon humanity, however much individuals or nations might hasten death's overtaking them. For these people, though they sinned, had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, which was a wilful violation of a direct command of a revealed God; as was Israel's making, through Aaron, the calf at Sinai: evolving judicial consequences to others besides themselves. For we read in Exodus 32:34 of a set future "visitation" on Israel, because of that sin at Sinai of their fathers: "In the day that I visit, I will visit their sin upon them"; this will be in "the time of Jacob's trouble," in the Great Tribulation--long after the calf-worship; indeed, still future!

6. We therefore must regard the human race as under a sentence of death they did not bring upon themselves: death reigned from Adam until Moses (Romans 5:14). Unlike Adam, and unlike Israel after Moses, those who lived between the two had no positive outward Divine law, the breaking of which would be a direct transgression and a threatening of death therefor. Nevertheless "death reigned"--even over them. Constantly before our eyes is the attestation to the same truth: babes that know nothing of right or wrong, die. Every little white coffin,--yea, every coffin, should remind us of the universal effect of that sin of Adam, for it was thus and thus only that "death passed to all men."

We see then, that from Adam until Moses, death "reigned-as-king" [115] on account of Adam's sin. Paul has said(Romans 4:15), "Where there is no law neither is there transgression"; so that those between Adam and Moses, not having direct commands of God, consequently had not transgressed known commands as Adam had done. Nevertheless, Adam's transgression had involved his whole race.

[115] We say, "reigned-as-king," because the Greek word means that. Not the power of sin to hold in bondage, as in Romans 6:1-23, is here meant; but the royal word, basileuo, is used, denoting sovereignty, not mere lordship.

Romans 5:14 : Here Adam is declared a type of the One who was to come--that is, of Christ, the last Adam. We cannot sufficiently urge the study of this great passage: until the mind sees, and the heart understands--and that gladly, condemnation by the one, and justification by the Other. It is just as necessary to see this "by the one" doctrine regarding our spirits, as regarding our bodies. As to the latter, Paul says, "As in Adam all die, so also In Christ shall all be made alive"; "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second Man is of heaven . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:22; 1 Corinthians 15:47; 1 Corinthians 15:49). To discover that we are even now no longer connected with that first Adam in which we were born, but with the Risen Christ, the last Adam--this will be our joy in Chapters Six to Eight. But the foundation of this blessed truth is laid here in the Doctrine of the Two Men.

We find in Romans 5:15-17 a sort of parenthesis in which the results of Adam's trespass and Christ's act of obedience are shown to differ in two respects (but not at all in the principle of the one involving the many). In the first case (Romans 5:15) there is the difference of degree in the result, because of the infinite chasm between the creature Adam, and the Creator--God and His Son Jesus Christ! So we read:

Romans 5:15 : For if by the trespass of the one [Adam] death came to the many; MUCH MORE did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of THE ONE MAN, JESUS CHRIST, abound unto the many! It takes faith to esteem this true now, seeing, as we do, the cemeteries all about us; death on every hand,--the general dire results of sin; but we must believe that the free gift will finally be seen, in its results, to be as far beyond the results of the trespass, as God and Christ are greater than the creature Adam! [116]

[116] David Brown (in Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's excellent commentary) disagrees here, saying: "The much more' here does not mean that we get much more of good by Christ than of evil by Adam (for it is not a case of quantity at all); but, that we have much more reason to expect,--or, it is much more agreeable to our ideas of God, that the many should be benefited by the merits of one; and, if the latter has happened, much more' may we assure ourselves of the former." But after all this does not disagree with what we have above said, for it is Adam, the sinning creature, on the one hand; and the infinitely great and good God, and His grace by His Son Christ, on the other. Measure, quantity, must enter in: as, indeed, in saying of God "we have much more reason to expect," Dr. Brown tacitly admits. "Much more," says Paul, "did the grace"--of whom? GOD. This emphasizing God brings out everything!

Romans 5:16 : And not as through one that sinned, so is the act of giving: for the judgment came out of one unto condemnation; but the grace-bestowal came out of many trespasses unto a righteous act. This tells us that out of Adam's one trespass came judgment, but that out of many trespasses laid upon Christ came not judgment, but a righteous act (dikaioma). [117] In short, all men acted,--sinned in Adam's act of sin. They that receive is on the principle of "the one for the many," but manifestly does not include all men, because some reject; although we find in Romans 5:18 that the free gift "came" unto them,--"unto all men."

[117] To the student of Greek (and to others, also), it is most instructive to note Paul's use of the words connected with righteousness: dikaios means righteous; dikaiosune means righteousness; dikaioO is to declare righteous; dikaiOsis means justification, or the act of declaring one righteous;

dikaiOma, the "righteous act," that makes justification possible.

Note what it is that believing ones "receive":

First, abundance of grace: The cross having met righteously all the claims of the Divine being, and the Divine throne, against sinners, God has now spoken to us as He is, in abounding grace, for "God is Love." Over and over are "abound," "abundance" used here to express God's attitude; and the free motion, since the cross, of His infinitely loving heart toward sinners, in gracious kindness. Those who "receive" God's grace give Him the honor of His graciousness.

Second, Those that "receive" this abundance of grace have therewith the gift of righteousness. What a gift! Apart from works, apart from the Law, apart from ordinances, apart from worthiness, an out and out gift of righteousness from God! Many times in teaching this passage to Bible classes I have asked them to repeat three times over each of these expressions: "The abundance of grace," "the gift of righteousness." We earnestly commend this to you, dear reader! Try it.

Alas, how few believers have the courage of faith! We have looked so long at our unworthiness that the very thought of pushing away from the shore-lines and launching out on the limitless, fathomless ocean of Divine grace makes us shrink and waver. When some saint here or there does begin to believe the facts and walk in shouting liberty, we say (perhaps secretly), "He must be an especially holy, consecrated man." No, he is just a poor sinner like you, who is believing in the abundance of grace! And if we hear some one praising God for the gift of righteousness, because he is now righteous in Christ before God, we are ready to accuse him of thinking too highly of himself. No, he is just a poor sinner like you and me, but one who has dared to believe that he has received an outright gift of righteousness, and is rejoicing in it.

Romans 5:17 : For if by the trespass of the one, death reigned-as-king through the one, much more those accepting the abundance of grace and of the free-gift of righteousness, shall reign-as-kings in life through the One, Jesus Christ! It is not only that you have life, and that eternal life, in Christ: but here in Romans 5:17 we find two kingdoms:

First, By the trespass of the one death reigned-as-king through the one. And is that not true? I travelled around this world from west to east, beginning from Chicago. As we went eastward to the older parts of the States, we saw the stones thicker and thicker in the cemeteries. Then in England and Scotland, still more cemeteries, with still more monuments to the reign of death. But when we got out to old China, I was literally appalled at the number of the tombs and the coffins! Surely death has reigned, through Adam! But second (for the fourth time in this chapter), God now uses the words "much more," applying them to those who accept the abundance of His grace and of His gift of righteousness, saying these shall reign-as-kings in life through the One, even Jesus Christ. Look now at this expression, reign-as-kings in life. I am writing this during the week of the coronation of George VI of England, and have heard of the splendors with which the ceremony was attended; and we do thank God for the British Empire, and honor, with her subjects, her monarch. But, ah, believer, look closely at these words of Paul, reigning in life. Here is a kingdom before which all of earth is dust. And who are the kings here? Believers! Those whose humble faith has "received the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness": these shall reign-as-kings through Jesus Christ.

God has "the ages to come" in which to manifest fully this mighty reigning! But it is already begun for those in Christ. Gideon, speaking of certain Israelites, asked the kings of Midian, "What manner of men were they?" "As thou art, so were they," they answered; "each one resembled the children of a king." "They shall reign forever and ever," is God's description of the saints of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:5). And their reign has already, in this life, begun; because they are in Christ the mighty Victor! Satan would fain keep from your ears this news, believer, that you stand in the abundance of God's grace; that you have received the gift of righteousness in Christ; and that you are to reign-as-a-king-in-life now and forever, through the One, Jesus Christ. May God awaken us to the facts! [118] Satan is deathly jealous of the Church of God, which is already in the heavenlies, from which he is soon to be cast out. He knows that the Church will share Christ's throne and soon reign with Him in indescribable glory. Therefore he will blind you, if he can, to your present place of royal power of life in Christ. It will, we are sure, be a matter of fathomless regret to many Christians, at Christ's coming, that their lives on earth were characterized by doubt, defeat and depression; rather than by victorious reigning in life in Christ. God has no favorites. Each one who is in Christ has a complete Christ. The exhortations of the Epistles are addressed alike to all. David Livingstone early wrote in his diary, "I have found that I have no unusual endowments of intellect, but I this day resolved that I would be an uncommon Christian." Concerning such it is written, "Considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7). Let us refuse to be content with a Christian existence that cannot finally be summed up as "He reigned in life through Jesus Christ,"--over sin, Satan, the world, difficulties, adverse surroundings and circumstances. Let us remember the apostles, the martyrs. Reformers, godly Puritans, the holy Wesleys, and Whitefields, the Havergals and Crosbys; and the humble saints we know, whose existence is described by Paul's glorious phrase "reigning in life through our Lord Jesus Christ."

[118] When Israel inquired of the Lord about Saul, the eon of Kish, who had been anointed as their King (for they could not find him), the Lord answered, you remember' "Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff." "And they ran and fetched him thence" (1 Samuel 10:22-23). How sad if some of us who have received the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, and whom God desires to be reigning in life in Christ, have gotten ourselves hidden "among the stuff,"--of earthly goods, and ambitions, "religious" traditions, and the literature of this world!

Romans 5:18 : So then, just as [the principle was] through one trespass unto all men to condemnation; even so also through one righteous [or justifying] act [the principle is] unto all men to justification of life! Through one trespass [it was] unto all men to condemnation--The expression "the many" in Romans 5:15 and Romans 5:19 indicates the principle of the evil effect of the act of the one going forth to others; the expression "all men," of Romans 5:18, emphasizes the extent of the application of that principle: absolutely all human beings were condemned when Adam sinned.

Now do not question either God's right or His wisdom here, or His love. He had the right to have a judgment day of our whole race in Eden, in our head, Adam; and He did so. He always does right. Furthermore, He knew that creatures would ever fail,--there is no sufficiency in the creature, but only in the Creator. You and I would fail, as did Adam! and God desired that believers should be secure forever, by Christ's work. It was in love He held that judgment day in Eden. In love He judged us, condemned us, in our federal head, Adam, that He might justify us in the work and Person of the other federal Head, Christ! The ordinary conception of justification does not go

beyond the pardon of sin. This indeed is first; and we should also have confidence that our sins will never be reckoned against us--whether they be past, present, or future sins. This is seen in Romans 4:7, Romans 4:8; and in Romans 5:9, we see ourselves "justified in His blood," "justified from all things," as Paul says in Acts 13:39. But this leaves the believer without a positive standing. We do not come to "justification of life" [119] until Romans 5:18.

[119] The expression "justification of life" seems to stand over against that condemnation and death which came by Adam's trespass. It is a characterizing word: What is offered unto all men, through Christ's act of righteousness at the cross is not only a cancellation of guilt, but life in the Risen One. For, since Adam's sin, there was only spiritual death in his race. The words of John 1:4, regarding Christ, "In Him was life," describe the only source of life for man. And justification must be of life: for those justified are most certainly taken, out of their place of death in Adam, and given a place of life in Christ.

Now it is Christ Risen who is made our "standing": so that, as we see else where, we do not need aught else: for we are in Christ. Justification provides therefore not only release from the penalty of sin, but also a place in the Risen Christ Himself. This begins to be indicated in Chapter Four, where righteousness is reckoned to those who "believe on Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." It is, of course, necessarily comprehended in the astonishing phrase IN CHRIST JESUS,--used first in Romans 6:11! And it is amplified and developed through the rest of Paul's epistles. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we see that Christ Himself, Risen, was made unto the believer, righteousness. Paul also in Galatians 2:20; Galatians 2:21 directly connects his having been "crucified with Christ" with righteousness. That is, the history in Adam of believers was ended at the cross. (Yet always remember that it was as ungodly ones that they believed!) In Colossians 1:12 we read: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Then hear again that most stupendous utterance of all: "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is this glorious revelation, which men have been loathe to read, teach, or refer to, which we must apprehend by God's grace, and by that grace believe!

Now, how, in what sense, are we "the righteousness of God" in Christ?

It is at once evident that to set us in His own presence in Christ as He has done, God must (I) reckon to us the infinitely perfect expiation of Christ in putting away our sin by His blood; (2) make us one with Christ in His death; and (3) place us in Christ Risen, even as Christ is received before Him. All this He has done; so that He says we are the righteousness of God in Christ. If we are in Christ, we are before God in Christ, "even as He,"--"accepted in Him."

Romans 5:19 : For just as through the disobedience ot the one man the many were set down as sinners, even so, through the obedience of the One the many shall be set down as righteous.

Set down as sinners--the word "sinners," here, is not an adjective (sinful), but a substantive,--sinners. [120] Romans 5:19 first sums up the doctrine of our federal guilt by Adam's sin, then sums up our justification by Christ's death.

[120] The Greek word (hamartOlos) means not merely one possessed of a sinful nature or tendency, but one who is regarded as having committed sin. The same word is used in Romans 3:7 and Romans 5:8. "Substantive, hamartOlos, a sinner; common acceptance, LXX, New

Testament, etc."--Liddell and Scott. This word is used in N.T. to designate sinners 41 times' beginning with Matthew 9:10; five times in Luke 15:1-31, and four times in John 9:1-41; and only four times in an adjectival sense (Mark 8:38; Luke 5:8; Luke 24:7; Romans 7:13). The whole emphasis of Romans 5:12-19 is upon the fact that the effect, whether in the case of Adam or in the case of Christ was produced by a federal head acting apart from any actions of those affected. There was a judgment held in Eden, by the righteous God, the pronouncement of which is, "unto all men to condemnation.'' [121] This, of course, has no reference to eternal damnation, which is a consequence of the rejection of "the Light which has come into the world"--men loving darkness rather than light "because their deeds are evil." But it does assert a judgment of sinnerhood, by the guilt of Adam's action, upon the whole human race.

[121] Human reasoning is futile and dangerous here. Men form themselves into "schools of theology" over this subject, each founding a "system" upon his notion of how Adam's trespass affected all. But that a man may act before he is born in person of his responsible forbear is evident, as we have shown, in the case of Levi, in Hebrews 7:9. The whole lesson of this passage is, that just as we have Christ only as our righteousness, we have Adam only as sin and death to us. (God's Word, however, puts Adam's act and its effect first, as a type of Christ's work.) We repeat these things over and over, because of their importance, both for our settled peace, and also for our enjoyment of the normal, joyous Christian life.

Even so through the obedience of the One--This was our Lord's death, as an act of obedience: [122] "He became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross." He was of course always obedient to His Father, but it cannot be too strongly emphasized that His life before the cross,--His "active obedience" as it is called, is not in any sense counted to us for righteousness. "I delivered to you," says Paul, "first of all, that Christ died for our sins." Before His death He was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners." He Himself said: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Do you not see that those who claim that our Lord's righteous life under Moses' Law is reckoned to us for our "active" righteousness; while His death in which He put away our sins, is, as they claim, the "passive" side, are really leaving you, and the Lord too, under the authority of the Law?

[122] Vaughan (as so frequently) gives a rendering of startling accuracy concerning disobedience and obedience in Romans 5:19 : "The one (parakoees) is properly, mishearing; the other, hupakoees, submissive hearing." Disobedience in its essence is refusal to hearken; and obedience is bowing the ear to submissive listening.

"Justified in (the value or power of) His blood," and of that alone, gives the direct lie to the claim that man must have "an active righteousness" as well as "a passive righteousness." The specious assertion is, that "inasmuch as we have all broken the Law (although God says that Gentiles were without law'--and those in Christ are not under it!) and inasmuch as man cannot by his works himself recover his righteous standing, Christ, forsooth, came and kept The Law in man's place (!); and then went to the cross and suffered the penalty of death for man's guilt so that the result is an active righteousness' reckoned to man:--that is, Christ's keeping The Law in man's place; and, second, a passive righteousness,' which consists in the putting away of all guilt by the blood of Christ."

Now, the awful thing here is the unbelief concerning man's irrecoverable state before God. For not only must Christ's blood be shed in expiation of our guilt; but we had to die with Christ. We were connected with the old Adam; and the old man--all we had and were in Adam, must be crucified--if we were to be "joined to Another, even to Him that was raised from the dead." Theological teaching since the Reformation has never set forth clearly our utter end in death with Christ, at the cross. The fatal result of this terrible error is to leave The Law as claiment over those in Christ: for, "Law has dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (Romans 7:1). Unless you are able to believe in your very heart that you died with Christ, that your old man was crucified with Him, and that you were buried, and that your history before God in Adam the first came to an utter end at Calvary, you will never get free from the claims of Law upon your conscience. [123]

[123] "Both Calvinists and Arminians think that the flesh is not so bad that it cannot be acted on for God by Christ using the Law of God and giving it power through the Spirit"--This is Wm. Kelly's shrewd and correct comment.

I say again, that the Law was given to neither Adam. The first Adam had life: God did not give him law whereby to get life! Not until Moses did the Law come in, and then only as an incidental thing to reveal to man his condition. The Law was not given to the first Adam, nor to the human race; but to Israel only (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Deuteronomy 33:1-5; Psalms 147:19; Psalms 147:20). Again, the Law was not given to the Last Adam! "The Last Man Adam became a life-giving spirit": this is Christ, Risen from the dead, at God's right hand, communicating spiritual life. Is He under law? It is only the desperate legality of man's heart, his self-confidence, that makes him drag in the Law, and cling to the Law,--even though Christ must fulfil it for him! "Vicarious law-keeping" is Galatian heresy! Our Lord said plainly that His work in this world was to die: "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom"; and indeed, "through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without blemish unto God." True, He must be a spotless Lamb. But for what? For sacrifice! He did not touch our case, had no connection with us, until God laid our sins upon Him and made Him to become sin for us at the cross. Christ was not one of our race, "the sons of men": He was the Seed of the woman, not the man. He was the Son of Man, indeed, for God prepared for Him a body (Psalms 40:1-17; Hebrews 10:1-39), by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). But, though He moved among sinners, He was "separated from sinners," and had no connection with them until God made Him their sin offering at the cross.

Christ Himself, Risen, is our righteousness. His earthly life under the Law is not our righteousness. We have no connection with a Christ on earth and under the Law. We are expressly told in Romans 7:1-6, that even Jewish believers who have been under law were made dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, that they might be joined to Another, even to Him who was raised from the dead. One has beautifully said, "Christianity begins with the resurrection."

Romans 5:20 : Law, moreover, came in alongside [of sin] that the trespass [of law] might abound--The reference to law here shows that Paul has justification from guilt, and not our state of sinfulness, in view. "Law entered alongside" (pareis lthen) [124] not, in this connection, to reveal sinfulness, but thatthe trespass of law,--the act of law-breaking might abound. The Law, being given to neither Adam, came in alongside sin,--after sin had been there 2500 years, that vain self-confident Israel (as a public example for us all!) might see God's standard for those in the first Adam, and promising to obey it, fail; and thus know sin in order that Grace might overflow. That

so, where sin had reigned, Grace might reign-as-king, through the righteous work of Christ on the cross, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[124] It is very striking to note that in Romans 5:13 where we read "through one man sin entered into the world," the word for entered is eiselthen; and now law enters alongside,--the word being the same--eiselthen--with the preposition para, alongside, prefixed. And so, "through law is the knowledge of sin." Sin entered, and law, entering alongside, revealed the sin.

Thus neither our sins nor our "sinful nature" has, in this passage, anything to do with our condemnation: but Adam's act only. And not our new life in Christ, nor our walking in the good works unto which we are created (Ephesians 2:10), has anything to do with constituting us righteous, but Christ's act of death only (Romans 5:18-19). As we have said, law "came in alongside,"--not as in any sense a means of salvation, but that Israel (and through Israel, all of us) might discover guiltiness by breaking law; for law gives no power to keep law!

But, where sin abounded, grace did completely overflow. Grace began to work for Israel immediately after the Law was broken! For instead of cutting off Israel as a nation, God appointed Moses a mediator; and when sin came to a climax with the Jews' crucifying their Messiah, the Lord's words were "Father, forgive them." And as we shall read in Chapter Eleven, God will indeed yet forgive them,--will take away their sins and "bring in everlasting righteousness." Grace will yet over flow for Israel, nationally, as it has now overflowed to us as individual sinners, both Jews and Gentiles.

"Where sin abounded, grace overflowed," for such is ever the result of the work of the cross. Paul, who had been Christ's greatest enemy, the chief of sinners, declares himself to be the great example of mercy and grace: "I obtained mercy," he says "that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all His long-suffering, for an example of them that should hereafter believe on Him unto eternal life." And again: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10; 1 Timothy 1:16).

We might turn to David and Manasseh in the Old Testament as examples of the overflowing heart of mercy of God. Or we might call up such examples in Church History as the reckless profligate Augustine, whom God made a shining light in His Church; or John Bunyan, the profane tinker, who wrote his wonderful experience of the Divine goodness in "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners"; or John Newton, once a libertine and infidel, "a servant of slaves in Africa," as he wrote of himself for his epitaph,--whom God transformed into one of the great vessels of mercy of the eighteenth century, and whose hymns of praise all the saints sing. It was Newton who wrote:

"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me." and who told his own experience--so really that of all the saints--in the words of the beautiful hymn:

"In evil long I took delight Unawed by shame or fear, Till a new object met my sight, And stopped my wild career.

"I saw One hanging on a tree, In agonies and blood; Who fixed His languid eyes on me, As near His cross I stood.

"Sure, never till my latest breath, Can I forget that look;

It seemed to charge me with His death, Though not a word He spoke.

"My conscience felt and owned the guilt, And plunged me in despair, I saw my sins His blood had spilt, And helped to nail Him there.

"Alas, I knew not what I did, But all my tears were vain; Where could my trembling soul be hid, For I the Lord had slain!

"A second look He gave, that said, I freely all forgive! This blood is for thy ransom paid, I died that thou mayest live.'" On November 18, 1834, Robert Murray McCheyne, of St. Peter's Free Church, Dundee, Scotland, whose memory is like ointment poured forth, wrote his remarkable confession that his sins had caused Christ's death. The title, "Jehovah Tsidk nu," is the Hebrew for "The Lord Our Righteousness." Let it serve our use also, as it has that of thousands:

JEHOVAH TSIDK NU "I once was a stranger to grace and to God, I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;

Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree, Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

"I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage, Isaiah's wild measure, and John's simple page; But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree, Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

"Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll, I wept when the waters went over His soul;

Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree Jehovah Tsidkenu--'twas nothing to me. When free grace awoke me, with light from on high Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die; No refuge, no safety, in self could I see,-- Jehovah Tsidkenu my Savior must he.

"My terrors all vanished before the sweet Name; My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free-- Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

"Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast;

Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost; In Thee I shall conquer, by flood and by field-- My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!"

We might multiply examples like these: but these words, "Where sin abounded, grace did completely overflow," with the salvation of Saul of Tarsus as the Scripture example, will suffice. I stood on the bluff at Memphis, Tennessee, and saw the mighty Mississippi, normally a mile wide, stretch over forty miles in flood, covering deep under its multitude of waters the land as far as I could see. So, where sin abounded, the grace of God overflowed everything. [125]

[125] Two entirely different Greek words are translated, in the Authorized Version, "abounded." But the first, used of sin, means to increase, he augmented; while the Second, used of grace, means to abound beyond measure, to overflow. Second (Thayer) These words come from entirely different roots, and should have been so distinguished in translation. But one who undertakes to express in English the depth of the Hebrew, and the extent of the Greek language, will soon discover the frequent poverty of the English tongue. Hebrew seems to be the language in which God first spoke with men; it is the vehicle of praise. But to the Greeks He gave that great intellectual development of their "Golden Age" in which their endeavor to perfect their language

extended even to public assemblies where the most exact possible phrasing to express an idea was decided by contest. So when our Lord came as "the Savior of the World," that coming, according to the grand old Hebrew prophecies, was recorded in the Greek, which Alexander the Great had spread throughout the known world. The Romans, to whom had been given the power to govern, themselves admitted that they must borrow from the Greeks not only their philosophy, but also their method and manner of literary expression. Then also when the Roman Empire went into collapse, and the dark "Middle Ages" came in, the so-called Renaissance was the bringing of the Greek classics into crude Europe after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. And above all, the translation directly from the Greek New Testament manuscripts of our English Scriptures; for men had so long depended upon the faulty Latin (or Vulgate) translation. Perhaps the greatest wonder the last century and a quarter has seen is the translation into over 800 tongues and dialects of these same Hebrew and Greek Scriptures--with such transforming power that It is written of one Bible-bearing missionary, a man of God, in the South Sea Islands: "When he came, there were no Christians; when he left, there were no heathen." How wonderful that God should have a language of spiritual praise and worship--the Hebrew; and a language exact, intellectually rich,--the Greek, in which He could express the great doctrines concerning His Son! And both languages capable of being reproduced as to their spirit and meaning, not only in English, German, and French, but in the dialects of the most benighted heathen tribes,-- "every man in his own language."

Romans 5:21 : In order that, just as sin reigned-as-king by means of death: grace might reign-as-king, through righteousness, unto life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. This verse unfolds God’s great object: that Grace should have a kingdom where Death had had its kingdom: and that, of course, through righteousness,--that is, that all Divine claims should be first righteously met at the cross, and thus that all should be "through Jesus Christ our Lord." The question of justification is still on in Chapter Five, and not until Chapter Six is "our old man"--all we were from Adam--brought in. Furthermore, to bring into Chapter Five our sinful state by nature, is to confuse our sinful condition with that condemnation which over and over God says was brought about by Adam’s single act, and by that only. "The judgment came of ONE TRESPASS unto condemnation," etc.

Now if you and I were condemned in Adam’s sin, it is plain that to be justified we must be cleared not only of our own sins, but of our condemnation in Adam: our justification must cover all our condemnation. Our justification, is, therefore, in this great passage, related not to our personal sins, as in Chapters Three and Four; but to our guilt by and in Adam, from which we are cleared by Christ’s death. And Christ being now raised, we, connected with Him at the cross, now share His life: so that our justification is called "justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

It is true that we are not spoken of as "in Christ" until Chapter Six, where death with Christ is unfolded and our history in the first Adam, and our relation to sin, ended. But Paul speaks of being "justified in Christ" (Galatians 2:17). And certainly the subject in the last section of Chapter Five is justification: condemnation by Adam’s trespass, and justification by Christ’s righteous act of death.

Thus, not until we come to Romans 6:1-23 is our walk, our sanctification, taken up. It is true that the doctrine of the two men (Romans 5:12-21) makes possible of understanding the great fact of Romans 6:1-23,--that we died with Christ. But the subject of the latter section of Romans 5:1-21 is condemnation by Adam, justification by Christ.

02.11. Chapter 6A

CHAPTER 6A

We Died with Christ: Our Baptism being Witness; and are to Reckon Ourselves Dead unto Sin and Alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:1-11.

Presenting Ourselves to God as Risen Ones, not under Law but under Grace, Sin loses Its Dominion over Us. Romans 6:12-14.

Grace Not to be Abused, for Sin Always Enslaves, and would End in Death; Obedience brings Freedom, with the End, Eternal Life,--God's Free Gift in Christ Jesus Our Lord. Romans 6:15-23.

1 What then shall we say? Are we to keep on in sin in order that grace may be abounding? Far be the thought! 2 Such ones as we,--who died to sin! how shall we any longer be living in it? Or [in the very matter of our baptism] are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized unto Christ Jesus unto His death were baptized? 4 We were buried therefore [in figure] with Him through that baptism unto death; in order that, just as Christ was raised from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we might be walking in newness of life. 5 For if we became united with [Him] in the likeness of His death, so shall we be also [in the likeness] of His resurrection: 6 coming to know this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we might no longer be in slave-service to sin: 7 for the person who hath died [as have we] is justified from sin. 8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also be living with Him [in this world]: 9 knowing that Christ having been raised from among the dead dieth no more: death over Him no longer hath dominion. 10 For in that He died, unto sin He died once for all; but in that He is living, He is living unto God. 11 Thus do ye also reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus.

WE COME NOW to the second part of Christ's work for us--our identification with His death. [126]

[126] There are five parts to our salvation: 1. Christ's propitiatory work toward God through His blood: bearing the guilt and condemnation of our sins. 2. Christ's identification with us as connected with Adam, "becoming sin for us," releasing us from Adam, our federal head: "our old man" being crucified with Christ. 3. The Holy Spirit's whole work in us, as "the Spirit of grace," involving conviction, regeneration, baptism into Christ's Body; being in us as a "law of life" against indwelling sin, the Witness of our sonship; our Helper, Intercessor, and, finally, the mighty Agent in the Rapture. 4. Christ's present work in Heaven; leading our worship and praise as our Great High Priest; and protecting us should we sin, as our Advocate with the Father (as against our accuser). 5. Christ's second coming to redeem our bodies, and receive us to Himself in glory: The Rapture.

It is not until we come to Romans 6:1-23 that the question of a holy walk as over against a sinful walk, comes up. For the blessed verses which describe the results of the discovery of peace with God, and of "justification of life" and "reigning in life" through Christ, as revealed in Chapter Five, are things of experience, of rejoicing,--even in the hope of the glory of God Himself! But the

question of a holy walk under this "abounding grace" is now brought up, in Chapter Six, in the answers to two questions: First, Shall we keep sinning that grace may keep abounding? and, Second, The fact having been revealed that we are not under the principle of law but under that of grace, shall we use our liberty to commit sin? That is, Shall we use our freedom from the law-principle for selfish ends? The answer to the first question is, that for all who are in Christ, the old relationship to sin is broken,--for they federally shared Christ's death to sin, and are to reckon it so, and walk in "newness of life" unto God. The answer to the second question is, that anyone "yielding his members" becomes servant that to which he yields,--whether of sin unto death, or of righteousness unto sanctification.

Romans 6:1 : Are we to [127] remain in sin that grace may be abounding? This question arises constantly, both in uninstructed believers, and in blind unbelievers. The message of simple grace, apart from all works, to the poor natural heart of man seems wholly inconsistent and' impossible. "Why!" people say, "If where sin abounds grace overflows, then the more sin, the more grace." So the unbeliever rejects the grace plan.

[127] It is what is called the deliberative subjunctive here; "May we?" or "Should we? But best rendered in English by the form we have chosen: "Are we to"-- "is such the path?" And so in Romans 6:15.

Moreover, the uninstructed Christian also is afraid; for he says, "If we are in a reign of pure grace, what will control our conscious evil tendencies? We fear such utter freedom. Put us under rules for holy living,' and we can get along."

Another sad fact is that some professing Christians welcome the "abounding grace" doctrine because of the liberty they feel it gives to things in their daily lives which they know, or could know, to be wrong.

Romans 6:2 : Such ones as we, who died to sin! how shall we any longer be living in it?

Here we have, (1) such ones as we (hoitines). This is more than a relative pronoun: it is a pronoun of characterization, "placing those referred to in a class" (Lightfoot). Paul thus has before his mind all Christians, and he places this pronoun at the very beginning: "such ones as we!"

(2) He characterizes all Christians as those who died. The translation, "are dead" is wrong, for the tense of the Greek verb is the aorist, which denotes not a state but a past act or fact. It never refers to an action as going on or prolonged. As Winer says, "The aorist states a fact as something having taken place." Note how strikingly and repeatedly this tense is used in this chapter as referring to the death of which the apostle speaks: [128] Mark most particularly that the apostle in Romans 6:2 does not call upon Christians to die to sin but asserts that they shared Christ's death, they died to sin!

[128] Romans 6:2, "We died to sin" (an aorist tense,--definite past fact). Romans 6:6 : "Our old man was crucified with Him" (another aorist tense); not "is crucified," as in the Old Version, which expression is a relic of Romanism, and the meaning of which no one knows. Romans 6:7 : "The one having died" (aorist again; and meaning anyone in Christ) "is declared righteous from sin." Romans 6:8 : "If we died [aorist] with Christ." Romans 6:10-11 : "The death that He died. He died unto sin, once for all. (Aorist tenses, the second specially emphasized by "once for all.")

(3) Paul here therefore affirms that it was in regard to their relationship to sin that believers died. He is asserting concerning Christians that they died--not for sin, but unto it.

(4) Paul now asks the question: "How shall those whose relationship to sin has been broken by their dying, be still, as once, living in sin?" The answer to this can only be, It is an impossibility. In this second verse, therefore, the apostle is not making a plea to Christians not to live unto sin; but asking how they who died to sin could go on living in it. It is as if one would say, Those who died in New York City, shall they still be walking the streets of New York City? This does not mean that all Christians have discovered, or walk in, the path of victory over sin; for in this second verse Paul is answering directly the bald bold insinuation of verse 1--that grace abounding over sin warrants and enables one believing that doctrine to go right on in his old life! We know from other Scriptures the impossibility of this: "Whosoever is born of God doth not practise sin, because His [God's] seed abideth in him, and he is not able to practise sin, because he is begotten of God." [129]

[129] Of course, John deals with the new life; Paul, with the new relationship, the new creation. See 2 Corinthians 5:17 : "If anyone is in Christ,--a new creation! the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." The seed of God the new creature, being of God does not consent to sin: however weak and ignorant of the truth of the deliverance of the cross they may be, there is always the absolute difference between those in Christ and those not in Christ.

Note the repeated declarations in this Sixth Chapter of our actual identification with the death of Christ:

Romans 6:2 : "We who died to sin."

Romans 6:3 : "We were baptized into His death."

Romans 6:4 : "We were buried with Him through baptism into death "

Romans 6:5 : "We became united with Him in the likeness of His death."

Romans 6:6 : "Our old man was crucified with Him."

Romans 6:7 : "He that hath died is justified from sin."

Romans 6:8 : "We died with Christ."

Romans 6:11 : "Reckon yourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

Romans 6:13 : "Present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead." The same great federal fact is brought out in Colossians 2:20 : "If ye died [aorist tense, past fact, again] from the religious principles of the world"; and Colossians 3:3 : "For ye died [aorist tense again] and your life is hid with Christ in God."

It is most evident that the apostle is not here speaking of some state that we are in, but of a federal fact that occurred in the past, at the cross.

It was upon this federal fact that Paul's whole life hung, as he testified to Peter: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Such ones as we, who died to sin! How shall we go on living in it? Paul expresses his very soul in that opening word--"Such ones as we!" Believers were seen by him as risen ones,--dead with Christ to sin. How shall we any longer be living in sin--if indeed we died to it? This perplexes many, this announcement that we died to sin,--inasmuch as the struggle with sin, and that within, is one of the most constant conscious experiences of the believer. But, as we see elsewhere, we must not confound our relationship to sin with its presence! Distinguish this revealed fact that we died, from our experience of deliverance. For we do not die to sin by our experiences: we did die to sin in Christ's death. For the fact that we died to sin is a Divinely revealed word concerning us, and we cannot deny it! The presence of sin "in our members" will make this fact that we died to it hard to grasp and hold: but God says it. And He will duly explain all to our faith.

Romans 6:3 : Or [in the very matter of our baptism] are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized unto Christ Jesus unto His death were baptized?

Here the apostle turns them back to their baptism, that initial step in public confession of the Lord upon whom they had believed. Did they not realize the significance of that baptism--that it set forth their identification with a crucified and buried Lord? For in their baptism they had confessed their choice of Him, as against sin and the old life. But Christ having been "made sin on our behalf," had died unto sin; had been buried, and had been raised from the dead through the glory of the Father; and now lived unto God in a new, resurrection life.

Therefore they could see in their baptism the picture of that federal death and burial with Christ which Paul sets forth so positively in the second verse: "Such ones as we, who died."

We must first of all receive the statement of our death unto sin with Christ (Romans 6:2 and Romans 6:11) as a revealed federal fact; and then allow the Apostle to press the symbolical setting forth of that federal death by the figure of water-baptism. For these early Christians had not been befuddled regarding the simple matter of baptism,--as later generations have been! To them it was a vivid and happy memory,--the day they dared step out, against the whole world, and often in the face of persecution and even death, and confess the Lord Jesus, definitely and forever, as their own Savior and Lord.

Now, says Paul, in that very matter of your baptism, you set forth what I am teaching you, that you who are Christ's died with Him. Not only so, but your baptism set forth further that you were buried with Him: for was it not a vivid portrayal of your death and burial, when you went down into the waters which signified--not cleansing, but death? "Water," says Peter, "which after a true likeness doth now save you--even baptism: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Eight souls. Peter here says, were saved in Noah's day in the Ark--type of Christ. For those eight were, in the Ark, brought safely through the waters of judgment which drowned the world; as we were bought, through Christ, safely through the judgment of sin at the cross; and now have "a good conscience toward God"--through God's having raised up Christ: all of which, baptism sets forth--"after a true likeness" (1 Peter 3:20; 1 Peter 3:21).

Scripture here connects baptism with death, not with cleansing; with burial, not with exaltation; with the ending of a former connection that we may enter a new one. Or [in the very matter of our baptism] are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized unto Christ Jesus unto His death were

baptized? We find therefore, here in Romans 6:3

1. That Paul, along with all believers of his day, had been baptized. He offers no explanatory word, thus showing that the matter of having been baptized was a common consciousness among Christians.

2. That it was unto Christ Jesus that believers had been baptized. The preposition "unto" (eis) seems best rendered here as in 1 Corinthians 10:2, where we read that the fathers of Israel were all "baptized unto (eis) Moses." Those Israelites were not baptized into Moses, but were indeed judicially associated by God with the Mosaic economy,--"into a spiritual union with Moses, and constituted his disciples." So believers are baptized unto Christ Jesus, which we believe, must be the meaning here. They were indeed so "baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5), that they thereafter bore His Name (James 2:7, marg.). But we must not confuse this water-baptism of Romans Six, which stands for the identification of believers with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection; with that Holy Spirit baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13. For our identification with Christ-made-sin, and our death in and with Him) must never be confounded with what follows our Lord's ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit,--baptism into the one Body. These are two absolutely different things. One has to do with taking us out of our old man, justifying us from sin, as well as from sins. The other, the Spirit's baptism into "one Body," has to do with the glorious heavenly position God gives us in a Risen Christ. To seek to have a man baptized by the Spirit into Christ before he has been identified with Christ at the cross in death and burial, is really to ignore man's awful state in the old man which God had condemned to crucifixion with Christ made sin. So with the Bullingerites and many others: they do not distinctly see or solidly preach our identification with Christ in death and burial. "Buried with Him in baptism"--how can these words of Colossians 2:12 possibly apply to the work of the Holy Spirit? We beg all to consider this. Death to sin, and burial with Christ, water-baptism, and that alone, sets forth.

3. Unto His death were baptized. Neither must we confuse baptism unto Christ Jesus here with that actual identification in Christ's death of which baptism is a symbol. That our old man was crucified with Christ is one thing; baptism, quite another. However much baptism portrays our death with Christ, it in no wise brings about that death. If we had not died with Christ, there would be no meaning to baptism.

Certainly baptism sets forth the fact of our death with Christ. Christian baptism in water is the Scripture picture,--not of our being cleansed, nor of our being introduced into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (which is an entirely different matter); and not, of course, of our regeneration. But it is a setting forth of the great fact that we federally died and were buried with Christ, unto sin, unto the world, and unto all of the old creation; and are now raised with Him and share His risen life;--on new ground altogether.

Romans 6:4 : We were buried therefore with Him through the baptism unto [His] death. Here the apostle declares that all believers by the very matter of their baptism, proclaimed themselves as having been so identified with Christ's death that they were buried: that their past was ended,--not, of course, by the ordinance, though the ordinance confessed and proclaimed it. [130] And now the object of our identification with Christ's death is set forth: in order that, just as Christ was raised from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we might be walking about in newness of life.

[130] 1.Godet remarks: "Burial is the act which consummates the breaking of the last tie between man and his earthly life. This was likewise the meaning of our Lord's entombment. Similarly, by baptism there is publicly consummated the believer's breaking with the life of the present world, and with his own natural life." And he relates this striking incident, which proves how these sayings of the apostle, apparently so mysterious, find an easy explanation under the light of the lively experiences of faith: A missionary was questioning a converted Bechuana as to the meaning of a passage analogous to Romans 6:5,--namely, Colossians 3:3. The Bechuana said to him: "Soon I shall be dead, and they will bury me in my field. My flocks will come to pasture above me. But I shall no longer hear them, and I shall not come forth from my tomb to take them and carry them with me to the sepulchre. They will be strange to me, as I to them. Such is the image of my life in the midst of the world since I believed in Christ."

Christ on the cross not only bare our sins in His own body, but He was also made to be sin,--to be the thing itself. Then God the Father, through His glory, raised Him from the dead,--"that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." This was the most marvelous display of glorious. Divine power ever known. The words "through the glory of the Father," bring into action all that God is. Christ had fully glorified God in all that He is, in His earthly life, and on the cross (as we saw in Romans 3:24, Romans 3:25). Then God raised Christ from the dead in glorious triumph. And thereafter Christ walked for forty days on earth "in newness of life." He was "the First-born from the dead." He was the Last Adam, now become (though having His flesh and bones body) "a spirit making [others] alive," the Second Man, "a new starting point of the human race." The old man was crucified with Christ, and all that belonged to "man in the flesh" was ended before God there on Christ's cross. Now the "glory of the Father" is put forth in raising Christ and placing Him in that risen "newness of life" never known before, and in receiving Him up in glory!

Walking in newness of life. Note that walking presupposes the possession of life. The literal translation of this word is seen in 1 Peter 5:8, "walking about." [131] Now mark in this verse that it is Christ who is raised from the dead, and the saints are to walk, consequently, in "newness of life"--showing at once their union with Him; that as He was raised, so also they, when they are placed in Him, walk about in newness of life.

[131] Unfortunately, we do not have this word "walk" in this Pauline sense in ordinary English use. Men have substituted the word "live," and that in a legal sense: "Live the Christian life," "Live as you ought to live," etc.

Note that it is life--not a mere manner of living. Then it is newness, or a new kind of life, for that is the meaning of the word. Resurrection life was never known until Christ was raised from the dead. Lazarus, and the widow of Nain's son and Jairus' daughter, were brought back into this present earth-life. Indeed, it is written concerning Jairus' daughter, that when the Lord said, "Maiden, arise!" her "spirit returned," and she rose up instantly. The spirit had left the body, the earth-life had ceased; it was now resumed. But in Christ's resurrection this was not so. He was the First-born from the dead, the First-fruits of them that slept. It was not back into the old flesh and blood earthly existence that He came. He had, indeed, His body: "Handle Me and see." "Have ye here anything to eat?" Yet He had poured out His blood. The life of the flesh was in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). He had laid that life down. He is now a heavenly Man. He is in the heavenlies.

And He is there as to His human body: "God . . . wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenlies." Poor human reason attempts to follow here; but this revelation is addressed to faith only. The disciples "were glad when they saw the Lord." Into the upper room He came, and stood in the midst; and "He showed unto them His hands and His side." And Thomas was told, "Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing"; and further, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

It is in this newness, this new kind of life, which they now share, [132] that believers are to walk about in this world. They are one with this Risen Christ! Being "joined unto the Lord," they are "one spirit" with Him now; and shall have bodies, shortly, conformed unto the body of His glory (1 Corinthians 6:17; Php 3:20; Php 3:21).

[132] Many quote Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:31 : "I die daily," to prove the Romish idea of our "dying daily to sin." But we need only remember that the great message of 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 has to do with the body, to refute this. Indeed the preceding verse and the following verses (1 Corinthians 15:30 and 1 Corinthians 15:32) show what Paul meant by "dying daily." "We stand in jeopardy every hour,"--meaning the physical dangers that beset his ministry. And, "If after the manner of men we fought with beasts at Ephesus,"--referring to the terrible outward trials he had faced and yet would face. To make the words "I die daily" mean an inward spiritual struggle with sin, is to falsify Paul's plain testimony: "I have been crucified with Christ"; "Our old man was crucified with Him"; "He that hath died is righteously released from sin"; "Reckon ye yourselves dead unto sin." Paul indeed says he desired to be "conformed unto" Christ's death (Php 3:10); but as one who had federally shared it: and not as one who sought to approximate, ,or imitate, Christ's death! This last is Romanism. But Paul was a believer,--in the work of the Cross!

Romans 6:5 : For if we became united with [Him] in the likeness of His death, so shall we be also [in the likeness] of His resurrection: Here Paul looks back to Romans 6:2, to the fact he declared true concerning all believers, that they died to sin; and he now insists that that death is a fact about true believers only--those who have been vitally enlifed with Christ. The word means to grow together [133] --as a graft in a tree, so that the graft shares the tree's life. The meaning of Romans 6:5 may be paraphrased: If we became actually united with Him, which, in our baptism--the "likeness of His death," we profess; so we shall also be united in the likeness of His resurrection: (so therefore to be walking in newness of life!). Conybeare well remarks concerning Romans 6:5 : "The meaning appears to be, If we have shared the reality of His death, whereof we have undergone the likeness" (in baptism).

[133] The Greek word is sumphutoi--used only here. It was confounded by the King James translators with sumphuteuo, translated in Romans 6:5, "planted together," whereas the proper word means to be actually enlifed together with.

Now when the apostle says we are to be united with "the likeness of His resurrection," he refers to the walking in "newness of life" just spoken of in the preceding verse. (For this verse explains that.) To be joined in life with the Risen Christ, and thus daily, hourly, to walk, is a wonder not conceived of by many of us. But it is the blessed portion of all true Christians. They shared Christ's death, and now are "saved by [or in] His life"--as we read in Romans 5:10. But not only saved: we walk here on earth by appropriating faith, in the blessedness of His heavenly "newness" of

resurrection life! This is what Paul meant when he said, "To me to live is Christ"; "our inward man is being renewed day by day"; "I was crucified with Christ; Christ liveth in me . . . the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Of course Romans 6:5 may look on, also, to that day when our bodies will share this resurrection-life,--as we have seen in the verse before; but the context here shows Paul is speaking of our "walking about in newness of life" in Christ today!

We reap the exact effect of what Christ did. Did Christ bear our sins in His own body on the tree? He did. Then we hear them no more. Was Christ made to be sin on our behalf and did He die unto sin? Truly so. Then Christ's relation to sin becomes ours!

Romans 6:6 : Coming to know this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we might no longer be in slave service to sin. The word translated "coming to know," means, in the Greek, coming into knowledge ,--a discriminating apprenhension of facts. See note below. [134]

[134] The Greek word for "know" (gignOskO) here, means to get to know, come in the knowledge of, become acquainted with the fact. It is an entirely different word from the one translated "knowing" in Romans 6:9 (eidO), meaning "a clear and purely mental conception, in contrast both to conjecture and to knowledge derived from others" (Thayer). In this latter verse the fact spoken of is a matter of common knowledge. We, by God's word here, come to know (verse 6) that our old man was crucified with Christ; whereas we know as a necessary thing that Christ, being raised, dieth no more (Romans 6:9). This is not a fact we "come to know," as in the matter of our vital connection with His death, verse 6. The manner in which we "come to know" our old man was crucified is by faith in God's testimony to fact! Our old man--This is our old selves, as we were in and from Adam. It is contrasted with the new man (Colossians 3:9; Colossians 3:10)--which is what we are and have in Christ. The word our indicates that what is said, is said of and to all those who are in Christ. The expression "our old man," of course is a federal one, as also is "the new man." The "old man," therefore, is not Adam personally, any more than the "new man" is Christ personally. Also, we must not confuse the "old man" with "the flesh." Adam begat a son in his own likeness. This son of Adam, as all since, was according to Adam,--for he was in Adam; possessed of a "natural" mind, feelings, tastes, desires,--all apart from God. He was his father repeated. Cain is a picture before us of the meaning of the words, "the old man." Moreover, since man's activities were carried on in and through the body, he is now morally "after the flesh." Inasmuch as his spirit was now dead to God, sin controlled him both spirit and soul, through the body. And thus we read a little later, in the Sixth of Genesis, upon the recounting of the horrible lust and violence that filled the earth, God's statement: "In their going astray, they are flesh!" (R. V. margin.) What a fearful travesty of one created in the image of God, and into whose Divinely formed body God had breathed the spirit of life, so that he was "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23); and with his innocent spirit able to speak with his Creator! with his unfallen soul-faculties, and with body in blessed harmony. When we are told, for instance, in Colossians, that we have put off the old man, we know that we are being addressed as new creatures in Christ, and that the old man represents all we naturally were,--desires, lusts, ambitions, hopes, judgments: looked at as a whole federally: we used to be that--now we have put that off. We recognize it again in the words "Put away as concerning your former manner of life the old man" (Ephesians 4:22).

1. First, then, our old man was crucified (Romans 6:6). That is a Divine announcement of fact.

2. Those in Christ have put off the old man.

3. He still exists, for "the old man waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit" (Ephesians 4:22).

4. He is to be put away as belonging to our former manner of life: for we are in Christ and are "new creatures; old things are passed away; behold they are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Now as regards the flesh:

1. While our old man has been crucified, by God, with Christ at the cross,--the federal thing was done; yet of the flesh we read, "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Galatians 5:24).

2. The flesh has passions and lusts.

3. It has a mind directly at enmity with God.

4. As we shall see in Romans 7:1-25, the flesh is the manifestation of sin in the as yet unredeemed body. "Our old man," therefore, is the large term, the all-inclusive one--of all that we were federally from Adam. The flesh, however, we shall find to be that manifestation of sin in our members with which we are in conscious inward conflict, against which only the Holy Spirit indwelling us effectively wars. Our bodies are not the root of sin, but do not yet share, as do our spirits, the redemption that is in Christ. And as for our souls (our faculties of perception, reason, imagination, and our sensibilities),--our souls are being renewed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Not so the body. "The flesh," which is sin entrenched in the body, is unchangeably evil, and will war against us till Christ comes. Only the Holy Spirit has power over "the flesh" (Romans 8:1). Our old man was crucified--The matter of which we are told to take note here is the great federal fact that our old man was crucified with Christ. Perhaps no more difficult task, no task requiring such constant vigilant attention, is assigned by God to the believer. It is a stupendous thing, this matter of taking note of and keeping in mind what goes so completely against consciousness,--that our old man was crucified. These words are addressed to faith, to faith only. Emotions, feelings, deny them. To reason, they are foolishness. But ah, what stormy seas has faith walked over! What mountains has faith cast into the sea! How many impossible things has faith done!

Let us never forget, that this crucifixion was a thing definitely done by God at the cross, just as really as our sins were there laid upon Christ. It is addressed’ to faith as a revelation from God. Reason is blind. The "word of the cross" is "foolishness" to it. All the work consummated at the cross seems folly, if we attempt to subject it to man’s understanding. But, just as the great wonder of creation is understood only by faith: ("By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the Word of God,"-- Hebrews 11:3) so the eternal results accomplished at the cross are entered into by simple faith in the testimony of God about them.

No, it is no easy or light thing that is announced to you and me, that all we were and are from Adam has been rejected of God. Scripture is not now dealing with what we have done, but with what we are. And really to enter spiritually into the meaning of this awful word, Our old man was crucified, involves, with all of us, deep exercise of soul. For no one by nature will be ready to count himself so incorrigibly bad as to have to be crucified! But when the Spirit of God turns the light upon what we are, from Adam, these will be blessed words of relief: "Our old man was crucified."

Now here is the very opposite of the teaching of false Christianity about a holy life. For these legalists set you to crucifying yourself! You must "die out" to this, and to that. But God says our old man, all that we were, has been already dealt with,--and that by crucifixion with Christ. And the very words "with Him" show that it was done back at the cross; and that our task is to believe the good news, rather than to seek to bring about this crucifixion ourselves. The believer is constantly reminded that his relation to sin was brought about by his identification with Christ in His death: Christ died unto sin, and the believer shared that death, died with Him, and is now, therefore, dead unto sin. This is his relationship to sin--the same as Christ's now is; and believing this is to be his constant attitude.

Difficulty there will be, no doubt, in taking and maintaining constantly this attitude: but faith will remove the difficulty, and faith here will grow out of assiduous, constant attention to God's exact statements of fact. We are not to go to God in begging petitions for "victory,"--except in extreme circum stances. We are to set ourselves a very different task: "This is the work of God, that ye believe" We may often be compelled to cry, with the father of the demoniac, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" But it is still better to have our faces toward the foe, knowing ourselves to be in Christ, and that we have been commanded to reckon ourselves dead to sin, no matter how great and strong sin may appear. Satan's great device is to drive earnest souls back to beseeching God for what God says has already been done!

"Our old man was crucified with Christ." This is our task: to walk in the faith of these words. Upon this water God commands us to step out and walk. And we are infinitely better off than was Peter that night, when he "walked on the water to come to Jesus"; whereas we are in Christ. And our relationship to sin is His relationship! He died unto it, and we, being in Christ Risen, are in the relationship Christ's death brought about in Him, and now to us who are in Him: whether to sin, law death, or the world.

If I did not die with Christ, on the cross, I cannot be living in Him, risen from the dead; but am still back in the old Adam in which I was born!

Christ died once--once for all, unto sin. He is not dying continually. I am told to reckon myself dead--in that death of Christ. I am therefore not told to do my own dying, to sin and self and the world: but, on the contrary, to reckon by simple faith, that in His death I died: and to be "conformed unto His death." But, to be conformed to a death already a fact, is not doing my own dying,--which is Romanism. If you and I are able to reckon ourselves dead--in Christ's death: all will be simple. That the body of sin might be annulled--The word for "annulled" is katargeo. See note on Romans 4:14. The meaning is, to "put out of business." The "body of sin" refers to our bodies as yet unredeemed, and not delivered from sin's rule; as Paul says in the Eighth Chapter: "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." Now we shall find that we have no power to deliver our body, our members, from "the law of sin" (See Romans 7:8-24). But since our old man has been crucified with Christ, all the rights of sin are gone; and the indwelling Holy Spirit can annul "the body of sin"; thus delivering us from sin's bondage. We know the Spirit is not mentioned here (as He will be constantly in Chapter Eight); but inasmuch as it is His work to apply all Christ's work to us, we speak of His blessed annulling of the power of indwelling sin. It is blessed to know that we do not have to crucify the old man: that was done in Christ's federal death at the cross. Nor do we have to "annul" the "body of sin": that is done by the blessed Spirit as we yield to Him.

Romans 6:7 : For he that hath died hath been declared righteous from sin!

We must seize fast hold of this blessed verse.

Let us distinguish at once between being justified from sins--from the guilt thereof--by the blood of Christ, and being justified from sin--the thing itself.

"Justified from sin" is the key to both Chapters Six and Seven and also to Eight! It is the consciousness of being sinful that keeps back saints from that glorious life Paul lived. Paul shows absolutely no sense of bondage before God; but goes on in blessed triumph! Why? He knew he had been justified from all guilt by the blood of Christ; and he knew that he was also justified, cleared, from the thing sin itself: and therefore (though walking in an, as yet, unredeemed body), he was wholly heavenly in his standing, life and relations with God! He knew he was as really justified from sin itself as from sins. The conscious presence of sin in his flesh only reminded him that he was in Christ;--that sin had been condemned judicially, as connected with flesh, at the cross; and that he was justified as to sin; because he had died with Christ, and his former relationship to sin had wholly ceased! Its presence gave him no thought of condemnation, but only eagered his longing for the redemption body. "Justified from sin"--because, "he that hath died is justified from sin." Glorious fact! May we have faith to enter into it as did Paul! [135]

[135] "Justified from sin" does not mean "sinless perfection,"--but something utterly different, and infinitely beyond that! It is different, in that it does not refer to an "experience" of deliverance from sin, but a passing beyond, in death with Christ at the cross, the sphere where the former relationship to sin existed! We are justified, accounted wholly righteous, with respect to the thing sin itself! This, therefore, is infinitely beyond any state whatever of experience. It is a newly-established relationship to sin, which the saints have because they died with Christ: in which they stand in Christ as He is toward sin. They are "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." They are heavenly. Their old relation to sin is over forever. They are justified from it. They rejoice, indeed, and have a most blessed "experience." But they do not say sin is gone from their flesh: but that they, having died, are declared righteous from it; that they are cleared, before God, of all condemnation because of sin’s presence in this unredeemed body; and delivered from all sin’s former rights and bondage over them.

It is the deep-seated notion of Christendom that gradually we become saints,--gradually worthy of heaven: so that sometime,--perhaps, on a dying bed, we will have the right to "drop this robe of flesh and rise." But Scripture cuts this idea off at once, by the declaration that we died, and that we are now, here, justified from sin! "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The saints in light are those in glory, and they are there for one reason alone: the work of Christ on the cross.

How unspeakably sad is our little faith! And I am speaking of true believers, certainly.

1. Many have turned truly to God, but not knowing the finished work of Christ, that is, that He actually bare their sins and put them away, are never sure of their own salvation.

2. Many have appropriated gladly Christ’s finished work, as respects the guilt of their sins, and they no longer have apprehensions of judgment, knowing that He met all God’s claims against them on the cross. But as to their relation to sin itself, it is an "O-wretched-man" life that they live,

for they see honestly their own sinfulness and unworthiness, but have never heard how they are now in a Christ who died to sin, and that they share His relationship now, dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:10, Romans 6:11).

3. Thank God, there are some who have seen and believed in their hearts that their relationship to sin itself was completely changed when God identified them with Christ in His death. Their relationship to sin was broken forever; and they present themselves unto God as alive from the dead, and, through an ever increasing faith, walk about on earth in newness of life; knowing that the same God who declared them justified from the guilt of their sins through Christ's shed blood, has now declared that, in being identified with Christ in His death to sin, they are themselves declared righteous [136] from sin itself!

[136] The Greek word is the perfect tense of the verb dikaioO(G1344), to declare righteous. As we have elsewhere remarked, relief from guilt and danger, through the shed blood of Christ, comes first. And the conscience concerning judgment being relieved, the heart ever rests in the blood of Christ. But to have God tell us further, that we, having died with Christ, are declared righteous from sin itself, is a new, additional, and glorious revelation, which sets us in the presence of God not only declared righteous from what we have done, but declared righteous from what we were--and as to our flesh, still are! We should have no more dejection and self-condemnation when we see our old selves; for we have been declared righteous from that old state of being, as well as from what we had done! Very excellent and godly men, not recognizing this blessed fact, have spent much time before God "bemoaning the sinfulness" of their now revealed old nature. But this was really not to recognize the Word of God that we have been justified, declared righteous, from the old state of being, from sin itself! [137]

[137] The author many years ago edited a little book called Extracts from the Journal of David Brainerd--the wonderful missionary to the Indians in New Jersey in the eighteenth century, whose prayer-life has inspired hundreds; whose devotion to Christ was sublime. But many, many pages of his diary were found to be occupied with bemoaning (often alone on the room-floor, or in the forest, before God) his sinful state. For example, "May 13, 1742. Saw so much of the wickedness of my heart, that I longed to get away from myself. I never before thought there was so much spiritual pride in my soul. I felt almost pressed to death with my own vilencss. Oh what a body of death is there in me! Lord, deliver my soul. "May 15. Indeed I never saw such a week as this before; for I have been almost ready to die with the view of the wickedness of my heart. I could not have thought I had such a body of death in me. "June 30. Spent this day alone in the woods, in fasting and prayer; underwent the most dreadful conflicts in my soul that ever I felt, in some respects. I saw myself so vile, that I was ready to say, I shall now perish by the hand of Saul.' I thought, and almost concluded, I had no power to stand for the cause of God, but was almost afraid of the shaking of a leaf. Spent almost the whole day in prayer, incessantly. I could not bear to think of Christians showing me any respect." God forbid that we should disparage in the least such a very saint as Brainerd, whose Memoirs draw out our hearts with their sincere godliness as do almost no other uninspired writings. Yet Paul's attitude is the Divine example. He believed what he wrote--that he had been justified from sin itself. So that all struggles from self-condemnation were over. He knew that in him was "no good thing"; but that he had been justified from even indwelling sin. George Whitefield used to say, "When I see myself I seem to be half devil and half beast," and again, as he passed through great crowds on his way to preach: "I wondered why the

people did not stone so vile a wretch as myself." You may say, This is just the Seventh of Romans, and Paul had that experience. Yes, Paul had it; and found that in him, in his flesh, there was no good thing. But, having come to this vision of himself, and agreeing with God as to the evil of the flesh, he found deliverance in Christ and afterwards rejoiced in Him alway. There is no hint in his epistles of a continued struggle, nor of the slightest consciousness of Divine condemnation because of the presence of the flesh within. He walked in the consciousness of justification not only from guilt, but from sin itself! therefore, the Risen Christ, rather than ill thoughts of his old self, filled his vision! The trouble with most of us is, we do not believe we are utterly bad. Or if, like Brainerd or Whitefield, we see and own it, we do not see ourselves where God sees us, only in Christ.

If Gabriel, the presence angel, were to appear before you, your natural thought would be. He is holy, sinless; and I am unholy, sinful. Therefore, I am not worthy to stand in his presence. But this would be completely wrong. If you are in Christ, you stand in Christ,--in Christ alone,--even as He! The presence of sin in the flesh has no more power to trouble your conscience, than have your sins: for both were dealt with at the cross! Your old man was crucified, sin in the flesh was condemned (Romans 8:3) at the cross. And Paul definitely declares that we have now come "to the innumerable hosts of angels," as well as that we have been made meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"!

One of the most astonishing things (and yet, why astonishing?) that came to us in the study of the book of the Revelation was, that once the apostle John had "fallen as one dead" at the feet of the glorified Christ, in Chapter One, and the Lord had "laid His right hand" upon him, saying, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, and the Living One, and I became dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Revelation 1:17; Revelation 1:18)--after that, John, all unconsciously, but really, fears nothing, and no one! Not even the vision of the glorious throne in heaven before which the four living ones and the four and twenty elders are falling down, crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy," stirs John with the least emotion of fear or shrinking. In fact, he is found weeping because no one can take the sealed book. Not once is he concerned about his own moral or spiritual condition. He goes boldly up to the mighty angel in the Tenth Chapter, requesting according to Divine direction, that he give him the little book in his hand. Twice he falls at the feet of the angelic messenger that is revealing these glorious things to him, but it is not on account of a sense of moral or spiritual unfitness, but rather a being enraptured, overwhelmed with the glory of the scene.

Now why is this? Or how could Paul be caught up to the third heaven, into Paradise, and hear unspeakable words?

Simply because the work of the cross was complete! Not only were sins put away by the blood of Christ, but our connection with Adam was ended, our old man was crucified, we died to sin; our former history was completely over, before God. Thus it is written, as we quoted, "Giving thanks unto the Father who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

Now as to the fact, all this is as true of us here on earth, as it will be in the ages to come. Our realization of the truth may be small; yea, sad to say, our faith may be weak; but the fact is the same!

How utterly marvelous, then, to know that we have been justified from sin itself. Not only has it lost all right and power over us, but we are declared righteous from the hideous thing itself; we are standing with God, in Christ, outside the region of sin, "children of light," yea, even called "light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8).

Romans 6:8 : But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also be living with Him [in this world].

Here we take it for granted that we died; that our old man was crucified with Christ. And we go on to the expectation of a blessed life in Christ. For it is not only that we shall "live with Him" in resurrection glory when He comes, but even now we walk in newness of life in Him, as Romans 6:10 and Romans 6:13 set forth. This is no uncertain confidence, because "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more." The brief lordship of death over Him is ended forever, and it is His death and life we share.

Meyer well paraphrases: "Whosoever has died with Christ is now also of the belief that his life, i.e., the positive, active side of his moral being and nature, shall be a fellowship of life with the exalted Christ; that is, shall be able to be nothing else than this." And Rotherham: "If we jointly died with Christ,--we believe that we shall also jointly live with Him." And Conybeare: "If we have shared the death of Christ, we believe that we shall also share His life." This word, shall also be living with Him, must finally include, doubtless, the consummation of our salvation at the coming of Christ, and the fashioning anew of our mortal bodies. But the word refers directly to that expressed by Paul in Galatians 2:20 : "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." Here in Romans Six it is called a living with Him, as over against our death with Him. Hodge well says: "The future tense is used here, referring not to what is to happen hereafter, so much as to what is the certain consequence of our union with Christ." And Alford: "The future (we shall also live with Him') as in Romans 6:5, is used, because the life with Him, though here begun, is not here completed." And now the reason for this assurance that we shall keep on sharing the risen life of Christ, is given:

Romans 6:9 : Knowing that Christ having been raised from among the dead dieth no more: death over Him no longer hath dominion.

Knowing--"This participle justifies the we believe' of verse eight." We know (eidotes) both that our present spiritual participation in Christ's risen life will continue, and also that our mortal bodies will be finally delivered, in view of the fact we are conscious of, that Christ has been once and irrevocably raised; that God "loosed the pangs of death"; that "He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption,"--for it was written, "Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption." Sin never had dominion over Him; and death could have had no dominion except that our sin was transferred to Him! Death, therefore, the "wages," had a brief dominion, but now that is ended forever; and we are in Him,--also forever! Therefore death with its dominion is for the believer forever passed away. Our identification with Christ in death at the cross made possible of fulfillment His wonderful promise in John 8:51, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." If a believer falls asleep (God's word for a believer's physical death) his spirit goes to be with Christ: there is no "dark valley." On the tomb of an early Christian were these words: "I sinned, I repented, I trusted, I loved; I slept, I shall rise, I shall reign!"

It is a terrible thing to contemplate--that death once held the Prince of Life, the Lord of all. Yet behold the Lord of Life, under the dominion of death! But He is not making atonement during those three days and nights,--that was all finished on the cross. [138] And now, praise God, we read, Death no more hath dominion over Him. He liveth unto God, in a glad resurrection life which shall never end. This is the life that we share, for we shared His death.

[138] Our Lord's last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." As Peter writes: "Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which [quickened spirit] He went and preached unto the spirits in prison," etc. (1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 3:19). Christ's human spirit, we know, from His own word, was to be "three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40) in the heart of the earth." This of course does not refer to His body, which lay in Joseph's tomb on the surface of the earth.

Romans 6:10 : Therefore we must go on to Romans 6:10 and read God's statement of Christ's death unto sin: For in that He died, unto sin He died once for all; but in that He is living, He is living unto God.

Now we beseech you, do not change God's word "UNTO," here! Do not confuse with this passage those other Scriptures that declare that Christ died FOR our sins. For this great revelation of Romans 6:10 is that Christ died UNTO sin! There is here, of course, no thought of expiation of guilt. That belongs to Chapters Three to Five. Here, the sole question is one of relationship, not of expiation. Christ is seen dying to sin, not for it, here.

What is meant by that? In 2 Corinthians 5:21, God declares: "Him who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Christ is made to be what we were, that we might become, in Him, what He is! Might not Christ, the Sinless One, bear the guilt of our sins and that be all? Nay, but we were connected federally with Adam the first--with a race proved wholly unrighteous and bad. And that we might be released from that Adam-state, there must be not only our sins borne, but we ourselves released from the old-Adam headship,--all we had from Adam: which involved the responsibilities we had in him--responsibility to furnish God, as morally responsible beings, a perfect righteousness and holiness of our own.

Now God's way was, not to "change" the old man, but to send it to the cross unto death, and release us from it. No one who remains in Adam's race will be saved! "Ye must be born again!" should sound the tocsin of alarm, yea, terror, to every one not yet in Christ. For God's method was to set forth a Second Man, a Last Adam,--Christ; (with whom indeed all God's eternal plans were connected), whom God would not only set forth to make expiation of guilt, but would make to become sin itself: thus to get at what we were, as well as what we had done. Our old man would thus be crucified with Christ, so that all the evil of the old man, and all his responsibilities also, would be completely annulled before God for all believers. For they must righteously be released from Adam, before they are created in Christ, another Adam! And this must be by death.

Thus God would say to believers, to those in Christ, "Your history now begins anew!" just as He said to Israel at the Passover: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." So Paul triumphantly writes, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." What a day was that when Christ, made to be sin itself, died to it, and was forever done with it! So that now He lives

unto God in light and joy eternal without measure!

Romans 6:11 : Therefore the eleventh verse becomes a necessity: God must say to us: Thus [because of the facts of the preceding verse] do ye also reckon, yourselves dead, indeed, to sin, but living to God, in. Christ Jesus! [139] Your relationship to sin is exactly the same as Christ's! Why? Because Christ is now your only Adam: you are in Him! His act of death unto sin involved all who are connected with Him.

[139] The A.V. translation, "through Christ Jesus," is unfortunate, as it does not, as does God's Word, emphasize the place of blessing in which we now are--in (Gr. en) Christ Jesus. It is not, in this verse, what shall be done through Christ for us; nor only what has been done through Him; but the place of federal blessing in which we now are, that is in view: we are lit Him who died to sin, and His death was ours.

Thus, in His death, all Christ's connection with sin was broken, ended, forever. Not only did He no longer bear sin; but He had died unto sin. When He was raised, it was as One who lived unto God, in an endless life with which sin had nothing to do,--resurrection-life, newness of life!

And, because believers were united with Him in His death, they too died to sin in and with Him. And their relationship to sin is now exactly His relationship: they are dead to it. They are also "alive unto God" in Christ Jesus. This is not a matter of "experience," but of fact. The truth about believers is, that they are dead to sin and alive to God, being in Christ! And they hear it said by God, and are asked to reckon it so! Their path of faith is plain: "Reckon [140] ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus."

[140] 2. This word "reckon" is a favorite word of Paul's in Romans, where he uses it 19 times, and only 16 times in all his other epistles. The Greek word (logidzomai) might be called both a court word and a counting-room word. Paul uses it as a court word as to God's action in accounting the believer righteous. In this sense it is used 11 times in Romans Four alone--where it should be studied: see Romans 4:3-6, Romans 4:8-11, Romans 4:22-24. Again, this word logidzomai is used to express man's belief and consequent attitude as illustrated in Romans 14:14 : "To him that reckoneth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Here, we repeat, an expression of belief, and of an attitude in view of that belief, is included in this word. This is its meaning in Romans 6:11 : "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin." The belief of the fact and the attitude in view of the belief, are both involved in the word "reckon" in this verse. (Consult note on Romans 4:3.) John Wesley truly counselled:

"Frames and feelings fluctuate:

These can ne'er thy saviour be!

Learn thyself in Christ to see:

Then, be feelings what they will, Jesus is thy Saviour still!"

Lay to heart the very words of the eleventh verse: Reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin, but living to God, in Christ Jesus. There are two words signifying death in this passage. The word for dead (nekros(G3498)) here in Romans 6:11, does not refer to the act or process of dying, but to the state or effect produced by death. The other word (thnesko) signifies the act, and occurs in

Romans 6:3-5, Romans 6:7-10; and is used when Christ's dying, or our dying with or in Him, is set forth. It is, therefore, with the already accomplished death unto sin of our great Substitute and Representative, Christ, that believers--those now in Christ--find themselves connected; and as we said above, the believer is to reckon himself dead (nekros) unto sin, but alive unto God,--because he is in Christ Jesus, who died unto sin once for all; but now, in resurrection life, is living unto God. You will realize anew the meanings of these two words for death, when you notice, in Romans 6:4 and Romans 6:9, that Christ, having died (thnesko) was raised "from among dead ones" (nekroi). Christ's body lay in Joseph's tomb. He was not now dying: that was over. He was dead. And so we are not told to die to sin: because we are in Christ who did die to it; and therefore we also are dead to it, in His death; and reckon it so. This should make the believer's task simplicity itself. The only difficulty lies in believing these astounding revelations! That we should be dead to sin, and now alive unto God as risen ones, sharing that newness of life (Romans 6:4) which our Lord began as "the First-born from among the dead," is at first too wonderful for us. We see in ourselves the old self-life, the flesh--and straightway we forget God's way of faith, and turn back to our "feelings." We say, Alas, if I could escape from this body, I would be free. But that is not at present God's plan for you and me. We wait for the redemption of our body. This body is yet unredeemed. Nevertheless, we are to reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God. Not dead to sin, notice, through prayers and strugglings, nor dead to sin in our feelings or consciousness; but in that death unto sin which Christ went through on the cross, and which we shared, and in that life which He now lives in glory!

Indeed, when we come down to Romans 6:12-13, we shall find Paul's definite directions to us to present ourselves unto God "as those that are alive from among dead ones." (All out of Christ are of course "dead ones," in God's sight.)

02.12. Chapter 6B

CHAPTER 6B This is really the heart of the struggle in the matter of our walk,--of our having our "fruit unto sanctification." It is hard to reckon and keep reckoning that we shared Christ's death to sin, and that we are alive unto God in Him. Yet, there is no establishing of our souls along any other line! To turn back from this sheer faith that we died with Christ and now are alive to God in Him, is to turn back--to what? to the weary, hopeless struggle Paul tells us in Chapter Seven he "once" went through to make the flesh obey God; or else back to groanings before God, begging Him to give us personal deliverance. And all the time God is saying, The word of the cross is the power of God. It is God's word as to what was there done that will establish your heart. God says you died with Christ. Reckon it so. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isaiah 7:9). [141]

[141] On our way to the Far East, out in the Indian Ocean, our ship entered on what has always seemed to me the blackest night I have ever known. It was the dark of the moon, and the clouds had hung heavy all day, and now the very pall of darkness! One of the ship's officers invited me to the bridge. Answering the captain's greeting, I said to him, "Do you know where you are?" "Yes," he said. "We have sailed by dead reckoning' all day, and now I will show you where we are." And he took me into the chart room. Bending over the chart, he said, "We are within several miles of where my finger points. We have a watch aloft, of course; but the sea is very deep here; there are no obstacles. We shall sail on through by dead reckoning.'" I laid the lesson to heart. It is difficult to accustom ourselves to "dead-reckoning,"--right through the darkness, in what seems so untrue to the facts of our consciousness. But, obeying God, we reckon ourselves dead to sin, and alive unto Him in Christ Jesus. And God will bring us through!

Now if the declaration in Romans 6:2 that we died to sin meant that sin is now absent from our flesh, there could be no exhortation in Romans 6:11 to "reckon" ourselves dead to sin. If the fact that we died to sin with Christ means that sin is gone from these bodies of ours, there would be no thought of "reckoning." The statement would simply have been, "Sin is absent,--no longer a present thing with you!" The word reckon is a word for faith--in the face of appearances. The same place for faith is left in the matter of our justification. Christ is "the propitiation for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). But in Romans 3:25 it is said, "God set Him forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood." So in Romans 6:2 it is said that we died to sin, while here in the eleventh verse we are told to "reckon ourselves dead to sin." The reckoning does not make the fact, but is commanded in view of the fact.

It has pleased God to call for our faith, both in connection with salvation and with deliverance. Therefore, if we would obey and please God, let us follow His method! Let us learn to reckon ourselves dead,--that Christ's death to sin was our death; and is the present relation of us who are in Christ, unto sin. The path of faith is always against appearances,--or, if you will, against human consciousness. God says certain things; and we, obeying the "law of faith," say the same things; like Abraham, not regarding our own body, which says the contrary thing. Facts are facts: and

these are what God reveals to us. Appearances, or "feelings," are a wholly different thing from facts! God says, "You died to sin: reckon yourself dead!"

Obedient souls do so, and enter the path of deliverance in experience. Doubting souls fall back on their "feelings," and turn back to prayers and struggles, avoiding faith.

Now note carefully again: the apostle does not tell us to reckon sin dead, but ourselves dead to it. We are now in Christ, and His history becomes ours. He died unto sin (Romans 6:10), and left the whole sphere of sin forever. It is not said even concerning Christ that He reckoned sin dead, but that being made sin, the thing itself. He died unto it, and now liveth unto God. It seems to us most unfortunate that some very excellent teachers fall into the manner of saying that "sin is to be reckoned dead" and that "our old man is counted dead and gone," and so forth. One of the clearest teachers of Pauline gospel that I know, though generally speaking accurately, in Paul's language, that we ourselves died to sin, and that the old man is to be regarded as having been crucified with Christ, yet sometimes lapses into such expressions as "we are to hold the old man as dead and gone."

Yet the old man, though having been "crucified with Christ," and having been "put off" by the believer, still exists; and believers are commanded to "put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit." We have spoken of this elsewhere. It is of course the intense desire of a saint truly exercised by the Spirit to be quit of the consciousness of the old man. This has been so in all ages. But the temptation is very strong in Christians, in times of great spiritual uplifting, to regard the old man as having disappeared. But it is the very essence of a holy walk according to Scripture, to receive God's testimony concerning the old man's having been crucified. To reckon ourselves dead to sin while conscious of sin in our members, is faith indeed; and is walking according to God's Word, instead of according to our feelings. "Those that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh and its lusts": because they know that the federal thing, the "old man," has been crucified (Galatians 5:24). It is in the power of the faith that God has dealt with all that we were, that we are able to deal with the manifestations of the self-life.

Nevertheless, this life in this present world, is not the Christian's place of resting. Christ will bring him rest at His second coming (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

It is to those who are described in the opening chapters of Romans,--guilty, under Divine judgment; and also in the flesh, under the old man; far from God, without hope,--to such the gospel message has come! These statements that we belong up there, in Christ, are issued by the High Court of Heaven, itself. God says that no matter how things may seem, we died with Christ, and share His newness of life; and we are to present ourselves unto God as those alive from the dead. [142] The glorious promise follows: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." We have not been brought to a Sinai, to a hard, demanding master, but are under the sweet favor in which Christ Himself is, being ourselves in Him, yea, the very righteousness of God in Him!

[142] A solemn question: To those who refuse or neglect to reckon themselves dead to sin as God commands, we press the question. How are you able to believe that Christ really bare the guilt of your sins and that you will not meet them at the judgment day? It is only God's Word that tells you

Christ bare your sins in His own body on the tree. And it is that same Word that tells you that you, as connected with Adam, died with Christ, that your old man was crucified, that since you are in Christ you shared His death unto sin, and are thus to reckon your present relation to sin in Christ--as one who is dead to it, and alive unto God. If we claim that this is too difficult, because we feel the consciousness of sin dwelling in us, then reflect that it is only by faith that we know that our sin's guilt was borne by Christ. And it is by faith alone that we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin. Let us beware, then, lest we be found making a secret truce with indwelling sin, while yet hoping to be saved from the guilt of the sins we have committed by Christ's shed blood. Again, we repeat, if we are in Christ, we are in a Christ who was made to be sin on the cross and died unto it. This, therefore, is our relationship to sin; and God expects all of us to assert by simple obedient faith this revealed fact,--to reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God, in Christ Jesus. A danger to be avoided: It is not as having died with Christ that we are justified from the guilt of sin; but it is after we have been justified by His blood, as ungodly, that we are told this second great truth,--that our old man was crucified with Christ--that we died with Him. I have seen professing Christians begin to be exercised in conscience regarding the guilt of sin, who, when they heard that those in Christ were dead to sin, immediately seized hold of this latter truth, and that with great relief. This false peace lasted, in some cases, a good while, and gave its possessors much complacence and sweetness of spirit, for they went on in secure Christian profession. But, not having been previously really convinced of their personal guilt before God, and consequently not having fled for refuge to the shed blood of Christ, they became finally the very chiefest targets of the devil, and were sometimes driven back into black despair itself. God had announced, long before, their common guilt with the worst wretches: "None righteous,--no, not one"; "All under sin." But these had somehow slipped in past that message; and had taken hold of this, that they were "dead unto sin." For a true believer, this is a blessed word of deliverance. But for one who is Christianly religious, who has not really rested, as a guilty ungodly one, in Christ's shed blood, this is a truth dangerous above all. And when Satan attacks such souls, what shall they do? They cannot plead "I am dead to sin," against the devil! Saints overcome him only by the blood of the Lamb. Only the blood of Christ will avail against Satan, or as a real ground of peace, in your own conscience (Hebrews 9:14). Christ made peace by the blood of His cross. If you have not yet learned to rest in that only, for eternal peace with God, and as the answer to all Satan's power, let all else alone until you have learned this: if it be at the cost, even, of confessing openly that you have never known true peace before!

12 Let not sin, therefore, be reigning-as-king in your mortal body, that ye should obey the desires of it [the body]. 13 Neither be presenting your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness. But on the contrary present yourselves to God as being alive from among the dead; and your members to God, as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not have lordship over you. For you are not under law, but, on the contrary, under grace.

Romans 6:12 : Do not, therefore, be allowing sin to reign-as-king in your mortal body, that ye should obey the desires of it (the body):--and the Greek is emphatic: "Be not at all allowing sin to reign!"

1. Notice first, our present body is mortal, that is, subject to physical death. We are waiting for the redemption of the body, at Christ's coming.

2. Sin is present in our members, and ready to reign-as-king, if permitted. That is, our bodies have not yet been redeemed from the possibility of sin’s being king, if we permit such kingship.

3. It is through the lusts or desires of the body that sin is ready to assume control. The body has many desires not in themselves evil. Paul, speaking of foods, says, "All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). It is when natural desires are yielded to in self-will or self-indulgence, that sin uses the desires of the body to assert sin’s power and establish its reign.

4. The believer is directed to reject this reigning of sin, which would involve our obeying the desires of the body.

5. Note the important word, "therefore." This looks back at the first part of Chapter Six, in which our death with Christ unto sin has been asserted, our relationship to sin being now the same as Christ’s--we have done with it in death and burial. Notice that these present verses of exhortation are built wholly upon the fact that we died with Christ: we reckon ourselves dead because we participated in Christ’s death. Therefore we dare refuse sin’s dominion. We owe sin nothing. We are dead to it; justified from it, and living in another sphere!

Romans 6:13 : Neither be presenting your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness. But on the contrary present yourselves to God as being alive from among the dead; and your members to God, as instruments of righteousness. The moment we come to exhortation, we have to do with the will; whereas believing is a matter of the heart: "With the heart man believeth." In learning that I am dead to sin, all I need to do is to listen to God’s marvelous unfolding of the fact that I was identified with Christ in His death, and in my heart believe it. My will has nothing to do with that. When God says, "Your old man was crucified with Christ," that is Divine testimony. It is a revealed fact. I hear it and from my heart believe it, because God is true. I reckon myself to be "dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus," because God has said that I was. But when it comes to the application of this stupendous fact, my will is addressed: "Let not sin therefore reign." Well, some one asks, if I am dead to it, how can it still reign? We answer, By your presenting your bodily members unto sin for sin to use, as "instruments of unrighteousness." Your tongue, for instance, which James calls "an unruly member,"--you have only to hand it over to sin, and it will talk angrily, lyingly, filthily.

Now, what is God’s way? Present yourselves unto God, as those in a Risen Christ, those "alive from among the dead." Of course, this will test your faith: you will not feel dead to sin. Your old man will seem anything but crucified. But the path of true faith is always one of obedience; and God has commanded you to reckon yourself dead unto sin and alive unto Him (as a risen one) in Christ Jesus. It is in this character, of being alive from the dead, that you are commanded to "present yourselves unto God."

Now two things about this word "present":

First, as to its meaning here: it does not in Chapter Six signify consecration: but the taking of an attitude in accordance with the facts. In Chapter Twelve, it is true, the same word is used to signify consecration to God (Romans 12:1). But here, "present" (A.V., "yield"), signifies an attitude to be taken in recognition of the facts: "Present yourselves as those alive from among the dead." We are not here looked at as giving ourselves to God, but as believingly assuming the aspect toward God

of those in Christ--those who died to sin in Christ's death, and are now alive in Christ unto God.

If the colonel of a certain regiment of soldiers,--say the One Hundredth, should give notice to all his regiment to repair to his headquarters at a stated hour for review, they would "present" themselves there as members of the One Hundredth Regiment. It would be as such and in that consciousness that they would come. So believers are to take the attitude toward God of risen ones because they are risen ones. They are in Christ, they are alive from among the dead This is the fundamental consciousness of a believer, as described in the Pauline Epistles: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is . . . For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1; Colossians 3:3). If you do not have risen life, you are not in Christ; for those in Christ are all alive from among the dead.

Second, the command to present ourselves thus unto God is in the aorist tense, which indicates a definite entering upon this attitude of presenting ourselves as risen ones to God. As to sin it is, "Do not be presenting (present tense of habitual and continued action) your members unto sin." The exhortation is believingly to take the attitude of a risen one in Christ, and thus present yourself once for all to God. Whether in prayer or thanksgiving, or praise or service, you are alive from the dead. It is not that you make yourself alive by presenting yourself unto God; but that since you are in Christ, you are alive to God in risen life, and you thus present yourself. And it becomes an habitual attitude,--you keep on presenting your members unto God as a habit of life. He will now use them as "instruments of righteousness"; as, before,--you well remember! your members were instruments of sin.

Then comes a glorious promise, and also a royal pronouncement:

Romans 6:14 : For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace.

Note the two "fors." The first "for" announces the Divine decree that sin's lordship over us shall be ended. The second reveals the happy condition of things in which such a release is possible: we are not under the legal principle,--which first demanded duty, and then offered blessing; but we are under the grace principle,--which confers blessing first, and, behold, fruits follow!

It is deeply significant here that even to us, new creatures in Christ, and recipients of the Holy Spirit, it is definitely announced to us that we are not under law,--else bondage and helplessness would still be our lot. Note, God does not say we are not under the Law,--the Mosaic Law: (Gentiles never were!) But, God says we are not under law,--under the legal principle. In the opening part of Chapter Seven, Paul will show the Jewish believers, (who had been under law), that only death could release them from their legal obligation; and that they had been made dead to the Law, through being identified with Christ in His death.

Only when we believe that our history in Adam, with all its responsibilities and demands to produce righteousness, ended at the cross, shall we find ourselves completely free to enjoy these words of heavenly comfort--UNDER GRACE! [143]

[143] Many honest souls cannot believe that obedience to God can be secured in any other way than by law. They say, "Set a man completely at liberty, and you cannot control him." But consider: 1. No human being has ever been really controlled by the principle of law. Israel, whom God placed under law, and that "with marvelous and glorious manifestations of His own presence and

authority," immediately renounced the obedience which they had promised. 2. Consider the relationship of a bride and a bridegroom: it is one of love, and delighted seeking of mutual benefit. It is not a relationship of enactments of law at all. The husband does not go about the house tacking up rules for the wife to "observe": and upon the observance of which the relationship shall continue! Such rules are for servants! Yet, you find the wife eagerly asking the husband what he would like for dinner, and how, in any other way, she can make him comfortable and pleased. And all this arises from the principle of love, not law! 3. Now God declares, and that repeatedly, that we have been removed from under the principle of law "in Christ's death." And now, being under grace, we bring forth "fruit to God," We serve in "newness of the spirit": which can only mean that, (like the wife thrilled with delight at the prospect of pleasing her husband), the very spirit of service, which is personal devotion, animates the believer. 4. But we really have no hope of any person's willingness or ability to see the power of this newness-of-spirit plan, this love-plan of God's, until such a one has seen and believed that he died with Christ,--that he was so bad that his entire "old man" was sent to the cross to be crucified; so that now he is married to Another, to Him that was raised from the dead, that he may bring forth fruit unto God. That God can be a Savior-God and not be a Law-giver, is beyond the reach of the human mind to conceive, and is to be received by faith alone. That in those not under law is brought about all--and much morel than the Law demands, is foolishness to all but faith!

Study carefully the contrast between Romans 6:14 and 1 Corinthians 9:21. Paul declares in the former passage, "We are not under law." The Greek here is, hupo nomon. This expression evidently indicates placing one under external enactments--under that principle. Now in 1 Corinthians 9:21, Paul, in describing his ministry to souls, says, "To those without law (anomois), I became as without law (anomos), not at all being without law Godward, but, on the contrary, en-lawed (ennomos) to Christ,"--as the members of a body to the head, controlled naturally by the one spirit and will.

There is every possible difference between the two,--between being "under law," and "en-lawed." Israel under law, placed under the Law at Sinai, with a veil between them and God, had to think of their behavior, in all its details, as affecting their relationship to God. The Law was "written on tables," by the hand of Divine authority. It was external to them: there was no union between them and Jehovah; nor was the Holy Spirit within them (although He was upon certain of them, for certain service, at certain times).

But, with us, all is different. We are in Christ, members of Christ. The Spirit of God's Son, also, has been sent forth into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" We are "no longer bondservants, but adult sons" (Galatians 4:4-7). Our relationship is settled. [144]

[144] Seven things believers enter into since the cross, and the coming of the Holy Spirit that were not true of believers before, may be stated here: 1. Sin has been put away on the cross. (It had been only "covered" year by year before that.) 2. Our old man has been crucified with Christ,--opening the way for complete deliverance from the power of sin, by the indwelling Spirit. 3. Christ has been glorified (Acts 1:3; John 7:39). 4. The Holy Spirit has been given, at Pentecost, dispensationally; and upon hearing and believing the gospel, individual believers are hereafter sealed by this "Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13); who witnesses in them, as "the Spirit of God's Son," their adult sonship. 5. God began at Pentecost to create "new creatures in Christ

Jesus" (2 Corinthians 5:17): "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). Christ, the First-born from among the dead, is the Head of this new creation. 6. Believers were, at Pentecost and thereafter, "baptized into one Body," the Body of Christ,--becoming members of Christ and members one of another, a marvelous thing and a new! 7. After Pentecost the "house of God" was not at Jerusalem, but "in the midst" with believers anywhere,--even of twos or threes gathered in Christ's Names for there He Himself is (Matthew 18:19; Matthew 18:20); and there the Holy Spirit is (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21; Ephesians 2:22).

"Walking by the Spirit," who indwells us, takes for us today the place that observing the things written in the Law had with Israel. "Being dead to the Law, and discharged therefrom," says Paul, "we bring forth fruit unto God"; "We serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter" (7:4, 6(Romans 7:4, Romans 7:6)). When Paul says (as above) in I Corinthians that he was "en-lawed to Christ," the Greek word ennomos signifies that blessed control by the Holy Spirit proceeding from Christ as the Head, which corresponds to the control of our natural bodies by our physical heads. This, of course, is the very opposite of being "under law" in the sense of Romans 6:14. To speak of a believer's being "under the Law to Christ," would be no more true, than to say that your hand has a set of external rules by which it obeys your head and seeks to render itself pleasing to you! No, your hand is en-lawed to your head, in that it is one with your head; your spirit dwells in every member of your body, and the head intelligently directs every member.

I am more and more inclined to the belief that in order to a consistent interpretation of the New Testament, we must scrupulously regard Israel only as having been placed under The Law, though doubtless all men have moral responsibility. See Paul regarding this below. [145]

[145] "We [Jewish Old Testament saints, contrasted with Gentile [believers] were kept under the Law . . . The Law was our tutor to lead us unto Christ--to be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we [Hebrew believers] are no longer under a tutor" (Galatians 3:23; Galatians 3:24). "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the Law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4). "If ye are led by the Spirit, YE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW"! (Galatians 5:18). "Christ abolished in His flesh the enmity [between Jew and Gentile], the Law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15). " . . . For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, (for The Law MADE NOTHING PERFECT), and a bringing in thereby of a BETTER hope, through which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:12; Hebrews 7:14; Hebrews 7:18; Hebrews 7:19).

Whether then it be the Jew under law, or the race of Adam under conscience, the freedom that is in Christ means deliverance from trying to "be good" to be accepted of God. Sinners are accepted freely on account of Christ's sacrifice, and placed in Him Risen. For such, therefore, as are in Christ, the walk is one of rejoicing faith,--appropriating Christ,--and nothing else. The Law of Moses has nothing to say to a believer! We know the legalists and the pretenders to human righteousness will cry out at this. But God says about the Law two things that cannot be escaped:

First, that the Gentiles were not under Moses' Law, that Law having never been given to them, but to Israel only.

And, second, that God, who gave to Israel the "foregoing commandment"--the Law--has "disannulled" the same, and brought in by another way, even simple faith in Christ, "a better hope,"

through which alone all believers, Jew or Gentile, "draw nigh to God" (Hebrews 7:18; Hebrews 7:19). Not behaving, but believing, is God’s way: behaving follows believing!

I know that true faith is a living thing, and has two feet, and will walk; but it will be "walking in works"--not working in works!--"Good works that God afore prepared." Walking by faith in "prepared" works; discovering in this walk of faith, the beautiful will of God day by day; treading this fresh and living path, is the believer’s great secret! The children of Abraham all follow their father in walking by faith! The believer is not under law, not under external enactments, not under conditions; but he has already an eternal standing in grace,--that is, in already secured Divine favor, by a sovereign act of God; which has not only reckoned to him Christ’s atoning work, but has placed him fully in the place of Christ’s present acceptance with God! The believer today is neither in the Old Testament with the Patriarchs, nor with Israel at Sinai; nor walking with the disciples during our Lord’s earthly life and kingdom ministry! The believer lives now after the cross, and in the full right and power of all that Christ did there. God gave Israel at Sinai a Law,--a holy, just and good Law, but they kept it not. The Lord Jesus when on earth said to His disciples, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"; but they all failed and fled. Why? Man was still under testing. The cross ended that; revealing, as it did, utter wickedness in man; and, also, complete weakness in the disciples,--in God’s saints!

Then what? Christ is raised from the dead through the glory of the Father: that we may walk in newness of life. Not only are our sins forever put away by His blood, but we ourselves find our history in Adam over, we being dead with Christ, crucified with Him.

Then the Holy Spirit is given at Pentecost as the power of this new, heavenly walk. Men were then, for the first time, transferred into the Risen Christ. They shared His risen life; for they had been identified with Him as an Adam, a federal man, in His death, at the cross; and were now placed by God in Christ Risen: yea, they were "created," now, in Him; and even made members of His Body,--which, of course, is an additional favor, based on their identification with Him, as an Adam, at the cross.

Now Paul could say, in triumph, "I through law died to law!" "I have not [desire not] the righteousness of law; yet I know nothing against myself." "Thanks be to God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ"; "For me to live is Christ"; "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And he could say this right in the teeth of sin, and of the Law which gave sin its power! (1 Corinthians 15:56; 1 Corinthians 15:57). Both sin and the Law had passed away for Paul, at the cross, as victors over him!

Yet, alas, most believers are not walking on the resurrection side of the cross, and by the "new creation rule" of Galatians 6:14; Galatians 6:15 : "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy!"

If you had been in heaven fifty years, and were then sent down by God to earth to live and witness for fifty years, then to be taken back to Heaven:--how would you live? Would you fall under daily doubt as to whether you should count yourself as belonging to Heaven? Would you not, rather, be a constant witness, both in walk and word, that you really belonged in and to Heaven?

Now God says He has "made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5; Ephesians 2:6). Are you going to try to add to that glorious heavenly calling the Law,--that was given to Israel down here on earth to make them know their sin? A Law under which God says you are NOT? May God forbid such folly in any of us! For we all tend toward it. May Colossians 1:5; Colossians 1:6 be fulfilled in us all: "The word of the truth of the good news which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also,--since the day ye heard and knew THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH"!

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? Be it not thought of! 16 Do ye not Know that to whom ye present yourselves as bondservants unto obedience, his bond-servants ye are whom ye obey,--whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were bondservants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that pattern of doctrine [salvation by the cross] unto which you were handed over [by God in the gospel]. 18 And being set free from sin, ye were made bondservants to righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms on account of the [moral]strengthlessness of your flesh: for just as ye did present your members as bondservants to uncleanness, and to lawlessness unto [further] lawlessness, so now present your members bondservants to righteousness unto sanctification. 20 For when ye were bondservants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness. 21 What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death! 22 But now, being made free from sin, and being put into bondservice to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life! 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:15 : What then? Are we to sin, because we are not under law but under grace? Far be the thought!

Here Paul warns against the abuse of that liberty which the believer has: He shows that those who commit sin come under the bondage of sin as master; even as the Lord said in John 8:34 : "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." The two questions in Romans 6:1-23 : "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1); and, Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? (Romans 6:15); are distinct, but not really diverse, questions. For each considers that same lawlessness, that same independence of the Creator, which is ever the creature’s great temptation. The fact that these two questions are written down here is the proof of this. Now Paul, with holy abhorrence, repudiates at once both these thoughts: The answer to the first question is: We are in the Risen Christ, and we shared His death; our relation to sin is broken forever; we walk "in newness of life."

Romans 6:16 : Do ye not know that to whom ye present yourselves as bondservants unto obedience, his bondservants ye are whom ye obey,--whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? And the answer to the second question is: God has set believers free, to serve Himself. The only other master is sin. And bondage to sin results from serving sin. But the Word of God says to the believer. Ye are not under law, but under grace.

Many people who have been convicted of the guilt of sin and have relied on the shed blood of Christ as putting away that guilt, have not yet, however, seen a state of sin as abject slavery. The strength of sin is just as real as its guilt. No creature can free himself from the bondage of sin. Sin

brought to fallen man the inability to do anything else but sin (Genesis 6:5). Although contrary to conscience, to reason, to desire for liberty; in spite of the terror inspired by the tragic examples about them,--yea, despite awful warnings and expectations of personal impending ruin, men continue in sin and its bondage. But there is another "obedience,"--that unto righteousness. And the case turns on the words, to whom ye present yourselves as servants. Although we cannot free ourselves, or change our own spiritual condition, the great fact of human responsibility is plainly written here. God, who would have all men to be saved, is always ready to have them present themselves to Him. And it is by means of the gospel that we do so,--whether to take our place as sinners, in the first instance; or, after we have believed, when we present ourselves to Him and our members as instruments of righteousness.

We all know this, be our theological training what it may. We all know we are doing wrong if we do not obey the gospel of God concerning His Son. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will convict the world in respect of sin . . . because they believe not on Me" (John 16:8; John 16:9).

Let us remember then, that the obedience unto righteousness of verse 16, is "the obedience of faith," always.

Romans 6:17-18 : But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were bondservants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that pattern of teaching [salvation by the cross] unto which ye were handed over [by God in the gospel]. And, being set free from sin, ye were made bondservants to righteousness.

Now, our becoming obedient from the heart to the Word of the cross involves a work of Divine wisdom and power far beyond that involved in the creation of the world! For how shall a creature remain, and behold his utter judgment on the cross? How shall he despair eternally of himself, and yet find hope? How shall he continue a free being and yet consent to be bound forever,--"with cords of a Man, with bands of love"? How shall he walk with confidence into the Court where very thoughts come into judgment? Moral and spiritual impossibilities are greater than physical impossibilities. It was impossible that where nothing at all existed the physical universe should leap into being--out of nothing but God’s word! Man, having sinned, ran from God. Men yet sin and flee from God. Now God’s holy nature. His infinite righteousness, bar the way back. But Christ comes, sent of the Father. And there is the blood of the cross. And from the North and South, and East and West, men, women,--and children, too, come, obeying from the heart this impossible news: of peace by the blood of His cross,--peace for those whose sins slew Christ! They come to be gladly bound with the unbreakable "bands of love, the cords of a Man"--Christ Jesus! (See Hosea 11:4.) And we see that mighty work of response to grace in such hearts abide and endure. We see God’s willing "bondservants" pouring out their lives in glad service, in all lands, to all limits!

Now, this becoming obedient from the heart to that pattern of doctrine of salvation by the blood of the cross, and the freedom from sin that goes with it, may be enjoyed even in this life, "without stint or limit." For "all things are possible to him that believeth."

Note that the Old Version misses the entire sense of this seventeenth verse in translating: "that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you," whereas the true rendering is, that form of doctrine unto which ye were handed over (or, delivered). For the verb is in the plural--ye were delivered over! This statement instructs us deeply in the Divine arrangements. The Israelites, for example,

were delivered over to Moses and the Law. It was not only that the Law was delivered by Moses to them; they were themselves delivered over to a legal dispensation--to a "mold of doctrine," which had the Ten Commandments as the foundation, and the "ten thousand things of the Law" spoken in accordance therewith. The Jews knew they were under the Law. They had been handed over to it, to its demands, and to its whole economy. Likewise, believers now are delivered over to a form or pattern of teaching. Summarily, this is the Gospel,--particularly, the work of Christ on the cross. Believers have been handed over by God to the mighty facts, not only that their guilt was put away on the cross, but that they, as connected with Adam, died with Christ; that their history in Adam is thus entirely ended before God; and that they now share the risen life of Christ, and are before God as risen ones (Romans 6:10; Romans 6:11). And all believers are comprehended in these great truths, whether they apprehend them or not! It is the first duty of every teacher of God's saints to open to them the glorious facts already true about them, and unto which great mold or form of doctrine, they have been "delivered over" by God. [146]

[146] The word "delivered" is the word constantly used, for instance, of our Lord's being handed over to His enemies (Matthew 20:18; Matthew 20:19; John 19:11; John 19:16); and of the disciples' being delivered over to councils (Matthew 10:17; Matthew 10:19). It is used of the Jews' being "delivered over to serve the host of heaven," in Acts 7:42 (most significant as to its force in Romans 6:17); and 1 Corinthians 11:23 contains the word in both its significances: Paul delivered over to the Corinthians directions concerning the Lord's supper; Christ was delivered over to His enemies. It is the same Greek word in both cases. This distinction is vital, because people conceive of the Gospel as something delivered to them to "live up to," or to lay hold of by their own wills, rather than as of a body of truth unto which they, as believers, have already been blessedly handed over! "Obedience of faith" can be nothing else than walking in the light of facts Divinely revealed.

Now in Romans 6:17 we see that these Roman believers had become obedient from the heart unto this mold of doctrine,--that of salvation by Christ on the cross. They had yet much to learn concerning their salvation, (and Paul was coming to "establish" them). But they had seen and accepted redemption by the blood of the despised Lamb of God: which involved everything,--of separation from a sinful world, as well as of safety from Divine judgment.

Romans 6:18 : Being set free from sin, ye were made bondservants to righteousness. It will help us to note carefully that in this verse is the first description of "experience" in this Sixth of Romans. Bit it is the result of that "obedience of faith" in which these believers had received the good news of their salvation by Christ crucified; for lo! they found themselves thereby "set free from sin,"--sin was no longer their master. [147]

[147] To make the words "free from sin" of Romans 6:18 denote what is called "eradication of the sin-principle," a sinlessness in the flesh, is a terrible perversion. Paul constantly preached and testified the contrary. Our bodies will not be redeemed (no matter how much we may be blessed or filled with the Holy Spirit) until "the redemption of the body" at Christ's second coming. Till that time, sin will be in the flesh, although those who "obey from the heart" in simple faith that word of the cross unto which they have been delivered, will find themselves in a state of blessed relief from sin's bondage. For Scripture does teach heart-cleansing, a "pure heart," as we have elsewhere shown.

Romans 6:19 : I am speaking in human terms on account of the [moral] strengthlessness of your flesh--Paul here explains why he is using this word "bondservants" throughout this passage. He declares the "infirmity of our flesh" to be such, that we must necessarily be in bondservice--either to sin or to God. Rome was full of slaves,--indeed, many of the Christians to whom he was writing were slaves, as seems to be indicated in Chapter Sixteen (which see). In the Roman Empire, freedom was a most difficult thing to secure (Acts 22:28). So Paul speaks in human terms, "after the manner of men," and he says that we are strengthless naturally, that we must be servants, either of God or of sin.

Man hates this fact. He boasts his independence, whether it be in the realm of intellect--"free thought!" in the matter of private wealth--"independent!" or in the manner of government--"free!" But it is all really a delusion. We indeed rejoice at the intellectual shackles thrown off at the Renaissance, and at liberty of thought and expression, wherever found among men. We also honor those who, like Boaz, are "mighty men of wealth,"--for God has permitted it to be so; and we rejoice at that relief from governmental tyranny which is yet found in some parts of this earth. But what we most earnestly assert is that not only Paul here, but our Lord Himself, and Scripture generally, sets forth that only those that know the truth and walk therein, are free. The Jews (in John 8:33 ff) horribly rebel against our Lord's saying: "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free! . . . Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin . . . If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." There is no freedom out of Christ. "Whose service is perfect freedom" is the beautiful expression of obedience to God.

We must see this necessity of service to God or service to sin for our own lives. When John wrote to believers, "We know that we are of God, and the whole earth lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19),--what a revelation was that!

These Roman Christians had formerly, like the pagans among whom they lived, presented their members bondservants to uncleanness [in every inward thought], and to lawlessness unto [further] lawlessness [in outward practice]. A blacker page of iniquitous abominations history does not write than that of the Roman Empire of Paul's day. And out of these fearful states of sin, God had de livered these believers! Compare 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Romans 6:20-21 : For when ye were bondservants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness. What fruit had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death! And in those former evil days, they had been, as Paul says, free in regard of righteousness. They were altogether given to iniquity, without any check whatever. [148] And those were fruitless days of which they were now ashamed. Free and fruitless! what a pair of words to describe the life of one who is going on daily toward eternity! Let each believer look back to those days when God was "not in all his thoughts." The pleasures and treasures of sin we sought--free in regard of righteousness, like the beasts which perish. What saved one can say of his unsaved life, I can treasure this or that as fruit? of any particular iniquity, I cherish good results from it? What fruit had you? Shame, only: things of which ye are now ashamed. Furthermore, we were going on steadily in that path unto the end, which was death, and that eternal. Remember the relentless but true description of sin's horrid birth and end, in James 1:14; James 1:15.

[148] "There seems to be a grave but cutting irony in this allusion to their old condition, when the only freedom they knew was in respect to righteousness! They were slaves of sin, and had nothing to do with righteousness!"

Now from all this, God has in sovereign grace rescued us, and should we not, do we not, gladly enter upon the path of loving service, yea, bondservice, to Him?

Romans 6:22 : But now, having been freed from the fearful Master, Sin, and brought into a sweet, willing bondservice to God, there was not only the daily delightful fruit, which those given over to sanctification were ever bearing; but there was the consciousness that every day brought nearer, the full realization of that blessed eternal life,--which they already possessed, but the full enjoyment of which was the end of the path of God's saints!

They were now and would be forever under the domination of that motive which is the strongest of all,--LOVE. Their service to God would be no longer one of seeking to fulfil certain enactments by Him (as under law) but a glad willingness, such as Christ expressed toward His Father in the prophetic words of Psalms 40:8 : "I delight to do Thy will, O my God!" There is no relief comparable to this surrender to the all-wise and all-loving will of God! Our Lord prescribes for those "laboring and heavy-laden," first, to come to Him, and He will give them rest (that is, salvation); and then, having come, to take His yoke upon them (the yoke of Him who is meek and lowly in heart) and they shall find rest to their souls (that is surrender)!

Romans 6:23 : For sin, which they had once served, was a terrible Paymaster' Sin's wages was death,--appointed so by God Himself. What a hideous employer--Sin! What a horrid service! What hellish wages! Yet sin is the chosen master of all but Christ's "little flock"! Of sin's flock, it is written: "Death shall be their shepherd."

Death, as we read in Romans 6:23, is the "wages of sin." Men. speak of it lightly. But it is indeed "the king of terrors" for the natural man (Job 18:14). A well-known writer says: "Man finds in Death an end to every hope, to every project, to all his thoughts and plans. The busy scene in which his whole life has been, knows him no more. His nature has given way, powerless to resist this master (death) to which it belongs, and who now asserts his dreadful rights. But this is far from being all. Man indeed, as man alive in this world, sinks down into nothing. But why? Sin has come in; with sin, conscience; with sin, Satan's power; still more with sin, God's judgment. Death is the expression and witness of all this. It is the wages of sin, terror to the conscience, Satan's power over us, for he has the power of death. Can God help here? Alas, it is His own judgment on sin. Death seems but as the proof that sin does not pass unnoticed, and is the terror and plague of the conscience, as witness of God's judgment, the officer of justice to the criminal, and the proof of his guilt in the presence of coming judgment. How can it but be terrible? It is the seal upon the fall and ruin and condemnation of the first Adam. And he has nothing but this old nature.

"But Christ has come in. He has come into death--O wondrous truth, the Prince of life! What is death now for the believer? Death is ours,' says the apostle, as all things are. By the blessed Lord's entering into it for me, death,--and judgment too, is become my salvation. The sin, of which it was the wages, has been put away by death itself. The judgment has been borne for me there." But the grace-bestowal (charisma) of God--here is the same dear word as in Romans 5:15; Romans 5:16. It is the expression which describes what is behind God's gift,--his grace (Greek,

charis). And what is, here, God’s grace-bestowal? Eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord! What a bestowment of grace is this! Sins borne, pardoned, gone,--and more! A welcome in Heaven,--and more! Life granted to a lost soul dead in sins,--and more! Eternal life,--to last as long as God its Giver. But more,--life in Christ Jesus our Lord Himself! Sharing His life, who is the Well-Beloved of the Father, sharing "the love wherewith God hath loved Christ." Life, eternal life, in Christ Jesus,--God’s grace-gift! The wages of sin as over against the free gift of God!

Mark this, that God will keep the contrast constantly before us, even at the end of this chapter, between what is earned and what is given. In verses 21 and 22, "the end" of two paths is seen: one, death; the other, eternal life. But it must finally be said here, at the chapter’s close, that while death is earned wages, eternal life is a FREE GIFT! And also note the blessed Sphere of this Eternal life: In Christ Jesus our Lord. Every advance in the glorious truth of salvation is marked by Christ’s own Name!--from His being "set forth" by God as "Christ Jesus,--a propitiation through faith in His blood (Romans 3:24-25); raised as Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:24); our exulting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11); and grace reigning through righteousness and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:21); reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11); and now the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). And victory will come, in Romans 7:25 : "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And, at last, no separation "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"! (Romans 8:39). A FEW WORDS ABOUT GRACE

I The Nature of Grace

1. Grace is God acting freely, according to His own nature as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfil; and acting of course, righteously--in view of the cross.

2. Grace, therefore, is uncaused in the recipient: its cause lies wholly in the GIVER, in GOD.

3. Grace, also is sovereign. Not having debts to pay, or fulfilled conditions on man’s part to wait for, it can act toward whom, and how, it pleases. It can, and does, often, place the worst deservers in the highest favors.

4. Grace cannot act where there is either desert or ability: Grace does not help--it is absolute, it does all.

5. There being no cause in the creature why Grace should be shown, the creature must be brought off from trying to give cause to God for His Grace.

6. The discovery by the creature that he is truly the object of Divine grace, works the utmost humility: for the receiver of grace is brought to know his own absolute unworthiness, and his complete inability to attain worthiness: yet he finds himself blessed,--on another principle, outside of himself!

7. Therefore, flesh has no place in the plan of Grace. This is the great reason why Grace is hated by the proud natural mind of man. But for this very reason, the true believer rejoices! For he knows that "in him, that is, in his flesh, is no good thing"; and yet he finds God glad to bless him, just as he is!

II The Place of Man under Grace 1. He has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing!

2. He is not "on probation."

3. As to his life past, it does not exist before God: he died at the Cross, and Christ is his life.

4. Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies beforehand: His action was independent of them, not dependent upon them.

5. The failure of devotion does not cause the withdrawal of bestowed grace (as it would under law). For example: the man in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; and also those in 1 Corinthians 11:30-32, who did not "judge" themselves, and so were "judged by the Lord,--that they might not be condemned with the world"!

III The Proper Attitude of Man under Grace 1. To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.

2. To refuse to make "resolutions" and "vows"; for that is to trust in the flesh.

3. To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.

4. To testify of God’s goodness, at all times.

5. To be certain of God’s future favor; yet to be ever more tender in conscience toward Him.

6. To rely on God’s chastening hand as a mark of His kindness.

7. A man under grace, if like Paul, has no burdens regarding himself; but many about others.

IV Things Which Gracious Souls Discover 1. To "hope to be better" is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.

2. To be disappointed with yourself, is to have believed in yourself.

3. To be discouraged is unbelief,--as to God’s purpose and plan of blessing for you.

4. To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.

5. The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion.

6. Real devotion to God arises, not from man’s will to show it; but from the discovery that blessing has been received from God while we were yet unworthy and undevoted.

7. To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God’s order, and preach law, not grace. The Law made man’s blessing depend on devotion; Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing: our devotion may follow, but does not always do so,--in proper measure.

Baptism in Romans not Baptism by the Spirit As to the Holy Spirit’s "baptizing us all into one Body" (1 Corinthians 12:13): we are said indeed to be baptized by Him into the Body,--but only after we died with Christ made sin:--a theological distinction, no doubt, but a most necessary one.

Christ as Head of the Body, the Church, comes after Christ as the Second Man, the Last Adam, It would not be accurate, or indeed, possible, to speak of Christ as the Head of the Body bringing about our death with Him, any more than to say that Christ as the Head of the Body had borne our sins. The Body, the Church, came after Christ, as the Last Adam, had put away our sin, and by His

"one act" constituted us righteous; and after we had died with Christ made sin. In a man's history before God, he is not made a member of Christ's Body before he has died with Christ made sin! Let us trace this:

1. An ungodly man, as such, believes on God about Christ, and is justified,--declared righteous.

2.His justification, however, involved the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was "delivered up for his trespasses, but was raised for his justifying" (Romans 4:25).

3. His justification, therefore, becomes what is called in Romans 5:18 "justification of life."

4. Now, it is not as a member of Christ's mystical Body that we can assert justification of him. Doubtless he is made member of Christ Risen, but,

5. When he is told to reckon himself dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus, it is not as a member of Christ's Body that he is thus to reckon, but as one who was in Adam, on whose behalf Christ was made to be sin and died unto sin.

6. Doubtless by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body, and are made to drink of the one Spirit; but this truth of 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 is not fundamental truth, but positional truth, A man cannot say, Because I am a member of Christ's Body, therefore I am made dead to sin, But he can say, I was in Adam the First, guilty, a man "in the flesh," in "the old man." But by God's grace I am now in Christ, the Last Adam. This is fundamental truth, And it is fundamental truth that Romans contemplates. As we state elsewhere, there will be saved Israelites, and others, besides Church saints, who will partake of the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection; but who will not be of the Body of Christ.

7. Therefore, in carrying out the believer's walk as directed in Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, we must go back of and beyond our consciousness of the Body of Christ, to Christ as an Adam, a federal, representative Man. Our standing is in Christ as the Last Adam; our membership: in that blessed corporate company called the Body of Christ, Christ being the Head. In other words, we had no right to be put into Christ the Head of the Body until we had died with Christ made sin, died to our position in the other Adam. You will notice when Paul describes his personal manner of life, he says "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." This is not Body truth, but federal truth, which is fundamental, Body truth comes after federal truth, Federal truth has to do with our relationship to God. We are either in Adam or in Christ, before God.

Only in Romans 12:4; Romans 12:5 is the Body of Christ referred to; for Romans is fundamental, and deals with our relation to God,--as in Adam or in Christ; and therefore does not deal with the corporate character of the Church as such.

02.13. Chapter 7A

CHAPTER 7A

Release from the Legal Principle Illustrated: Jewish Believers, to whom the Law of Moses was given. Dead to that Law by Identification in Death with Christ Made Sin; now joined to the Risen Christ: thus Bearing Fruit to God and Rendering Glad Service. Romans 7:1-6.

Paul's Vain Struggle to be Holy by the Law,--Before he knew of Indwelling Sin and his Helplessness against it; and that he had Died with Christ to Sin, and to the Law, which gave Sin power. Romans 7:7-24.

Deliverance seen through Christ; and the Flesh declared Hopeless. Romans 7:25.

1 Or are ye ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men acquainted with law), that the law rules over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. 3 So then, if while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but, if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the Law, through the body of Christ, that ye should be joined to Another,--to Him who was raised from among the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were through the Law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we have been annulled from the Law, having died to that wherein we were held: so that we serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter.

HERE WE HAVE a chapter of two sections,--(1) Romans 7:1-6; and (2) Romans 7:7-25 : both of which we are prone to misunderstand and misapply, unless we exercise much prayerful care. In the first section, God shows how those that were placed by Him under law were released from that relation by sharing in the death of Christ; so that, joined to a Risen Christ, they bear fruit; and, released from law, they give glad and willing service. In the second section, we have Paul describing his struggle under the Law, as a converted Israelite, before he knew the great facts of this first part,--that in Christ he was dead to the Law: "I was alive apart from law once." It is the struggle of one that is born again, and "delights in the Law of God," seeking to compel the flesh to obey God's Law. The end, of course, is a cry of utter despair (for the Law was a "ministration of death"); and a new view of Christ, as the One through whom is found deliverance from sin's power and from the Law that gave it that power! [149]

[149] "I," "me," "myself" are used 47 times in the 19 verses of Romans 7:1-25,--capital "I" 28 times! In Romans 8:1-39, "me" occurs once; and that, "Christ made me free"; "I" twice, and that, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward"; and, "I am persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God." In Chapter Eight "we," "us," "our," and like words occur 41 times! For in Romans 8:1-39 we are conscious at last of the blessed indwelling Spirit: and so, of all other saints. While the legal

struggle is carried on in a terrible loneliness. The Gospel-Announcement of Romans 7:1-25 : Dead to and Discharged from Law

Romans 7:1 : Or--the opening word of Romans 7:1 connects Romans 7:1-6 directly with Romans 6:14, "Ye are not under law but under grace." (For the last part of Romans 6:1-23 is parenthetical,--a warning against abuse of our "not under law" position.) Therefore connect these words "Ye are not under law" with the "Or" of Romans 7:1. Conybeare aptly paraphrases: "You must acknowledge what I say, (that we are not under law) or be ignorant," etc. The King James, by its failure to translate the chapter's opening word "Or," to which God gives the emphatic position in this argument, obscures the whole meaning of the passage and context. Unless we connect Romans 7:1 with Romans 6:14, (as the proper translation "or" does), we cannot properly understand the passage. Are ye ignorant, brethren--Some one remarks that when Paul uses this expression concerning the saints, it often turns out that they are ignorant! (Compare Romans 6:3; Romans 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, etc.)

(For I speak to men acquainted with law)--In this first verse it is law in general, [150] because this whole verse is connected with Romans 6:14 : "Ye are are not under law," (not under that principle) referring, of course, to all believers.

[150] When "law" as a principle is spoken of, we have used the small "l"; when the Mosaic Law is evidently meant, a capital "L"; and when the use of the latter is emphatic, we have several times written it "The Law." That the law rules over a man as long as he liveth--Paul here declares that the claims of law endure throughout a man's life,--death being the only deliverance. The Roman world well knew the reach and authority of human law--of which Paul is here speaking.

Romans 7:2-3 : For the woman that hath a husband--Here Paul uses the fundamental law of domestic relationship to illustrate the fact that only death breaks a legal bond. This is the evident, simple meaning in this passage. This husband-and-wife illustration is marvelously chosen. It is of world-wide application--instantly understood everywhere; and it sets forth perfectly what the apostle desired--that is, to describe the dissolution of a relationship by death, thus making possible a new relationship.

Now the simple, and to me obvious path of interpretation is to proceed immediately to the fourth verse, spending no more time on Romans 7:2-3 than will suffice to appreciate their force as an illustration of the fact announced in verse 1, that only death breaks a legal claim. We should proceed, therefore, according to the principle illustrated in Romans 7:2-3, to the application of the principle in the case of those believers who had been openly placed by God under a law: that is, Jewish believers. For in the example of the woman and her husband, there seems no real intention on Paul's part, other than to set forth the fact that death ends a relationship, and sets one free to enter upon a new relationship; as we have, to Christ Risen.

If Adam was our federal head, Christ now is so. And this was made possible by our death with Christ made sin. The obligation that governed our former condition as in Adam, no longer calls for righteousness or holiness of our own in the flesh: we have died as to that place in Adam; and are in the Second Man, the last Adam, Christ,--who is Himself our righteousness and sanctification.

If we undertake to apply Romans 7:4-6 directly to any but Jewish believers, we encounter this difficulty: that it is distinctly said, and that repeatedly, that the Jews, being under the Law, were in

contrast to the Gentiles, who were "without law." These verses then must first be applied to those who were under the Law, knew themselves to be under it, and were exercised by its commands. Otherwise Romans 7:5 becomes unintelligible: When we [Jewish believers] were in the flesh [they were now in Christ, and so in the Spirit] the arousings of sins which were through the Law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

These words would not be written by Paul concerning Gentiles, but they express exactly the state of Jewish believers as exemplified in the latter part of our chapter. And now for the gospel, which lies in verses four and six:

Romans 7:4 : Wherefore my brethren, ye also were made dead to the Law through the body of Christ. As touching Gentile believers, this latter fact was to be reckoned on for the disannulling (Romans 6:6) of "the body of sin," relieving them of sin's bondage. But for the Jewish believer, there was the additional fact that he was under the Law, which bound his conscience, and gave sin very peculiar power over him. For he must obey the Law, for it had been given his nation by Jehovah, and they had covenanted at Sinai to let their obedience be the condition of their relationship to Him. To the Jewish believer, then, the announcement is now directly made that he was made dead to the Law through the body of Christ, in order to be to Another, to the risen Christ, thus to bring forth fruit to God; and that he has been [Romans 7:6] discharged from the Law [literally, annulled with respect to the Law], thus bringing him out into service in newness of spirit. [151] This was the startling announcement made to those who, for 1500 years had known nothing but the Law: they had died to it all; the Law knew them no more.

[151] The expressions dead to the Law (vs. 4) and discharged from the Law (vs. 6) cannot possibly be referred directly to Gentiles, who had never been alive to the Law--it never having been given to them; and who could not be discharged therefrom, because they were not under it.

Now what Paul affirms in Romans 6:14 covers, of course, both the Gentile and Jewish believer: "Ye are NOT UNDER LAW": that is, not under that principle in any sense. The Gentiles had moral obligations as responsible children of Adam, though not under the Law, indeed, "without law." There was the work of the Law in their hearts (as we saw in Romans 2:1-29), with which their consciences bore witness. To Gentiles, therefore, the announcement that in Christ they are not at all under the principle of law, sets them free to delight in Christ, and to surrender to the operations of the Holy Spirit within them. The additional announcement is made to those under the Mosaic Law that they have the same liberty, having died to that wherein they were held. The great lesson which each of us must lay to his own heart, is, that those in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are not under law as a principle, but under grace,--full, accomplished Divine favor--that favor shown by God to Christ! And the life of the believer now is (1) in faith, not effort: as Paul speaks in Galatians 2:20 : "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God"; (2) in the power of the indwelling Spirit; for walking by the Spirit has taken the place of walking by external commandments; and (3) exercising ourselves to have a good conscience toward God and men always: particularly, not wrongly using our freedom.

While the form of the language in Romans 7:1-6 makes it evident that the Mosaic Law was before Paul's mind, at the same time it is of profit to us because: (1) We all have a moral responsibility to produce a righteousness and holiness before God and we cannot; (2) Both Jew and Gentile are included in the tremendous statement of Romans 6:6, "our old man was crucified."

Through the body of Christ--This is a peculiar manner of speech. God speaks not here of propitiation or justification, which are through the blood of Christ (Romans 3:25; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7). But God speaks here of that identification with Christ in which; in God's view, all believers were brought to the end of their history at the cross, so that their former relationships (to sin, law, the world), are ended. It is to be noted that both concerning Christ's death for us, and our death with Christ, Christ's own body is mentioned. As to the first, we remember 1 Peter 2:24 : "Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree." And as to the second, the present verse: made dead . . . through the body of Christ. [152]

[152] To any one who has examined their writings, there is the inescapable conclusion that the Reformed theologians--truly godly men--have kept the vision of believers confined generally to the propitiatory work of Christ, not seeing--at least, not setting forth clearly, the ending of our history in identification with Christ,--thus freeing us from sin, law, and the old creation, and setting us wholly on resurrection ground, in Christ Jesus. God's identifying us with Christ in His death was just as sovereign an act as was God's transferring our sins to Christ. It did not proceed from His incarnation: for He was "holy," and "separated from sinners." There was absolutely no union with sinful humanity except at the cross! There was no "union with humanity" with Christ in His earthly life! We would be horrified at the teaching that Christ was bearing our sins from His incarnation! But, if these were "laid on Him" at the cross, so also was "our old man" then, at the cross, and not before, so identified with Him as to be crucified with Him. It was God's sovereign, inscrutable act, in both matters: done at the cross, not before! That ye should be joined to Another, to Him who was raised from among the dead. The great lesson to learn in this whole passage lies in what we might call the two Christs: first, there is "the body of Christ," of Christ made sin, and our old man crucified with Him: our history in Adam thus ended before God; and, second, Christ raised from the dead. It is this latter Christ to whom we are now vitally united, to Him only. That we might bring forth fruit unto God. In this Risen Christ, as we saw in Romans 6:22 : "Ye have your fruit unto sanctification"; or Php 1:11; "being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are through Jesus Christ," brought about--made to bud, blossom, grow and ripen, through the indwelling Spirit: or "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22)--what a cluster of grapes that is: fruit unto God, indeed!

Now--however the principle may apply to all believers--Paul evidently, in Romans 7:4-6, has the Jew under the Law definitely before him; for he says "Ye were made dead to the Law." It is implicitly asserted here that those under law could not bring forth fruit to God. Because, in order to bring forth such fruit, they had to be made dead to the Law. This cannot be sufficiently emphasized, for all about us we find those who are earnestly seeking to bear fruit to God, while "entangled with the yoke of bondage," not knowing themselves dead to the legal principle. But before our very eyes those publicly placed under law, yea the Mosaic Law directly from God, did not bring forth fruit in that condition. Else would God have had them die wholly out of that position with Christ on the cross?

No, it is only those who see themselves to have died with Christ and to be now joined to a Risen Christ in glory, that fully bring forth fruit to God.

It Is a glorious day when a believer sees himself only in a Risen Christ--dead, buried and risen; and can say with another, "I am not in the flesh, not in the place of a child of Adam at all, but

delivered out of it by redemption. The whole scene of a living man, this world in which the life of Adam develops itself, and of which the Law is the moral rule, I do not belong to, before God, more than a man who died ten years ago out of it."

Romans 7:5 : For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were through the Law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. Now in this one verse is seen the whole of the great struggle detailed by the apostle in the latter part of this chapter: When we were in the flesh--Note, it does not say, in the body, for we are all that! Being in the body has no moral significance, but the words are, in the flesh--the condition of those not saved, as we see from Romans 8:8-9 : "For ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." This does describe a moral state or condition,--absence of life, absence of the Holy Spirit, and control by the fallen nature. The passions of sins which were through the Law--To those in the flesh controlled by the evil nature through a body dead to God, legal restraint was intolerable. As we shall see in the last part of the chapter, sin was there, but quiescent, until the Law came, demanding obedience and holiness. Thus came the arousings [or passions] of sins--sins of all sorts. It is evident that the Jew who had the Law, is distinctly and especially before the apostle's mind here. For these words could not be written of "Gentiles who have not the Law" (Romans 2:14-15); although these very two verses assert that there was a "work" written in the hearts of the Gentiles, which is called "the work of the Law," unto which their consciences bear fellow-witness. (See carefully, comment on Romans 2:14.) Nevertheless, it cannot be said that Romans 7:5 describes accurately any but an Israelite to whom the Law was given, and in whom the commandments of that Law directly aroused the opposition of sin in the flesh.

Wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death--Even in the last part of the chapter, in Paul's great struggle--after he is saved, we find a law of sin in his members, against which he is powerless, and which would have engulfed him in everlasting hopelessness, except for the revelation of deliverance in Christ. Here, in Romans 7:5, where an unsaved man, a man in the flesh, is in view, fruit unto death is brought forth by those "arousings of sins" which came through the Law

Romans 7:6 : But now we have been annulled from the Law, having died to that wherein we were held: so that we serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter. This word which we have rendered annulled, is Paul's old word katargeo(G2673),--"put out of business." In Chapter Six we read that "our old man was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled"--put out of business. That blessed message could be given to all believers, Jew or Gentile. For it is a federal one, as the words "our old man" reveal. But the Jew had not only the body of sin: he had distinctly given to him the Mosaic Law. Therefore it is written, in Romans 7:6, that he has been annulled, put out of business, from that Law, having died [153] to it.

[153] Note that the King James Version wrongly renders that the Law died. But the verb number is plural, as the Revised Version and all the best mss. read. It was believers who died, not the Law! The Law which once "held" him now had nothing to do with him, for he had been put out of the Law's domain, out of the place of business in which the Law operated, that is, on natural children of Adam, on men in the flesh. What a glorious deliverance!

Now let us who are Gentile believers most carefully note two things: (1) that the Jewish believer, who was put publicly, and under sanctions of death, under the Law, by God at Sinai, has been

declared by that same God to have died to that wherein he was held, so that the Law has no more business with him. (2) That therefore, however deeply taught by tradition that we Gentile believers are under law, we must throw that tradition all away. For if the Jew, who was Divinely placed under the Law, has been made dead to it and discharged therefrom, put out of the sphere and domain of the Law, then what presumption for a Gentile to claim that he is under that Law before God! So that we serve!--Wonderful paradoxes of the gospel! In verse 4, having died, they bear fruit; and here, having been discharged, they serve. What an unspeakable satisfaction filled the apostle's heart, at finding himself serving God, in all the capacities of his love-filled being, the more he felt his complete freedom from that Law that once "held" him. In the old days, it was, "I verily thought I ought to do"; now it is, "I delight to do." As we say elsewhere, the instructed believer finds himself doing the will of God as it is in heaven, that is, in the very spirit of service, and not by forms, or ordinances--which are earthly "rudiments." Oldness of letter it once was--minute particulars of legal observances according to the tradition of the fathers; newness of spirit it had become when the apostle learned that he had died out to the whole legal sphere, to the Adam-position--man in the flesh, [154] unto whom the Law had been given at Sinai.

[154] But inasmuch as the endeavor is widely made to make the Law "the first husband," it seems well to urge the fact that this would be to depart from the illustration entirely. For the fact to be illustrated is, that law rules humanity till death. The illustration is this universal one of a woman bound by law to a husband; not to the Law as a husband! Death now intervenes, and "the law of the husband" binds her no more. The Law was seen only as governing a relationship,--between husband and wife. A common conception would make the Law the husband! But the husband and wife are both ruled over by law: and if we make the Law the husband, what law would be over that Law? Furthermore, it is said, "if the husband die," This word excludes all idea of the Law being a husband: for God's Law does not die, God would not speak thus. And again, if we are to carry out this illustration, we must find one with whom the person to be set free (here called "the woman") is lawfully connected, and that connection broken by death. Now who, or what, is this? Does not the whole passage--from Romans 5:12 onward tell us plainly? With whom were we first connected except Adam the first? All our standing and our responsibilities were in him. Our relation to him was such as nothing but death could break! We were responsible to furnish God a perfect righteousness and holiness in the flesh. No matter if we could not: we ought to do so. Our inability does not at all diminish our responsibility. Now, what did God do? "Our old man was crucified." We shared Christ's death as made sin for us. We died to our whole position in Adam, and to our obligations connected with him. However, inasmuch as the Mosaic Law was a complete economy under which God placed His chosen nation, we do not wonder that many who carry the illustration to its limits have regarded the Law as the "first husband." We do not desire to quarrel with these expositors: only let them confine the Mosaic economy where God confined it--to Israel. Let Israel's deliverance therefrom be to the Gentile believer a glorious illustration of his own blessed position--not under law as a principle, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

Truly Paul could say to his Jewish fellow-believers, God has here, concerning the Law, conferred on us a heavenly degree of D.D.: "Dead, Discharged." (Beware that you do not turn into an LL.D. and go about "desiring to be teachers of the Law, understanding neither what you say, nor whereof you confidently affirm!" (1 Timothy 1:7)

Now unto us Gentile believers, what a breeze from the delectable mountains this passage is! For our poor consciences are always--sad to say--ready to hear of some new "duty" or "path of surrender," or "dying out" to this or that: not satisfied with God's plain announcement that we died to sin, are not under law: that even those whom He placed under The Law had died to it, and been discharged therefrom! And that we are to present ourselves to Him as "alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God--whose service is perfect freedom.' " [155]

[155] Note carefully that It is to God that we are to present ourselves, and that as in Christ (Romans 6:11; Romans 6:13), We are not told to present ourselves to Christ, for we are already vitally in Him.

Paul's Law-struggle--before he knew the Gospel-revelation, that he had died to the Law

7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Banish the thought! On the contrary, I had not become conscious of sin, except through law: for I had not perceived evil-desire, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not have evil-desire. 8 But sin, seizing occasion through the Commandment, wrought out in me all manner of evil-desire. For apart from law sin is dead. 9 And I was alive apart from law once. But upon the coming of the Commandment [to my conscience] sin sprang into life, and I died. 10 And the Commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death: 11 for sin, seizing occasion, through the Commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me. 12 So that the Law indeed is holy, and the Commandment holy, and righteous, and good. 13 Did then that which is good become death unto me? Banish the thought! But sin, that it might appear as sin, by working out death to me through that which is good;--that through the Commandment sin might become exceeding sinful! 14 For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I am working out, I do not own: for not what I am wishing this am I doing: but what I am hating--this I am practicing. 16 But if what I am not wishing, I am practicing, I am consenting unto the Law that it is right. 17 So, therefore, no longer is it I that am working it out, but sin which is dwelling in me. 18 For I know that there does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh, a good thing: for the wishing is present with me, but the working out that which is right,is not. 19 For not what I am wishing am I practicing--that is, the good; but on the contrary, what I am not wishing--that is, the evil, this I am doing! 20 But if what I am not wishing, this I am practicing, no longer is it I that am working it out, but on the contrary, sin which dwelleth in me. 21 I find then the law, that to me, desiring to be practicing the right, the evil is present. 22 For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: 23 but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? 25 I thank God, [for deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I myself with the mind, indeed, serve God's Law; but with the flesh sin's law.

Before beginning the study of this great struggle of Paul's, let us get it settled firmly in our minds that Paul is here exercised not at all about pardon, but about deliverance: "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The whole question is concerning indwelling sin, as a power; and not committed sins, as a danger.

Mark also that while (as we shall show) the indwelling Holy Spirit is the Christian's sole power against the flesh, He is not known in this struggle; but it is Paul himself against the flesh--with the Law prescribing a holy walk, but furnishing no power whatever for it.

Even the fact of deliverance through Christ from the Law (described in the fourth and sixth verses), is most evidently not known during this conflict with the flesh, (This fact itself marks the conflict as one that preceded the revelation to the apostle of his being dead to the Law, not under law: for such knowledge would have made the struggle impossible.)

Therefore this conflict of Paul's, instead of being an example to you, is a warning to you to keep out of it by means of God's plain words that you are not under law but under grace. But now you will adopt one of two courses: either you will read of and avoid the great struggle Paul had, under law, to make the flesh obedient by law,--with its consequent discovery of no good in him, and no strength; with his despairing cry, "Who shall deliver me?" and the blessed discovery of deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ and by the indwelling Spirit: and this is, of course, the true way,--for you are not under law. It is the God-honoring path, for it is the way of faith. It is the wisest, because in it you profit by the struggle and testimony of another, written out for your benefit. The second course, (and alas, the one followed by most in their distress and longing after a holy life), is to go through practically the same struggle as Paul had,--until you discover for yourself experimentally what he found. In this latter course you will be like Bunyan's pilgrim who fell into the Slough of Despond. You will enjoy reading the quotations below from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. We suppose you have this priceless book: but quote, to save the trouble of reference.

If we (as Gentiles who were not put under the Law by God), were able to believe, simply to believe, I say, that we died federally with Christ, we should enter into the blessed state of deliverance belonging to a risen one, who knows both that he died and that he is in Christ--not under law: and the "struggle" would be avoided. Rather, there would be a walk of faith, both in Christ's work, and the Holy Spirit's indwelling power. [156]

[156] Wherefore Christian was left to stumble in the Slough of Despond alone; but still he endeavored to struggle to that side of the slough that was furthest from his own house, and next to the Wicketgate; the which he did, but could not get out because of the burden that was upon his back. But I beheld, in my dream, that a man came to him, whose name was Help, and asked him. What he did there? Sir, said Christian, I was bid to go this way by a man, called Evangelist, who directed me also to yonder gate, that I might escape the wrath to come: and as I was going thither I fell in here. HELP; But why did you not look for the steps? [The great and precious promises of God,] CHRISTIAN: Fear followed me so hard, that I fled the next way and fell in. Then said Help, Give me thy hand; so he gave him his hand, and he drew him out, and set him upon sound ground, and bid him go on his way. Then I stepped to him that plucked him out and said: Sir, wherefore, since over this place is the way from the City of Destruction to yonder gate, is it that this plat is not mended, that poor travelers might go thither with more security? and he said unto me, This miry slough is such a place as cannot be mended: it is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run, and therefore it was called the Slough of Despond: for still as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there arise in his soul many fears and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place. And this is the reason of the badness of this ground, It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so bad; his labourers also have, by the directions of his Majesty's surveyors, been for above these sixteen hundred years employed about this patch of ground, if perhaps it might have been mended: yea, and to my knowledge, said he, here hath been swallowed up at least twenty thousand cart-loads; yea, millions of wholesome instructions, that

have at all seasons been brought from all places of the King's dominions, (and they that can tell, say, they are the best materials to make good ground of the place), if so be it might have been mended; but it is the Slough of Despond still; and so will be, when they have done what they can. True, there are, by the direction of the Lawgiver, certain good and substantial steps placed even through the very midst of this slough; but at such times as this Place doth much spew out its filth, as it doth against change of weather, these steps are hardly seen; or if they be, men through the dizziness of their heads step besides; and then they are bemired to purpose, notwithstanding the steps be there: but the ground is good when they are once got in at the gate.

And, if we can learn from Paul's struggle in Romans 7:1-25, the lessons Paul seeks to teach us--of the fact that we cannot be what we would, because of the inveterate, incurable evil of our flesh--of "the sin that dwelleth in us," and that deliverance is "through Christ Jesus our Lord,"--through faith in Him, as having become identified with us as we were, and having thus effected our death, with Him, to sin, and all the "I must" claims of our old standing: so that we count ourselves dead to sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus,--it will be well! We shall be blessed! But if we refuse to learn the lessons Paul would teach us here--of the great facts of our deliverance in Christ from "the power of sin which is the Law" (1 Corinthians 15:56), we shall not only fail of personal deliverance from sin's power, but we shall soon be traducing all the glorious doctrines of Paul, and be sinking to the doctrine that we must expect to go on sinning and getting forgiveness "till we die,"--which is, of course, putting our own death in the place of Christ's death: for God says we died with Him, and are now free in Him Risen!

Romans 7:7 : What shall we say, then? Is the Law sin?--Paul has been telling us in Romans 6:1-23 of having died to sin, and now, in the first section of Chapter Seven, he tells us of having been made dead to the Law and discharged therefrom. His enemies (and he must always keep them in mind--the enemies of grace)--would immediately accuse him thus: "You say we died to the Law; therefore you class the Law with sin." Banish the thought! is Paul's answer--his usual holy, horrified rejection of what is false. On the contrary, I had not become conscious of sin except through law: That is, forbidding a thing to one who cannot abstain from that thing, is the way to make him know his bondage--his own helplessness. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." For I had not perceived evil-desire, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not have evil desire--Here Paul begins to show the spiritual character and reach of the Law. He will proceed through the rest of the Chapter to show in detail the spiritual effect of the Law on him. The direct reference in this word "desire" is to Deuteronomy 5:21, where the correct translation is, "Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's house, his field, or his man-servant, or his maid-servant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbor's." Now, Saul of Tarsus had been occupied with the outward things, positive and negative) of the Law. But when God quickened to his heart the real meaning of the word covet, or desire--showing him that "desire not" forbade the reaching out of the heart after anything other than loving God with all the heart, soul, and mind, and his neighbor as himself; he discerned for the first time that such desire is sin. For desire, in a creature, for aught else but God's glory, is sin. Imagine Gabriel in God's presence entertaining desire for something for himself [157] : It would be the beginning of another Lucifer!

[157] The word epithumia(G1939)(desire) is used 37 times in the New Testament,--in all but three of these passages denoting evil-desire. The three exceptions, however, indicate that the context must determine the meaning in any case. (Luke 22:15; Php 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:17 :

contrasted, for example, with Mark 4:19; John 8:44; Romans 1:24; Titus 2:12; James 1:14; 1 John 2:16; 2 Peter 3:3).

It will be well, by the way, for all legalists--for those who seek either righteousness or holiness through the Law, to HEAR the Law: "Thou shalt not have evil desire"!

Romans 7:8 : But sin, seizing occasion through the Commandment, wrought out in me all manner of evil-desire. For apart from law sin is dead. That indwelling sin which was in Paul's members,--left there by God, had no means of making itself known to Paul, except by a quickened Law that became direct Divine Commandment to his very self. Then, indeed, when God revealed to Paul, (already renewed but not knowing the incurable evil of the flesh) the spiritual nature and character of His holy Law, together with the demand on his conscience to fulfil it,--then came Sin's chance! Paul had no strength,--only the renewed will: Let Paul undertake--as he will--to fulfil what was commanded! Then it will be seen that "the strength of sin is the Law": that sin will prove itself stronger than Paul, through the Commandment!

Wrought out in me all manner of evil-desire. This discovery that desire is sin would not be confined to the letter of the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not desire, or covet": but would in Paul's inner consciousness extend itself through the whole Decalogue: For the Law is one! To illustrate the words apart from Law, sin is dead: Suppose a man determined to drive his automobile to the very limit of its speed. If (as is not quite yet done!) signs along the road would say, No Speed Limit, the man's only thought would be to press his machine forward. But now suddenly he encounters a road with frequent signs limiting speed to thirty miles an hour. The man's will rebels, and his rebellion is aroused still further by threats: Speed Limit Strictly Enforced. Now the man drives on fiercely, conscious both of his desire to "speed," and his rebellion against restraint. The speed limit signs did not create the wild desire to rush forward: that was there before. But the notices brought the man into conscious conflict with authority. For apart from Law, sin is dead--Sin, like a coiled serpent, is in the old nature, but cannot get at the conscience to condemn it: for indwelling sin has no means of "springing into life," as sin, apart from law: it is quiescent, dormant, "dead."

Every impulse of the flesh, the old natural life, is sin. Take desire, or coveting: who is to know that this inward, universal, natural desire is sin, till the Law says to the conscience, "Thou shalt not covet"? This command not to covet does not remove the covetousness, but rather calls attention to it. And in forbidding it, immediately puts into conflict the renewed human will with the power of indwelling sin,--in this case with covetousness.

Now, however quickened or renewed the human will may be, strength, power against sin, does not reside in the human will. Furthermore, human strength is not God's way to overcome indwelling sin. That power resides always and only in the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Romans 7:9-10 : And I was alive apart from law once: but when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the Commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death: The words alive apart from law once--to what stage of his life does this refer? We have noted that the Law had not come as a spiritual thing, as commandment, to him in his unregenerate state. Now let us mark that it was not "the Commandment" that came to save him: it was Jesus of Nazareth, in absolute grace, who appeared to him on the Damascus road. Surely if absolute grace ever met a man, it met Saul of Tarsus that day! And the questions that came out of his mouth, "Who art thou,

Lord?" "What shall I do, Lord?" have nothing whatever to do with law. He has met a Person, not a code! And when Ananias comes to Saul as he prays, in Judas' house in Straight Street, he speaks nothing to Saul of law: but, "The Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Then Saul immediately begins his joyful, triumphant testimony in the synagogues in Damascus that "Jesus is the Son of God." That was no time for the Commandment to come. God is not speaking to him yet of indwelling sin, but of full and free pardon and justification, through the shed blood of a Redeemer. This fills his soul during the first stage of his Christian life.

Then he goes away into Arabia, and God begins to exercise him, evidently--as we have shown--no longer concerning sins, for they are pardoned; but concerning indwelling sin.

It is to that happy, first stage of his Christian life, we believe, that Paul refers when he says, "I was alive apart from law once." He says, "I was alive." Paul would not affirm that a man dead in trespasses and sins was "alive"! But let us go over the ground very carefully.

Apart from law--these words "apart from law" (Greek, choris(G5565) nomou(G3551)) are exactly the same as in Romans 3:21 concerning justification! They indicate therefore, a state of no connection with law. Justification was on grounds where law did not come; and Paul's first condition after salvation was also thus, as we shall see.

Paul connects with this word "once" the Law's becoming quickened to his soul: When the Commandment came. No: this could not have been during the Tarsus, or Gamaliel, or persecuting days: for Paul says of those very days, "I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth." There was no hint there, surely, of a conflict with indwelling sin! But only a steady certainty that he was right. Those who would make the struggle of Romans Seven in any sense that of an unregenerate Jew under the Law should remember that for a Jew there was no such struggle! An unregenerate Jew was occupied with outward things, and rested there! If he were ceremonially "clean," and kept the "feasts, new moons, and Sabbath days," there was no "struggle" in his heart. Why should there be? Was he not of the chosen people? and walked he not "according to the ordinances"? Paul was a Pharisee--"a Pharisee of Pharisees"--being "more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers." Let him alone at that! There was no "struggle." He was satisfied, serene, apart from any spiritual knowledge of the Law! The Law was a terrible thing. It was a "fiery Law." When Israel heard it, at Sinai, they stood afar off, in terror, and said to Moses, "Let not Jehovah speak with us any more, lest we die"! The Jews, in Paul's day, (as today) held it in the letter. They knew nothing of its holy, "spiritual" character. They were occupied with the length of a "Sabbath day's journey"; or the question of how many nails a man could have in his sandals without "bearing a burden on the Sabbath"; and of "washing their hands to the elbows" before eating (Mark 7:3, marg.). There is not the slightest reason for differing Saul of Tarsus from those other Pharisees who would let the sick, palsied and demon-possessed remain under Satan's bondage-- if only their Sabbath were observed their way! (There is nothing so merciless as self-righteous religion: witness all History!) See Saul holding the clothes of Stephen's murderers! See him "breathing out threatening and slaughter"--mark it--slaughter, wholesale murder, toward "any that were of the Name" of Jesus.

02.14. Chapter 7B

CHAPTER 7B

What perfect theological folly to conceive that the struggle of Romans Seven had been all along in Saul's heart! That such a monster of murder was at the same time "delighting in the Law of God after the inward man"! No, no! That was before the holy Law, with its "Commandment" for an inner personal holiness,--free, even, from unlawful desire (epithumia(G1939)) had been quickened to him! Saul of Tarsus could have headed the Spanish Inquisition, and have had no qualms of conscience! He was on his way to Damascus as a regular, merciless Duke of Alva, to crush Christ's confessors,--with a good conscience: "I verily thought I ought to do."

Paul certainly distinguishes here between his early Christian life of rejoicing in the new-found Redeemer, and that later experience in which God exercises him about indwelling sin and deliverance therefrom. But upon the coming of the Commandment [to my conscience] sin sprang into life, and I died.

Here is seen that crisis described by so many godly saints. it is what some people call "coming under conviction for holiness." "Ye are yet carnal," Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Here he is discovering that state in himself. To Paul, converted, but still thinking himself under law, God uses "the Commandment." He discovers to Paul the spirituality of the Law and lets it command him to be and do. This Paul undertakes, not knowing of the sin dwelling in his members. So, Sin sprang into life, with the result that,--I died, as the following verses describe: it is the death of all hopes in himself, in his flesh. And the Commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death--its proper ministry, condemnation and death (2 Corinthians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 3:9)--to all hopes in flesh, even in the flesh of people born again, as Paul was.

Romans 7:11 : For sin, seizing occasion, through the Commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me.

Sin is personified all through this passage: Let Paul, says Sin, undertake to fulfil this Commandment! Let him keep on trying it!

How wonderful the consistency of Scripture! Paul was not under Law, being in Christ. God was not "beguiling" Paul in commanding what He knew Paul could not fulfil. But God permitted Sin to "beguile" him, by leading him to rely on his own power to obey, that Paul might find his utter powerlessness, and finally despair of delivering himself. And through it slew me--That is, killed off all his hopes in himself, his "flesh." We all know how endlessly "resolutions" are formed by earnest Christians--honest resolutions to be "better" Christians, to "quit" this or that sin or bad habit: and what failure and despair is the result of relying on our own wills! But to Paul, failure was terrible: for there was the Law, the Law of Moses, given by God, under which he had been born and brought up, and constantly instructed. The Law was his hope. And now it helps him? Not at all! Indeed it becomes the very means by which Sin attacks him. And Sin slays him--that is, all hopes in himself lie vanquished dead! And that by means of a holy instrument! for, Paul cries:

Romans 7:12 : The Law is holy, and the Commandment holy, and righteous and good--Here Paul positively refutes the charge that he dishonored God’s Law. Nay, more, the Commandment (entol(G1785)), the direct application to him of the Law, with its fatal consequences to himself, to his self-hopes, he defends. This is the mark of a saint: he upholds God, and condemns himself.

Romans 7:13 : But now he answers the further question: Did then that which is good become death unto me? And again his answer is, Banish the thought! But it was indwelling sin that wrought death to me,--using indeed, that which was good. Through the Commandment, thus, Sin was shown to be sin. The more fully and widely the Law resolved itself in new and fresh commands to Paul’s soul, the more intense and desperate became indwelling Sin’s horrid opposition to it. Thus was Sin’s hideous countenance seen in full! It became exceeding sinful! In general, we may say that in Romans 7:14-17, the emphasis is upon the practicing what is hated,--that is, the inability to overcome evil in the flesh; while in Romans 7:18-21, the emphasis is upon the failure to do the desired good,--the inability, on account of the flesh, to do right.

Thus the double failure of a quickened man either to overcome evil or to accomplish good--is set forth. There must come in help from outside, beyond himself! This, of course, is the indwelling Spirit, as the eighth chapter so vividly portrays. In narrating in particular the account of his great struggle in Romans 7:14-23, we find the apostle arriving at three definite conclusions.

First, In doing what he is not wishing, but practicing what he is hating, his conclusion is: "If what I am not wishing, that I am doing, I am consenting unto the Law that it is right." Romans 7:14-16.

Second, It is indwelling sin, and not his real self, that is working out this evil: "But if what I am not wishing, this I am practicing, no longer is it I that am working it out, but on the contrary, sin which dwelleth in me." Romans 7:17-20.

Third, There is the terrible revelation of a positive Law (or settled principle) of sin in his members, defeating him despite his inward delight in the Law of God:--"bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:23). For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I [158] am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I am working out, I do not own: for not what I am wishing this am I doing: but what I am hating--this I am practicing.

[158] "The apostle does not say, We know that the Law is spiritual and we are carnal.’ Had he done so, it would have been to speak of Christians, as such, in their Proper and normal condition." Romans Seven is not the present experience of any one, but a delivered person ascribing the state of an undelivered one. A man in a morass does not quietly ascribe how a man sinks into it, because he fears to sink and stay there. The end of Romans Seven is a man out of the morass showing in peace the principle and manner in which one sinks in it" (Darby). The Law is spiritual: but I am carnal--"Spiritual" may include:

(1) Addressed to man by God, who is "spirit";

(2) To "the spirit of man that is in him" (1 Corinthians 2:11);

Therefore:

(3) Consisting of communications adapted to and only understandable by beings of a spiritual realm or sphere.

(4) "Spiritual," also, in the moral sense; holy because communicated by a holy God.

Thus Law is spiritual. But I am carnal: Paul speaks of himself here as he is by nature. He does not say body-ish (soma(G4983), body, as opposed to pneuma(G4151), spirit) but "carnal": The word sarkinos(G4560), translated "carnal," comes from the root, sarx(G4561), "flesh."

1. If Paul had been speaking of himself before being quickened, he would have used the word natural: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

2. "Carnal" is not used to describe an unregenerate person, but a Christian not delivered from the power of the flesh: "I, brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1).

3. In this connection, note that while Paul's condition at the time of this struggle was that of being carnal, there are those that are spiritual: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things" (1 Corinthians 2:15). "Ye who are spiritual, restore" (Galatians 6:1).

4. Therefore, by the word "carnal" Paul was describing a state out of which there was deliverance.

We know that carnal, sold under sin--is evidently meant by the apostle in this fourteenth verse to indicate the state of human nature as contrasted with God's holy spiritual Law.

Sold under sin: This is slave-market talk: and it describes all of us by nature. Instead of being spiritual and therefore able to hearken to, delight in and obey God's holy spiritual Law, we are turned back, since Adam sinned, to a fleshly condition, our spirits by nature dead to God, and our soul-faculties under the domination of the still unredeemed body. Now Paul, though his spirit was quickened; and his inward desires, therefore, were toward God's Law; found to his horror his state by nature "carnal," fleshly, "sold under sin." How little humanity realizes this awful, universal fact about man--"sold under sin"!

"Sold under sin" is exactly what the new convert does not know! Forgiven, justified, he knows himself to be: and he has the joy of it! But now to find an evil nature, of which he had never become really conscious, and of which he thought himself fully rid, when he first believed, is a "second lesson" which is often more bitter than the first--of guilt! For that which I am working out, I do not own [as my choice]: for not what I am wishing this am I doing [159] , but what I am hating, this I am practicing.

[159] Three Greek verbs expressing conduct are used in these verses: (1) prasso(G4238), do! (2) poieo(G4160), practise, make a business of; (3) katergazomai(G2716), work out to a result (whether by personal choice or nature). By translating literally we can better get the vivid sense of the original.

We must constantly remember throughout this struggle that it is not a description by the apostle Paul of an experience he was having when he wrote this Epistle! but an experience of a regenerate man before he knows either about indwelling sin or that he died to sin and to the Law which gives sin its power; and who also does not know the Holy Spirit, as an indwelling presence and power against sin. God let Paul have this experience. And he now writes about it that we may read and know all the facts of our salvation: not merely of the awful guilt of our sins, and our forgiveness through the blood of Christ; but also of the moral hideousness of our old selves; and

our powerlessness, though regenerate, to deliver ourselves, from "the law of sin" in our members.

Therefore Paul said that in that struggle he found himself "working out" a manner of life he refused to "own"--to admit as his real choice. For, he says, Not what I am wishing, that am I practicing. The word "wish" or "desire" is not quite strong enough for the Greek word here, (thelo(G2309)); but the word will is too strong; for "will" has come in English to have the element of carrying a purpose through; which Paul was unable to do. His holy wish never mounted the throne of I will.

Romans 7:16 : But now he gains a further step: But if what I am not wishing, I am practicing, I am consenting unto the Law that it is right. The wicked man does what he is wishing; and is willing to condemn God's Law if it interferes with him. But Paul cries in this struggle, "I have just discovered that I am not at all in my heart opposing the Law; but am in my heart of hearts consenting that it is right." And that is a very real step. In the matter of forgiveness, the thief on the cross took that step, in saying to his fellow, "We receive the due reward of our deeds." And Paul, forgiven but undelivered, cries, The Law is right! My heart consents to God's Word and God's Way,--however far I am from following it! And now he pursues his advantage: So therefore, no longer is it I that am working it out, but sin which is dwelling in me.

Romans 7:17 : "No longer I!" That was a wonderful discovery! For a forgiven Saul, who had gone on in joy awhile without inward trouble, it was indeed a terrible awakening to become again convicted--not now of sins, but of indwelling sin, of a hateful power that seemed one's very self--but was really "our old man." [160] But he is making discoveries about himself--amazing things, brought out for the first time in Scripture. He is going much further than "consenting to the Law that it is right" (Romans 7:16); for now, instead of being completely over whelmed by this holy, righteous Law; he arrives at (and writes down for us!) a conclusion that is daring: Since I am doing what I am not wishing, there must be another and evil principle working within me. For it is not my real self that is working out this evil, but sin which dwelleth in me. An unwelcome, hateful presence!

[160] For, though our old man was crucified with Christ, put in the place of certain, though not instant death--we find, though we have "put him off" (Colossians 3:9) we must "put away," as to every thing of the former life, "the old man" (Ephesians 4:22). And, to be put away, he must be discovered to us, and this is what is so vividly set before us in this struggle. Note, it is never said the old man is dead, but that we died. We were federally identified with Christ, and passed on with Him into burial, and. now share His Risen life. The old man is not to be "counted dead" (as some very dear brethren have put it): but to be counted crucified--his place being there only.

Romans 7:18 : For I know that there does not dwell in me, that is in my flesh, a good thing: for the wishing is present with me, but working out that which is right, is not.

Here is that man who wrote in Php 3:1-21, "If any man hath whereof to glory in the flesh, I yet more!" And he gave there seven facts he could glory in,--beyond the greatest Greek, or Roman, or English, or any Gentile--"I yet more"! but now saying, "In me dwelleth no good thing." And also: "I can will, but cannot do!" This great double lesson must be learned by all of us! (1) There is no good thing in any of us--in "our flesh"--our old selves. (2) We cannot do the good we wish or will, to do. Most humbling of all confessions. Renewed, desiring to proceed--we cannot! We are dependent on the Holy Spirit as our only spiritual power, just as on Christ as our only

righteousness!

Alas, how incompletely are these two facts taught and learned! We have seen hundreds of eager young believers who are being told to "surrender to Christ," that all depended upon their yielding, etc. But these dear children, what did they know of the tremendous truths Paul has taught in the early part of Romans, before asking that believers present themselves to God as alive from the dead? (Romans 6:13). He has taught the terrible, lost guilty state of all men; their inability to recover righteousness; then Christ set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood as their only hope; then identification, as connected with Adam, with Christ in His death; and the command to reckon themselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus; together with, the fact that they are not under law, but under grace.

All this before the real call for surrender for service, in the Twelfth Chapter is given at all! Our hearts are weary with the appeals to man's will,--whether the will of a sinner to "make a start," "be a Christian," etc.; or the appeal to the will of believers who have not yet been shown what guilt is, and what indwelling sin is. For God's Word in Romans 7:18 tells us that while to will may be present with us, to work that which is right is not present. Paul told those same Philippians that believers were such as had "no confidence" in the flesh, and that it is God that worketh in us, "both to will and to work, for His good pleasure." [161]

[161] The author must be permitted to say that he had part in the Student Volunteer Movement for foreign missions of fifty years ago; that he saw hundreds of earnest and honest students "volunteer" for the mission field. But afterwards, in teaching the book of Romans, especially in China, he had many a missionary say, "We never knew this gospel before." It is nothing short of tragic to send men and women out against the hosts of hell in heathendom without teaching them through and through and through and through this mighty gospel Paul preached!--which gospel he says is "the power of God unto salvation." And he comes to further detail in saying, "The word of the cross is the power of God." Education, medication, sanitation, and general sweetness--what does Satan care for that. The word of the cross is the great wire along which runs the dynamic of God--and it runs along no other wire. If God is permitting great investments of money, men and time along other lines to be swept away, let us remember that the real Church of God, having the Holy Ghost, does not need great outward things. Paul built no colleges, schools, or institutions--which may be useful, never essential, But Paul's last epistle, just before his martyrdom, says "The Lord stood by me and strengthened me; that through me THE MESSAGE might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear."

Romans 7:19 : For not what I am wishing am I practicing--that is, the good; but on the contrary, what I am not wishing--that is, the evil, this I am doing.

Now this verse must not be for one moment misapplied, that is, it must not be made to describe Paul's "manner of life in Christ Jesus," which was, as we know, victorious, and fruitful and always rejoicing. But verse 19 does indeed express concerning Paul, and all of us, all the time, our utter powerlessness in ourselves (though Christians) against the evil of the flesh: whether we are consciously under Moses' Law, as was Paul, or convicted by the power of an awakened conscience that we ought to have deliverance from our sinful, selfish selves, and walk in victory in Christ. Romans 7:19 is not normal Christian experience, certainly. But it may describe our very case, if we have not learned God's way of faith.

Romans 7:20 : But if what I am not wishing, this I am practicing, no longer is it I that am working it out, but on the contrary, sin which dwelleth in me.

Paul reasserts the blessed fact (which is, alas, no comfort to him as yet!) that it is no longer the real "I," but indwelling sin, that is working out this hated life of defeat.

Romans 7:21 : I find then the law [or principle] that to me, desiring to be practicing the right, the evil is present.

He now states as a settled conclusion, what he has experimentally discovered. And we all need to consent to the fact--even if we have found God's way of deliverance, that evil is present. It is the denial of this fact that has wrecked thousands of lives! For evil will be present until the Lord comes, bringing in the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 7:22-23 : For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.

Here is first, delight, second, discernment, and third, defeat.

1. First, delight: in God's Law, Paul delights--this is a strong and inclusive word. And, after the inward man,--thus revealing himself as regenerate throughout this struggle: No unregenerate man would say, (unless profane) "It is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me:" For,

(1) An unregenerate man is not conscious of a moral power which is not himself: for he has but the one nature,--he is "in the flesh."

(2) An unregenerate man could not say, "What I hate, that I do." For only born-again people hate evil. "Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil" (Psalms 97:10), and David could say of himself, "I hate every false way" (Psalms 119:104). But of the wicked he wrote, "He abhorreth not evil" (Psalms 36:4).

(3) An unregenerate man could not say, "What I would not, that I do,--I consent to the Law that it is good." An unregenerate man resists the Law, that he may "justify himself." A regenerate man consents to the Law's being good, no matter how it judges what he finds himself doing! (Romans 7:16).

(4) The unregenerate man could not say, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man." For by nature all men are "children of wrath," "alienated from the life of God"; and "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, not subject to the Law of God." Before his conversion, Saul, as we saw, could help to stone Stephen,--"verily thinking he ought" to do it; but Paul was not then seeking holiness (as the man in Romans 7:1-25 is), but was secure in his own righteousness as a legalist.

(5) The unregenerate man could not say, "Wretched man that I am!" For he could not see his wretchedness! His whole life was to build up that which was the flesh.

(6) If you claim that the "wretched man" of Romans 7:1-25 is an unregenerate man under conviction of sin, the complete reply is, that this man of Romans 7:1-25 is crying for deliverance,--not from sin's guilt and penalty, but from its power. Not for forgiveness of sins, but help against indwelling sin. This man is exercised, not about the day of judgment, but about a condition of bondage to that which he hates. The Jews on the Day of Pentecost, and the jailor at

Philippi, cried out in terror, "What shall we do to be saved?" It was guilt and danger they felt. But this man in Romans 7:1-25 cries, "Who shall deliver me" (not from guilt) but, "from this body of death?" No one but a quickened soul ever knows about a "body of death"!

(7) But perhaps the most striking argument of all is in the closing words of Romans 7:25 : "Therefore then I myself with the mind, am subject to God's Law, but with the flesh to sin's law." Here we have both spiritual life and consciousness; also, discernment. and discrimination of both his real true new self, which chooses God and His will and of the flesh which will continue to choose "sin's law": and all this conclusion after he has realized deliverance from the "body of death" through our Lord Jesus Christ!

2. Second, discernment: I see a different law in my members. It is the unwillingness to own this different law, this settled state of enmity, toward God, in our own members, that so terribly bars spiritual blessing and advancement. As long as we think lightly of the fact of the presence with us of the fallen nature, (I speak of Christians) we are far from deliverance. In the law of leper-cleansing (Leviticus 13:2 ff), "if a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising," or even "a white rising"--he was unclean. (See the various degrees of the plague.) But, "If the leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his feet, as far as appeareth to the priest; then the priest shall look; and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean"! It is significant that at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 8:1-4) two things should be there: (1) A leper--showing the Law could cleanse no one. (2) A leper, as Luke the physician tells us, "full of leprosy" (Luke 5:12). It is because people do not recognize their all-badness that they do not find Christ all in all to them.

3. Third, defeat: There is no strength or power in ourselves against the law of sin which is in our members. God has left us as much dependent on Christ's work for our deliverance as for our forgiveness! It is wholly because we died with Him at the cross, both to sin and to the whole legal principle, that sin's power, for those in Christ, is broken.

Romans 7:24 : Wretched man that I am! The word here translated "wretched" meant originally, "wretched--through the exhaustion of hard labor," (Vincent). But the word reads in the Septuagint of Isaiah 33:1, Jeremiah 4:30 "desolate, bound for destruction," as also in Revelation 3:17. The hopelessness of Paul's condition, unless he be delivered, is thus appallingly revealed! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? Note now at once that all self-hope has ceased! It is not, How shall I deliver myself? or even, How shall I be delivered? But it is a frantic appeal for a deliverer! Who shall deliver me? Instinctively and absolutely Paul knows that no process will deliver him. The awful shallowness of the "Christian Scientist," who would get rid of all evil by "demonstrating" with the human will against it is seen at once! So is the silly (and damning) folly of the Buchmanites, the "life-changers." Where do such folk come in, in such a struggle as this of Paul with this body of death? They simply do not come in, for they know nothing of it. The Holy Spirit is not in their vain self-processes, any more than in the mumblings of human priests,--pagan or popish. The body of this death--what a fearful description of the body!--unredeemed, unchanged, under the law of sin in all its members. No matter what the "delight" of the quickened human spirit in the things of God may be, to dwell undelivered in such a body is to find it a "body of death."

Romans 7:25 : I thank God, [for deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord. Ah! The answer to Paul's self-despairing question, "Who shall deliver me?" is a new revelation,--even identification with Christ in His death! For just as the sinner struggles in vain to find forgiveness and peace, until he looks outside himself to Him who made peace by the blood of His cross, just so does the quickened soul, struggling unto despair to find victory over sin by self-effort, look outside himself to Christ--in whom he is, and in whom he died to sin and to law! Paul was not delivered by Christ, but through Him; not by anything Christ then or at that time did for him; but through the revelation of the fact that he had died with Christ at the cross to this hated indwelling sin, and law of sin; and to God's Law, which gave sin its power. It was a new vision or revelation of the salvation which is in Christ--as described in verses 4 and 6 of our chapter. The sinner is not forgiven by what Christ now does, but by faith in what He did do at the cross, for, "The word of the cross is the power of God." Just so, the believer is not delivered by what Christ does for him now; but in the revelation to his soul of identification with Christ's death at the cross: for again, "The word of the cross is the power of God."

It will be by the Holy Spirit, that this deliverance is wrought in us; as we shall see in Chapter Eight. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," is God's order. To sum up Paul's Great Discoveries in this Struggle of Chapter Seven:

1.That sin dwelt in him,--though he delighted in God's Law!

2.That his will was powerless against it.

3.That the sinful self was not his real self.

4.That there was deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ! [162]

[162] Archbishop Leighton, on Romans 8:35, says, "Is this he that so lately cried out, Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?' that now triumphs, O happy man! who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Yes, it is the same. Pained then with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, who will deliver? Now he hath found a Deliverer to do that for him, to whom he is forever united. So vast a difference is there betwixt a Christian taken in himself and in Christ!"

I thank God [for deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord! Paul had cried, Who shall deliver me? The answer is,--the discovery to his soul of that glorious deliverance at the cross! of death to sin and Law with Him! So it is said, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word of the cross--of what Christ did there, is the power of God--whether to save sinners or deliver saints! But ah, what a relief to Paul's soul--probably out yonder alone in Arabia, struggling more and more in vain to compel the flesh to obey the Law, to have revealed to his weary soul the second glorious truth of the Gospel--that he had died with Christ--to sin, and to Law which sin had used as its power! And now the conclusion--which is the text of the whole chapter! So then--always a quod erat demonstrandum with Paul! I myself, with the mind, indeed--this is the real renewed self, which the apostle has over and over said that "sin that dwelleth in him" was not! "With the mind"--all the spiritual faculties including, indeed, the soul-faculties of reason, imagination, sensibility--which even now are "being renewed" by the Holy Spirit, day by day. Am subject to God's law [or will]--all new creatures can say this. But with the flesh sin's law. He saw it at last, and bowed to it,--that all he was by the flesh, by Nature, was irrevocably committed to sin. So he gave up--to see himself

wholly in Christ (who now lived in Him) and to walk not by the Law, even in the supposed powers of the quickened life--but by the Spirit only: in whose power alone the Christian life is to be lived.

PAUL'S STRUGGLE NOT CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

It is of the utmost importance clearly to see that the great struggle of the latter part of Romans 7:1-25 is neither a purely Jewish one, nor a normal Christian walk, nor a necessary Christian experience.

It is not a purely Jewish struggle. Jewish struggles are set forth in the Psalms, and are a conflict with outward enemies, or the questioning cry (as in Psalms 88:1-18) as to why God seems far off, or even, for the present, seemingly against the supplicator (typically--the Remnant in the Last Days). But not even in the deepest Psalm of trouble is there ever a hint of two natures within the struggler! (For example. Psalms 10:1-18, or Psalms 88:1-18, or Psalms 77:1-20, or even such Psalms as Psalms 51:1-19, Psalms 32:1-11.)

Neither is this struggle a normal Christian experience. For, (1) there is no mention of Christ until the legal struggle is ended in self-despair,--and, (2) There is no mention whatever of the Holy Spirit--whose recognized presence and power make possible proper Christian experience: which is "walking by the Spirit." That it is not a normal Christian walk, we have also shown from Paul's own triumphant life. And that it is not a necessary Christian experience, is seen from the fact that Paul is, in this struggle, occupied with the Law,--under which God says believers are not! (Romans 6:14.) The complete Gospel believed, makes such a struggle unnecessary and indeed impossible. For the gospel reveals (as in Romans 6:1-11; Romans 7:1-6, and all Romans 8:1-39) (1) that we died with Christ and are now alive unto God in Christ Risen; (2) that those under Law were made dead to and discharged from the legal economy; (3) that the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer has taken over the conflict with the flesh; and is the whole power of a triumphant walk; (4) that therefore there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, and no separation from God's love to those in Him!

Doubtless we often see other Christians having a Seventh-of-Romans struggle, and shall easily find ourselves falling into such a struggle. But as the gospel concerning our death with Christ both to sin and to the legal principle becomes clear to us, and our faith therein becomes strong; and our reliance upon the Holy Spirit becomes more constant, we shall walk as Paul did:--"Thanks be unto God who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ." The path of faith is the most hateful path possible for the flesh. Faith gives the flesh no place--leaves no "part" for man's will and energy. The flesh will go to any degree of religious self-denial, or self-inflicted sufferings--anything but death! But faith begins right there: we died with Christ, we live in Him! We have no righteousness, no strength,--and desire none: Christ is our righteousness, and "when we are weak, we are strong."

Thus the walk of simple-hearted faith is indeed in another realm from the struggle of Romans Seven. God give us to have faith "as a little child," a cloudless, unmixed vision, as had Paul at last! When the demand, however, arises in our hearts that we be what we find written in the Epistles, the effect is the same exactly as in Paul's case as regards the discovery of powerlessness. The "Holiness" people call it, as we said, "becoming convicted for holiness." The conscience becomes suddenly awakened. We see that we have been content with a righteous standing, without a really holy walk. If we have seen that we died with Christ; and are properly instructed, we shall, upon

such awakening,

(1) Know that there is deliverance in Christ for us, whether we are yet able, or not, in living faith to reckon that we are dead unto sin and alive unto God.

(2) We shall be, or become, willing to have God show us how, or wherein, we are still holding fast to any sin, or any indulgence of the flesh.

(3) We shall be brought, by God's grace, to agree to the sentence of death that has already been pronounced on this particular thing, when our old man,--all our old self, was crucified with Christ.

(4) Then we shall enter into the place of reckoning ourselves dead to sin, and to this darling sin, and to all sin,--as God commands His saints who have died with Christ.

(5) We may have, if necessary, a struggle here: as James shows:

"Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God(James 4:4)? . . . God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble(1 Peter 5:5). Be subject therefore to God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you(James 4:8)!" And now see his following words:

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners"--those saints indulging known sin. "And purify your hearts, ye doubleminded"--those believers who have been half for the world, while half for heaven. "Be afflicted, and mourn and weep." (Not that God is unwilling, but that we are!) "Let your laughter" (which has been the fool's laughter of this condemned world!) "be turned to mourning, and your joy" (which has been the joy of worldlings, not of heaven-bound saints) "to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you!(James 4:8-10)" This is the path for worldly Christians. Not that the grace of God is insufficient: but they have been rejoicing with a condemned world! And they must come out of that, though in bitterness.

However, the bitterness need not be,--if we are willing! "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fruit of the land(Isaiah 1:19)." And nothing will persuade our hearts like the goodness of God, in the gift of His Son, and the work of the cross, already accomplished on our behalf.

Whether, then, it be a soul under law, or one in greater light: there will be the discovery of our own utter powerlessness, and of deliverance--from sin and self, in our Lord Jesus Christ! And this is the object of the revelation of Paul's great struggle,--not mere information, but application of these lessons to ourselves. For if we go through Chapters Six and Seven unexercised of soul, how shall we learn the blessed walk in the Spirit of Chapter Eight? For "the flesh" is there--in Romans 8:1-39 --all unchanged! And unless we practically learn,--learn for and regarding our own selves--the great lesson that in ourselves, in "the whole natural man," there is no good; that even when we will to do good, evil is yet present, and dominant! and that help for us, for our very selves, must come from without: unless we learn this holy self-despair; we will not enter into actual spiritual deliverance in Christ: but will only be "puffed up" by our study. For mere knowledge "puffeth up." But we all know that Paul was not puffed up when he cried, "O wretched man that I am!" And if Paul found a body of death to be delivered from, you and I have that same body of death! And we too must be brought to say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It may be that you will be found like the remarkable case below, related by Mr. Finney [163] : and be ready to step immediately into any new revelation of blessing in Christ [164] It should be a true illustration of

every believer!

[163] In his remarkable Autobiography Mr. Charles G. Finney relates the case of a lady who had always been marked for simplicity and uprightness of spirit. She had been, when a young woman, very highly regarded, but when she heard the gospel, she believed it, immediately entering fully into the admission of her guilt before God, and trusting Him implicitly on the ground of the shed blood of Christ, But in Mr, Finney's meetings she heard that God had commanded her to yield herself to Him and be filled with the Holy Spirit. She instantly complied again. And her husband came to Mr. Finney saying, "I cannot understand my wife. She was the most perfect creature I ever knew, when we were married. Then she was converted, and has been absolutely exemplary ever since. But she says now that at your meeting the other night she yielded herself in a new way to God; and I myself can see the most astonishing change, but cannot account for it at all." (We relate from memory.) This was a case of simplicity of heart and mind, perhaps not often found. Since the work on the cross, anyone can appropriate just as simply the whole benefit of Christ's work.

[164] But if you find yourself not spiritual, not even ready of heart to become so, can at least pray the prayer Mr. F. B. Meyer--of blessed memory! taught so many: "Lord, make me willing to be made willing!" There is a blessed walk in the Spirit for you! Believe that. And cast yourself upon the grace of God! He will bring it to pass!

02.15. Chapter 8A

CHAPTER 8A The Holy Spirit's Work in the Believer: as Against the Flesh, Romans 8:1-13; as Witnessing our Sonship and Heirship--even though Suffering, Romans 8:14-25; As Helping our Infirmity by Intercession, Romans 8:26-27.

God's Great Purpose in His Elect: Conformity to Christ's Image, and Association with Him: Their Heavenly Destiny. All Earthly Providences for their Good. Romans 8:28-30.

Triumphant Response of Faith to These Things! Romans 8:31-34. No Separation from God's Love, since it is IN Christ Jesus our Lord! Romans 8:35-39.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from, the law of sin and of death. 3 For, (the thing the Law could not do, because it was powerless on account of the flesh) God, having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 that the righteous result of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to flesh, but according to Spirit. 5 For those who are according to flesh, the things of the flesh do mind; but those according to Spirit, peace. 6 For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace: 7 Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can it be: 8 and those being in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His 10 And if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead on account of sin; but the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you. He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

WE HAVE NOW COME to that great chapter which sets forth that part in our salvation which is exercised by the third Person of the Godhead, the blessed Holy Spirit. Without Christ's work on the cross there would be no salvation, and without the presence and constant operation of the Holy Spirit, there would be no application of that salvation to us,--indeed, no revelation of it to us!

Let us therefore with the profoundest reverence, and greatest gladness, take up the study here in Romans Eight of that work of the Holy Spirit which is directly concerned with our salvation: for Romans is a book of salvation. Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the message that concerns salvation. Christ Jesus and Him glorified is that which concerns our perfecting as believers. The latter, other epistles will unfold more fully. But the teaching of the work of the Holy Ghost in Romans regards His fundamental operations,--just as it is fundamental phases of Christ's work that are presented here.

Romans 8:1-39 is the instinctive goal of the Christian. Whether or not he can tell why--whether or not he can give the great doctrinal facts that give him comfort here, he is, nevertheless, like a storm-tossed mariner who has arrived at his home port, and has cast anchor, when he comes into Romans Eight! The reasons are:

1. He finds himself in the hands of the blessed Comforter, the indwelling Spirit, in whose almighty and loving ministry he finds "life and peace."

2. He finds himself, without cause in himself, called "God's elect,"--involved in a great Divine purpose, that will end in his being conformed to Christ's image, Christ being "the First-born among many brethren."

3. He finds himself beloved in Christ; and therefore never to be "separated" from that love. And these are both the "upper and nether springs" of eternal comfort. This Eighth of Romans, then, comes after the work of Christ--after His atoning blood has put the believer's sins away; after he has seen, also, that he died with Christ,--to sin, and also to that legal responsibility he had in Adam; after the words, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under Law, but under Grace"; and, finally, after the hopeless struggle of the apostle has shown "the flesh" to be incurably bad; and that there is a blessed deliverance, which, though not changing "the body of this death," nevertheless gives freedom therefrom "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 8:1-2 : There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and of death.

Therefore looks back to the struggle of Romans 7:1-25, and the thankful shout of Romans 7:25; and not to the expiatory work of Christ for us in Romans 3:21-31, Romans 4:1-13, Romans 4:14-25, Romans 5:1-11. Those that are in Christ Jesus, and none others, can be before us in all this section.

It is on account of the Spirit's acting as a law of life, delivering the believer from the contrary law of sin and death in his yet unredeemed members, that there is no condemnation. It is of the utmost importance to see this. The subject here is no longer Christ's work for us, but the Spirit's work within us. Without the Spirit within as a law of life, there would be nothing but condemnation: for the new creature has no power within himself apart from the blessed Spirit,--as against a life of perpetual bondage to the flesh,--"the end of which things is death" (Romans 6:21).

Now the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer as set forth in Chapter Eight is fundamental, essential to the believer's salvation and must be understood by all of us, for Romans is the book of foundation truth. In Christ Jesus--Here the verse should end, as see note below. [165] The words in Christ Jesus express that glorious place God has given the believer. The question is not at all now one of justification, but one of position, in Christ Risen, "where condemnation is not, and cannot be." There cannot be degrees here: men either are in Christ, or not in Him.

[165] The Revised Version correctly omits "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Since the King James translation, over 300 years ago, many., and the best, most accurate, ancient Greek manuscripts which we have, have been recovered; and earnest, godly men have gone steadily ahead with the tedious but fruitful work of correcting errors that had crept in in copying. For, as we all know, we have not the original manuscripts of Scripture: God has been pleased to withhold these from creatures so prone to idolatry as the sons of men. We must close verse 1 with the words "in Christ Jesus," for four reasons: (1) The evidence of the Greek manuscripts is overwhelmingly in favor of the omission of the clause "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" from Romans 8:1,--as the evidence is universally for including these words in Romans 8:4. (2) Spiritual discernment also agrees, for the introduction of these words in verse I makes our

safety depend upon our walk, and not upon the Spirit of God, But all in Christ Jesus are safe from condemnation, as is plainly taught throughout the epistles. Otherwise, our security depends on our walk, and not on our position in Christ. (3) The clause is plainly in proper place at the end of Romans 8:4,--where the manner of the believer's walk, not his safety, from condemnation, is described. (4) That the clause at the end of verse 1 in the King James is a gloss (marginal note by some copyist) appears not only from its omission by the great uncial manuscripts, Aleph, A, B, C, D, F, G; A, D (corr.); with some good cursives and ancient versions (see Olshausen, Meyer, Alford, J. F. and B., and Darby's excellent discussion in his Synopsis, in loc); but it also appears from the similarity of this gloss to like additions made through legal fear, found in other passages. That God chose to have His Word translated and still authoritative is seen from the use in the New Testament of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint. We should thank God for those devoted men who have spent their lifetimes in profound study of the manuscripts God has left us, and who have given us so marvelously perfect a translation as we have. We should distinguish such scholars absolutely and forever from the arrogant "Modernists" (or, in former days, the "Higher Critics"). who undertake to tell us what God ought to say in the Bible, rather than with deep humility seeking to find out what God has said.

There is no condemnation--Those in Christ Jesus have more than justification from all things by His blood. They have "justification of life," which means that they share His risen life. No condemnation--means, no condemnatory judgment. The question of rewards for work for our Lord will indeed come up at His judgment seat--bema(G968) (2 Corinthians 5:10); but it is after the Church is caught up that this judgment occurs, when Christ comes, "apart from sin, to them that wait for Him." Blessed hope! (See Hebrews 9:28.) For [166] the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, freed me from the law of sin and of death. "The law" in both occurrences here indicates "a given principle acting uniformly." Now as to "the law of sin and of death," the latter part of Chapter Seven made abundantly clear what that was--the power of sin working in our unredeemed bodies against which even man's renewed will was powerless.

[166] Here we have at the very beginning of the chapter, one of the most common words of argument in Paul's epistles--for (Gr. gar(G1063)). It occurs some 17 times in Romans 8:1-39, and about one half as many in Romans 7:1-25, etc. In general, it assigns the reason. Let us not be among those who avoid Paul's epistles because of the mental attention they demand. Most people would rather read a novel or go to the picture shows than study. A chapter with 17 "fors" in it, is closely knit, and must be patiently followed. Unmeasured blessing will result. But now, another "law" has come in: not only has the believer life in the Risen Christ, but to him has been given the Holy Spirit as the power of that life: so that the Spirit becomes the Almighty Agent within the believer, securing him wholly, making effectual in experience that "deliverance which Paul saw when he cried in Romans 7:24-25 : "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God [for deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord." Of course, the deliverance [167] is through Christ, for it is Christ's own risen life the believer now shares. But it is the blessed Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," who makes the deliverance an experience. That is, the constant operation of the Spirit makes effectual in those who have life in Christ Jesus, that deliverance which belongs to those in Christ.

[167] John Wesley's testimony is well known, concerning the beginning of his life of real faith (in his 35th year, after 13 years in a relatively common-place ministry): "In the evening I went very

unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. For the next 53 years Wesley was "the outstanding figure and the greatest force in the English speaking world." But notice that he realized at Aldersgate Street, the two great elements of our salvation: (1) forgiveness of sin's guilt; and (2) deliverance from sin's power--from the law of sin and death!

How wonderful, how limitless, the patience of the blessed Spirit of God! Moment by moment, day by day, month by month, year by year, through all the conscious and unconscious processes of tens of thousands of believers, the Spirit acts with a uniformity that is called "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." In the newest convert, in the oldest saint, He gives freedom from the law of sin and of death! "Sin in the flesh, which was my torment, is already judged, but in Another; so that there is for me no condemnation on account of the flesh. . . . We lose communion with God, and dishonor the Lord by our behavior, in not walking, according to the Spirit of life, worthy of the Lord. But we are no longer under the law of sin, but, having died with Christ, and become partakers of a new life in Him and of the Holy Spirit, we are delivered from this law."

Romans 8:3-4 : For, (the thing the Law could not do, because it was powerless on account of the flesh), God, having sent His own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteous result of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to flesh, but according to Spirit.

Several things appear at once from this passage:

1. God did a thing that the Law could not do.

2. The thing that God did was to make possible a holy life for those walking by His indwelling Spirit.

3. The reason that the Law was unable to bring about this holy life, lay in the flesh (Greek, sarx(G4561)), the "mind" of which (Romans 8:7) is enmity against God, and not subject to His Law or Will. Thus, though the Law was holy, just, and good, in itself, it only irritated by its commands a sinful flesh that was not subject to it.

4. God's plan (which, we must remember, is "apart from law," without law's help or "rule," but the very opposite-- Romans 3:21; Romans 6:14; Romans 7:4, Romans 7:6) was to send His own Son, who had a body "prepared for Him" (Hebrews 10:5), and was born according to the angel's words to Mary in Luke 1:35 :

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." So, although sinless, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the likeness of "flesh of sin,"--in the likeness of the bodies of the children of Adam, bodies under bondage to sin.

5. God's purpose, as revealed in this passage, was to get at sin as connected with human flesh, and deal with it at the cross in the way of righteous condemnation, so that sin would no longer have rights in human bodies. The preposition "for" (Gr. peri(G4012)) in the words and for sin is the common word in the Septuagint for sacrifices for sin. But it refers here in Romans 8:3 not so much

to atonement for sin's guilt before God,--that has already been fully set forth in Chapters Three to Five. The question here (and in Chapters Six to Eight entire) regards the thing Sin itself rather than its guilt. [168]

[168] "The expression is purposely a general one, because the design was not to speak of Christ's mission to atone for sin, but, in virtue of that atonement, to destroy its dominion and extirpate it altogether from believers. We think it wrong, therefore, to render the words (as in margin) "by a sacrifice for sin" (peri hamartia(G4012, G266)) for this sense is too definite, and makes the idea of expiation more prominent than it is"--Jamieson-Fausset-Brown.

It is of the very first importance for the believer to recognize the two great facts which Paul develops concerning Christ's work on the cross:

First, His blood shed for us in expiation of our guilt. Considering this, one always thinks of the righteous claims of God's throne against us, and of their being satisfied, fully met, by Christ's shed blood; and of our being thus brought nigh to God.

Second, Our death with Christ, as "made sin for us." Because of our condition of sinfulness, as connected with Adam, and thus "in the flesh," we died with Christ. When we believed upon Him, Christ became our Adam, and God dated our history back to Calvary, and commanded us to reckon ourselves dead to sin because we died with Him federally,--thus our history in Adam was ended before God: so that He plainly says to us, "Ye are not in flesh"--where once we were: Romans 8:9 and Romans 7:5. Compare Ephesians 2:1-3.

Now, in Romans 8:3, God goes more explicitly into having Christ identified with us, made to become sin on our behalf, our old man crucified with Him. It was that God might thus condemn sin in the flesh, dealing with it judicially: as connected potentially with the whole human race, and actually with believers. When Adam sinned, his federal relationship involved all his posterity in condemnation (Romans 5:18-19), but he also "begat a son in His own likeness." ALL since Adam have participated in the fallen nature of Adam. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "We [now believers] were by nature children of wrath."

Now, human thoughts and philosophies, being under, and recognizing, this proneness to evil, and referring it to the body as the conscious abode of sin and source of sin's lusts and temptations, have praised a disembodied state as the only desirable one. Not only the Manicheans and the Buddhists, but real Christians who ought to know better, have regarded a disembodied spiritual state as their hope: "This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise," etc. "Modernists" today, generally,--as unbelievers in all periods, deny the resurrection of the material body. But in Romans 8:3 God tells us that sin as connected with flesh has been condemned, dealt with; although it has not yet been removed. Some pious and very earnest people have spoken of and sought after "eradication of the sin-principle from the body." But the redemption of the body lies in the future, at Christ's coming. Meanwhile, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, [disembodied spirits] but that we would be clothed upon . . . with our habitation which is from Heaven" (our glorified bodies at Christ's coming): "that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (2 Corinthians 5:4). But the foundation both for the resurrection of the sleeping saints when Christ comes, and for the changing of living believers, lies here in Romans 8:3 : sin has been

condemned as connected with human flesh. This gives God, speaking reverently, the righteous right to transform and catch up into glory the bodies of His saints.

It also gives the Risen Christ the glorious right to live in these bodies of ours while they are on earth; and to walk in us, therefore, daily, in resurrection victory! The only condition of such victorious life, is that we ourselves walk by that indwelling Spirit which has been given to us.

Again, speaking reverently, the Spirit has no commission in this dispensation to go beyond the work done by our Lord on the cross. But that work on the cross was perfect, and far-reaching indeed. Not only did Christ there put away our guilt before God by His blood, but there our old man was crucified with Him: sin was condemned as having any connection with human flesh! And for sin--The evident reference to the second phase of the sin-offering is apparent in these words. The question in this verse is not one of atonement for guilt, but of the dealing in judgment with that which was not to be atoned for! The evil of our natures is not atoned for, but judged, at the cross. The first phase of the sin-offering of Leviticus Four is the sprinkling of the blood before Jehovah, outside the veil of the most holy place, and the putting of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Jehovah, which golden altar, according to Hebrews 9:3-4 pertained to the holy of holies, the Shechinah presence of God; and the pouring out at the base of the brazen altar at the door of the tabernacle, the rest of the blood; together with the burning of the fat--symbol of the inner affections--upon that brazen altar. This first phase is seen to represent the power of the shed blood of Christ to bring us nigh to God--always the first thing.

Then the second phase is seen in Leviticus 4:11-12, where

--"the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall it be burnt."

Here, surely, is something further than the putting away of guilt by the shed blood. The fire, burning to ashes that sin-offering, seems to indicate God’s holy dealing with sin itself, after the shed blood has made the offerer nigh. It surely has a most solemn significance, for there is no atonement to be made for our evil nature. At the cross, God having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and having laid on Him as our Substitute our sins, now secures that opportunity which He sought--to deal with sin itself as connected with flesh. And He did deal in judgment. Sin, as connected with flesh, is a condemned, though not yet removed, thing. [169]

[169] God condemned, or, as you might say, executed sin in the flesh for us by the death of Christ. He did not die only for my sins (though that’s true), but for my sin. The root of sin that is in my nature, and that which worries and distresses the heart of the sincere believer daily, is put away for faith by death, and we are dead to it . . . God has settled the question, condemned the sin in you, which you condemn. But where has He done it? Outside of yourself altogether . . . He takes away the condemnation of sin in the nature, by God’s judgment being executed on the sinless flesh of His own Son. Thus sin in my flesh is judged, as well as my committed sins"--Darby, Notes on Romans, in loc. The thing the Law could not do--was accomplished by God! The law was powerless on account of the flesh. The Law holy, just and good, could command; but the flesh was not subject to it, and could not be. Therefore the Law could forbid, rebuke, reprimand, and curse, sin; but could not effectually condemn it, as connected with the flesh. When Christ comes, thank God, we shall be freed from the very presence of sin. But it has already been condemned in the

flesh, and should be reckoned so by us all. Just as really as our sins were put away by the blood of Christ, so was sin in the flesh condemned, judgment executed on it. In Romans 8:3, God so "condemned" sin,--so dealt with it, that it was thereafter a convict--as regards the flesh. This had no more been done before, than our sins had been borne before! Not until the Cross were sins borne, and not until the cross was Sin judicially dealt with in the flesh. Sin has thus no more rights in us now, than it will have in our glorified bodies! As we shall see in Romans 8:9, believers are not in the flesh before God, at all. This is the second glorious truth; the first being that because sin as connected with human flesh has been dealt with by God, all danger from it, all possible condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, is over.

Romans 8:4 : That the righteous result of the Law [which the Law sought in vain] might be fulfilled in us--Now let us say at once that a righteous state of living, while it is to be brought about in the Christian, is not what God primarily seeks; but rather "that we should be holy and without blame before Him IN LOVE." This will begin to be developed in Romans, but more thoroughly in other epistles. Nevertheless, our first occupation must be with the truth as set forth in God’s order. The Law commanded a wholly righteous walk toward God and toward our neighbor. But David said:

"I have seen an end of all perfection;

Thy commandment is exceedingly broad."

Throughout the Psalms, and all the Old Testament Saints’ experiences, we find that there is under the Law, an almost constant striving and groaning after a righteous state,--seen, but not experienced, because the Law consisted of outer enactments, to be fulfilled by man. The Law furnished no power. Now in Romans 8:4 we have three things: first, this righteous state or result; second, the fact that it was not fulfilled by us--we have no more power in ourselves than had the Old Testament saints: but it is fulfilled in us--it is the passive voice: be fulfilled. Third, it is fulfilled in us as we consent to reject the flesh and choose to walk according to the Spirit. In the Spirit lies all the power. With us, the responsibility of choice--a blessed, solemn one!

Romans 8:5 : For those who are according to flesh, [170] the things of the flesh do mind; but those according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

[170] We find the definite article "the" in the Greek before the word Spirit, where the Holy Spirit’s person or personal action is emphasized. But where His power, or nature as a sphere of being, and not His person, is before us, the article generally disappears. To translate literally several instances in this chapter: The Holy Spirit is introduced in Romans 8:2 as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"; but in Romans 8:4, it is "who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit." In Romans 8:5, "they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Here "according to Spirit" is a matter of characterizing; whereas in "the things of the Spirit," the Holy Spirit’s person is brought to the fore. He has certain things--"the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Again, in Romans 8:9, "Ye are not in flesh but in Spirit." The word phronousin(G5426 see note), "mind," does not here have reference to intellect or understanding, but to the attention or occupation of the being, caused by its natural disposition. And we find thus two classes; first, those according to flesh. This we believe includes here all those not born of God, that is, still in a state of nature, in which class Ephesians 2:3 shows believers once to have been: "We also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts."

Second, those according to Spirit. These are God’s true children, the Holy Spirit, of whom they were born, indwelling all of them.

Note: Couldn’t find the word "phronousin" in Strongs Dictionary. The word "phroneo" was the closest match and is the word used via the strongs number for the word "mind" in Romans 8:5. The distinction between these two classes is as real as that between the sheep and goat nations at Christ’s coming, or between those written in the book of life and those not written, at the last judgment. An unconquerable sadness rises in our hearts at the fact that after these centuries upon centuries of Divine dealing with man, and especially since the gospel has been preached, as Paul declares, "in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23), there are yet those like Cain, Esau, Balaam, Saul, Judas, that are according to flesh. Alas, this description includes the mass of our race, for it is only "a little flock" that can be described as being according to Spirit.

Now all those according to flesh cherish, desire, are occupied with, and absorbed in, talk of, think of, follow after, the things of flesh; those according to Spirit, likewise discern, value, love, are absorbed in, the things of Spirit. [171]

[171] "Man earthy, of the earth, an hungred feeds On earth’s dark poison tree-- Wild gourds, and deadly roots, and bitter weeds; And as his food is he. And hungry souls there are, that find and eat God’s manna day by day; And glad they are, their life is fresh and sweet, For as their food are they!

--Ter Steegen.

Those according to flesh "mind" the flesh’s things: its physical lusts,--gluttony, uncleanness, slothfulness; its soulical lusts,--mental delights, pleasures of the imagination, esthetic indulgences, or "tastes"--whether art, music, sculpture, or what not; its spiritual lusts,--of pride, envy, malice, avarice: in a word, every unclean thing, and every good thing used by unclean persons,--that is, persons not cleansed by the blood of Christ, not new creatures in Him. Then, too, there is the "religion" of the flesh, which includes all not of and in the Holy Ghost. And there are those who are according to Spirit,--who "mind" the Spirit’s things: salvation, the person of Christ, the fellowship of the saints, the Word of God, prayer, praise prophecy, the blessed hope of Christ’s coming, walking as He walked before men. True, many, many of these fall woefully short (as they well know); yet they mind the things of Spirit, the things of God, to some degree, while others will have nothing of them. The reason immediately appears:

Romans 8:6 : For the mind (phronema(G5427)--noun form of the verb of Romans 8:5) of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit, life and peace. It is terrible to contemplate a mind, disposition, purpose, so set on death (which is its end) that it can be said to be death. It is a most solemn contemplation that we who are in Christ were once in the flesh, the mind and disposition of which we could not and would not change, and which was death itself! The King James rendering in this verse is hopelessly obscure. God does not say that "to be carnally minded" is death, but that the mind of the flesh, in which they are, is death. Further, He does not say, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace," as if it were a state into which the believer came; but He does say, the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. In neither case does God speak of people, but of the flesh and of the Spirit. If you are according to Spirit, having been born of God, there is indwelling you a mighty One, the Comforter, whose whole mind, disposition, and manner of being and ruling within you, is life and

peace. This "life" is the life of the Risen Christ, which the Spirit, as "the Spirit of grace," supplies (Hebrews 10:29, Galatians 3:5); and this "peace" is that of Christ as spoken of in Isaiah: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

Romans 8:7 : Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. Here the disposition (mind) of the flesh is shown to be the reason why that disposition is death. Perhaps no one text of Scripture more completely sets forth the hideously lost state of man after the flesh. For the disposition (mind) of the flesh is enmity itself toward God! There was indeed, as we saw in Romans 5:10, reconcilement to God while we were enemies, but it did not in any wise consist in changing the nature of the flesh. On the contrary, we were transferred by death with Christ, into the Risen Christ, the flesh remaining unchanged. Your estate while in the flesh was as lost by nature as that of the demons. For nothing worse could be said of them than that they are enmity toward God and are not able to be subject to His law. God certainly has given the flesh up, and nothing but sovereign mercy ever redeemed a human being. [172]

[172] Very many years ago a deep revival was in progress in New Haven, Conn., and in Yale College there. Many, especially of the society class, were falling under profound conviction. Several young ladies who had found peace in the blood of Christ, went to a very prominent friend,--a young woman whose generosity, grace and kindness had endeared her especially to her circle of friends. They besought her to come to the revival meetings. When she objected, they protested, "But God has a claim on you. He loves you. He gave His Son to die for you," Fiercely she burst forth, stamping her foot: "I hate God!"

Romans 8:8 : And those who are in flesh cannot please God--This is God’s sweeping announcement concerning all mankind that are out of Christ. In this sense, all in the flesh are out of Christ. Those in the flesh, even if, like Cain, they would worship God, would come in their own way,--the flesh’s way, which God cannot accept. Terrible prospect! in a state forever displeasing to Him in whom is all blessing. Such are all not born of God.

Romans 8:9 : But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Here the great mark of a true Christian is, that the Spirit of God dwells in him. If he is indwelt by the Spirit of God, he is not "in flesh," but instead an entirely different kind of being,--"in Spirit." The Spirit becomes now the element in which the believer lives, like water to the fish, or air to the bird, vital, supplying, protecting.

Practically, there are those, like the men of Ephesus--"about twelve (Acts 19:1), who were disciples," but did not have the Holy Spirit,--a fact Paul instantly discerned. Their answer to his question in Acts 19:2, is wrongly translated in the King James. They really said, "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was" (or, "was given": it is exactly the same form as John 7:39, "The Spirit was not yet; because Jesus was not yet glorified"). John the Baptist had constantly taught about the Holy Spirit, that He that should come after him would give them the Holy Spirit. It was concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that these at Ephesus were ignorant. They were honest: they were converted men; they had been baptized with John’s baptism of repentance. John had said that they should, however, believe on Him that should come after him--on Jesus. Now Paul takes them and instructs them that Christ’s redeeming work having been fully finished on the cross, the Holy Spirit was come, and was given to all believers.

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6).

Now they were in the full Christian position. Thousands upon thousands of earnest, professing Christians have, we believe, like these, not yet heard "that the Holy Spirit was," that is, had definitely come on the scene at Pentecost, to be given to every believer. He is here! The gift of Him and His indwelling constitutes the distinctive mark of Christians.

Many sincere people are yet spiritually under John the Baptist's ministry of repentance. Their state is practically that of the struggle of Romans 7:1-25, where neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit is mentioned, but only a quickened but undelivered soul in struggle under a sense of "duty," not a sense of full acceptance in Christ and sealing by the Holy Spirit. [173]

[173] Of earnest "church members" today have all the Holy Spirit? Here and there is one who has the witness, "Abba, Father"; who testifies boldly that Jesus Christ is his Lord; who has a burden of prayer for the lost; who has a yearning for the fellowship of the saints, and a hunger for God's Word. What about the rest? They are occupied with various "Christian" activities. Or, having in most cases, (I speak of earnest souls) a Seventh of "Romans experience, not knowing themselves fully accepted of God on the ground of Christ's work, and not knowing the deliverance that is through Christ Jesus by the indwelling Holy Spirit from the power of sin and selfishness and worldliness, and sometimes--awful to say! not willing to come out and be separate from that world which crucified their Lord (and is not sorry!), they become part of the present ecclesiastical system,--as Jews were of that system. You ask, are such people Christians? If they have finally broken with sin, and are "praying to God alway," they belong, indeed, in the company of Cornelius (Acts 10), who was a devout man, but was not yet in the Christian position. Two steps led him to the Christian position: first, faith in Christ that his sins were remitted. (Acts 10:43); second, the gift of the Holy Ghost, which followed (Acts 11:15-18.) Of course, we cannot agree with the Pentecostal people that only those that speak with tongues have the Holy Ghost. We believe that gift was given at Cornelius house to convince Peter, as we read in the following chapter (Acts 11:17) that they had "the like gift," that had been conferred on the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost. That gift was the Holy Spirit; and not a gift--charisma(G5486)--which the Spirit Himself afterwards conferred. The same thing applies to Acts 19:6 : "The Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." The essential thing was the conferring of the Holy Spirit, and not the Spirit's operations thereafter. (What we say does not mean that we "forbid to speak with tongues"--which God forbids us to forbid:-- 1 Corinthians 14:39;--and concerning "prophesying" we comment in Chapter Twelve.) But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Now this sentence would seem at first to rule out what we have been saying in the foot-note on the Holy Spirit. But, that the apostle is not speaking of those who will shortly have the Spirit of Christ, they being sincere, godly souls, is at once evident when we remember that Cornelius, and those twelve men at Ephesus, were sincere disciples as far as their light went: and in them God is simply showing us the processes of the work of salvation in real saints. Whereas, when Paul says none of His, he is speaking in an absolute way of those who are Christ's and those who are not. Those who are Christ's either have or will have the Spirit. Sad to say, it may not be until on a death-bed, when at last the soul renounces all hope but the shed blood of Christ, and is then sealed by the

Spirit. Notice also here that the Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ. This is, of course, the Holy Spirit, (not the mind or disposition of Christ). [174] He is called the Spirit of Christ, because Christ promised and sent Him: "The Comforter, whom I will send unto you from the Father,--the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father," (John 15:26); "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Christ] hath poured forth this which ye see and hear" (Acts 2:33). And also because He manifests Christ: "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:14). Those therefore who belong to Christ have thus His Spirit given to them, always, as we said above, (if they are not still in the preparatory states of repentance, or legal struggle against sin, as in Romans Seven) when they rest believingly in Christ and His work!

[174] "It is astonishing to find many commentators insisting on "Spirit" with a small "s" here, stating that it is "the human spirit, . . . essentially that part of man that holds communion with God" (Sanday). But such a notion defeats the whole meaning of the passage, which is, that that possession by the believer of the Holy Spirit in person is the seal and mark of a true believer over against those that are merely "soulical" (literally, "psychical"); as in Jude 1:19 : "These are they who make separations, sensual, [Greek: psychikoi(G5591 see note)], having not the Spirit." Paul says to the Ephesians concerning Christ: "In whom, upon believing, [aorist] ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14). Having the Holy Spirit is the unvarying apostolic sign of the true Christian. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He gave us" (1 John 3:24). Compare Galatians 3:2-3; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Note: Couldn’t find "psychikoi" in Strongs Dictionary. Closest match was "psuchikos" and is the word that matches the strongs number for "sensual" in Jude 1:19.

Dwelleth in you--This word dwelleth is a touching word, used five times of the Spirit’s making His home within us, in every redeemed one!

Romans 8:10 : And if Christ is in you, the body indeed is dead, on account of sin; but the Spirit is life, on account of righteousness.

Here in this tenth verse we have the answer to our Lord’s prayer in John 17:21-22 : "I pray . . . that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us: . . . that they may be one, even as we are one."

We have seen in an earlier chapter how we came to be in Christ: that God, having ended our history before Himself as connected with the first Adam, at the cross, created us in Christ, the Last Adam, the Second Man. Thus was the one part of our Lord’s intercession answered. We are in Christ. But the other part of the great mystery is here before us in Romans 8:10 : Christ is in us. Although, as we know, He is within us by His Spirit, yet it is Christ Himself who is in us. That the Spirit can make Christ present in us, we see in the beautiful words of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 : "Now the Lord is the Spirit: . . . We . . . are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit. Or, as Paul says in the solemn words of 2 Corinthians 13:5 : "Know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" [175]

[175] "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), is called by the apostle there "the riches of the glory of this mystery"--the great revelation which Paul’s gospel contains. But it is a terrible error to confine the revelation of that mystery to what are called "the prison epistles," beginning

with Ephesians. The two sides of the gospel, We in Christ, and, Christ in us, are constantly set forth from Romans on. The very words of our verse in Romans (Romans 8:10): If Christ is in you, are as wonderful as we find! In Galatians also (Galatians 2:20): "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." And in 2 Corinthians 13:3 : "Christ that speaketh in me"; and in Galatians 1:16 : "To reveal His Son in me." (These last two refer especially to testimony.) In Ephesians 3:14-21 we have the great prayer, "that Christ may make His home down in your hearts through faith." He lives in all saints (2 Corinthians 13:5), just as all saints are in Him. But the Ephesians passage is like Revelation 3:20 : "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Let us beware of the false teaching, that only the so-called "prison epistles" are "church truth." For in all Paul's epistles we find this great double truth, we in Christ, and Christ in us. Each epistle has its particular object and phase of truth, certainly, but they are one; and are all for the Church, the one Body! Our Lord said in John 14:10-11 : "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." Christ and His Father were distinct persons, yet one, in being, life, love, and purpose. "I and the Father are one." "The living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father." "The Father loveth the Son . . . I love the Father." "I glorified Thee . . . glorify Thou Me with Thine own self." A similar marvelous union our blessed Lord asked and obtained for us with Himself: "That they may be one, even as We are one!" "That they may be in Us" (John 17:21-23).

Returning to Romans 8:10 : There is a double fact stated concerning those in whom Christ by His Spirit is. First, the body is dead. Second, the Spirit is life. It is evident that our bodies here are contrasted with our spirits, and these as in the Holy Spirit. It is well that we thoroughly understand and believe that our bodies are in no sense redeemed as yet. They are "dead" as regards any emotion Godward; and this "because of sin." Those who teach and seek "eradication of the sinful principle," as they call it, would do well to ponder this tenth verse. The other blessed fact, that the Spirit is life because of righteousness, is enough for our present walk. "Him who knew no sin God made to become sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Not only are our sins put away and we ourselves "justified from all things"; but we have been created in Christ Jesus. The new creature, Paul tells us, "hath been created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:24). It is striking in Romans 8:10 that the noun life is opposed to the adjective dead. Our spirits before they were new-created in Christ, were alive so far as existence is concerned but had no life as God counts life--for that is only in Christ and by the Spirit.

We read "Spirit" in this verse, meaning the Holy Spirit. The sense being, that the Spirit, by whose power we were made partakers of the risen life of Christ, acts constantly as "the Lord the Spirit," (as quoted above from 2 Corinthians 3:17) as the maintainer and supplier of that life of Christ in us. The Holy Spirit alone could be called life! We recognize that the human body and the human spirit seem to be contrasted in the verse before us. [176] Yet we remember Galatians 5:25 : "We live by the Spirit"; and Romans 8:2 : "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"; and "The mind of the Spirit is life" (Romans 8:6). Our spirits are now alive--and that to God! But "Christ is our life"; and the Administrator of that life in us is the Spirit of God.

[176] lt is "body" (soma(G4983)), not flesh (sarx(G4561)). It it were sarx, we would at once know the Holy Spirit is meant,--from Galatians 5:17.

Romans 8:11 : But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies, through His Spirit that dwelleth in you. The body--the mortal body--is the subject of this verse. Our spirits have been shown to have life,--now: while the body is still dead--as to God: But now God announces that to these bodies, so dead to God, holiness and heaven, is by and by to be given life!

First, we are reminded that the Spirit of that God who raised up Jesus is dwelling in us. Now, Jesus is our Lord's personal name: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." It was Jesus whom they crucified, and buried in Joseph's tomb. With Jesus, before His death and resurrection, we were not joined; but with Christ Jesus, the Risen One! This is His resurrection Name: indeed, He is never named thus until the Epistles.

Now we are asked to reflect on that place of weakness and deadness in which Jesus once was. But God raised Him up from the dead. And the Spirit of the God who thus raised Jesus is dwelling in us! So that, although our bodies are yet dead on account of sin,--dead to God,--the Spirit of Him who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead,--Christ Jesus, in whom we now are,--this God will give life also to these poor mortal bodies of ours! And it will be by His Spirit who now indwells us! (This word "mortal" means, subject to physical death; and is used in Scripture only of the body.)

What an unutterable comfort! "Whether we wake or sleep," this blessed indwelling Spirit of God will give life to these mortal dead-to-God bodies of ours, so that they shall be as alive Godward as our redeemed spirits now are!

It is present comfort beyond measure to know that when the day comes, God will do this blessed giving of life to our bodies through His Spirit that is now dwelling in us!

Mortal bodies--"Mortal" and "immortal," always, as we note above, in Scripture refer to the body. It is "this mortal" which will "put on immortality" when Christ comes. "What is mortal shall be swallowed up of life" (1 Corinthians 15:35; 1 Corinthians 15:54; 2 Corinthians 5:4).

What blessed phases of our salvation lie in the hands of the indwelling Spirit!

"Who shall deliver me?" That question of Chapter Seven is abundantly answered here in Chapter Eight! Not only from guilt, by the shed blood of Christ (in Chapter Five); but from the "law of sin" in the members, over which even man's quickened will was so impotent; and from a "mind" that is death, into the mind and walk of the blessed indwelling Spirit Himself: into a mind that is "life and peace." But further, now, we find that God, by that same indwelling Spirit, will bring our very mortal bodies,--now dead to God, and subject to death, to share that life in Christ which our spirits now have!

12 So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh,--according to flesh to be living! 13 For if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die: but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the doings of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by [the] Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For ye received not a spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received a Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: 17 and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.

Romans 8:12 : So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh--according to flesh to be living. "So then" has all the great truths in mind from Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-12! Identified with Christ, our old man was crucified with Him, our connection with Adam the first being thus broken by death. Next we share His newness of life as being in Christ Risen. Next the Spirit of life is caused to indwell us, by His almighty power setting us free from the law of sin and of death--because all rights of sin as connected with flesh were cancelled at the cross. Finally, although our body is still dead to God, yet the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus personally dwells within us, guaranteeing that He who raised Christ federally and caused us to share His risen life will make our bodies also alive toward Him when Christ returns. And meanwhile the indwelling Spirit becomes an "earnest" of the coming redemption of our bodies. "So then"--let the power of all these mighty truths govern our thoughts here.

Now note the form of statement in Romans 8:12 : We are debtors--(indeed we are) to God, to Christ and to the indwelling Spirit! But this debtorship to God is not here pressed at all. But rather the negation of any debtorship whatever to the flesh! in view of our wonderful deliverance just recited. We are indeed debtors, but not to the flesh--according to flesh to be living. God formed man’s body, first, calling: him man (Genesis 2:7). Then he breathed into his nostrils the breath (literally, spirit) of life; and man became a living soul. His bodily functions we all know. His soul-life put him in touch with the world into which by Divine creation he had now been introduced, but man was essentially a spirit, living in a body, possessing a soul. It was with his spirit that God communed and in which alone man was God-conscious.

Now when man sinned, all was overthrown! The body, that was to be the tabernacle of this Divinely inbreathed or created spirit, took immediate lordship. The life of God was withdrawn from man’s spirit. He had died to God! The spirit became the slave of the body; and the propensities of the latter, normal and controlled before, became the whole urge or driving force of man’s existence! His soul, also, which included his five "senses,"--which perceived and enjoyed the external universe; with his reason and imagination, became controlled by what God called "the flesh." "The thoughts of man’s heart," became "only evil and that continually."

Now in the new birth the dead spirit (dead to God) is by Divine creation made alive, or enlifed with Christ; and the Holy Spirit becomes the sphere of man’s newly created spirit; for whatever the believer’s progress may be, he is no longer in flesh but in Spirit! The body’s demands are the same as ever, because the body is not yet redeemed; and to live after the desires of the body--"according to flesh" Paul warns:

Romans 8:13 : For if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die--Here is a terrible warning: (1) It is one of the great red lights by which God keeps His elect out of fatal paths. (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:2, Colossians 1:23.) (2) It shows how those who have received a knowledge of the truth and are addressed by the apostle as among God’s people, may yet be choosing a flesh-walk--which involves the refusal of the Spirit--refusal to be led by Him, as are all God’s real sons (Romans 8:14). (3) Death, here, is of course eternal death, as in Chapter Six: "The end of these things is death"; and here in Chapter Eight: "The mind of the flesh is death." (4) Note that expression "about to die" (mellete(G3195 "mel’-lo" word used for "about" in Strongs numbers in Romans 8:13)). Those following a flesh-walk are not yet viewed as dead, so let them hear and repent quickly, lest they become as those professing Christians became in Jude 1:12 : Autumn

trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots,"--summer ended, a fruitless autumn, and Divine cursing. or "twice dead" means that there was an awakening, a quickening, and a tasting, as in Hebrews 6:1-20; tasting of the heavenly gift--eternal life; then, final apostasy, and withdrawal of all gracious influences; the very roots, as in the barren fig tree, plucked up and withered. Born again? No. Yet "escaping the defilements of the world," only to choose to go back to a "twice-dead" condition. Surely the mind of the flesh is death! But if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the doings of the body, ye shall live--Here is a most definite word that the body is under the control of sin; and a most definite statement as to the manner of a holy life.

1. The deeds, or doings of the body are naturally selfish, and so, evil, for the body is not redeemed. (See same word "deed" in Luke 23:51.) The body would have its every desire gratified--because it so desires. It has no governor in itself but the sin by which it is still dead--to God and all holiness. Even the lawful needs and desires of the body become sinful and deathful if the body is allowed to rule. In Romans 6:12 we hear: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body that ye should obey the desires of it" (the body). The beasts and birds follow the instincts and desires of their bodies, being without spirit, conscience or sin. But man cannot do so. For he has,--yea, he is, essentially a spirit,--though he dwells in a bodily tabernacle, and has a conscience, under the eye of which all his consents or refusals pass, and that constantly. And to let his unredeemed body govern him, is to fall far below the very beasts: for he lets sin reign in his mortal body, when he lets the lusts of the body control his decisions.

2. Now God says the "doings" of the body are to be put to death. Not that our bodies are not dear to God. They are,--and if we are Christ’s our bodies are members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). But they are not redeemed as yet. And God has left us in these unredeemed bodies, that we may learn--(1) the badness of our old self-life, as we see that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing; (2) the exceeding sinfulness of sin,--and learn to hate and abhor it; (3) the sweet and blessed path of relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit,--nay, even of using His Almighty and willing power by acts of simple faith; for it reads, "If WE, by the Spirit, put to death the doings of the body." For we must note most carefully that a holy life is to be lived by us. It is not that we have any power,--we have none. But God’s Spirit dwells in us for the express object of being relied "upon by us to put to death the doings of the body." Self-control is one of that sweet cluster called "the fruit of the Spirit," in Galatians 5:22.

02.16. Chapter 8B

CHAPTER 8B

How confidently Paul walked in this power of the Spirit! "In the Holy Spirit," he says, in 2 Corinthians 6:6,--"in pureness," etc. And again, "I will not be brought under the power of any" bodily desire,--however lawful. And again, "I buffet my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, having preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (1 Corinthians 6:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27). A holy life without a controlled body is an absolute contradiction; not to be dreamed of for a moment. Indeed, God goes further here, and says, "Ye shall live,--if ye by the Spirit put to death the doings of the body": the opposite path being, "If ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die!" When we announce that the Scripture teaching is that walking by the Holy Spirit has taken the place of walking under the rule of the Mosaic law, there remains to be examined, and that most carefully, just what walking by the Spirit means.

1. It does not mean to desert the use of our faculties of moral perception or of moral judgment.

Although there doubtless are occasions in which the believer, being filled with the Spirit, acts in a wholly unanticipated way; and although there may be times when he will be carried quite out of himself in ecstasies of joy or love; and although the believer walking by the Spirit will normally be conscious of the almighty power within, of triumph over the world and the flesh: nevertheless the feet of the believer will never be swept from the path of conscious moral determination. He will always know that so far as decisions of moral matters are concerned, he has still the sense of moral accountability, or, perhaps better, responsibility. The believer’s own conscience will protest against any such letting go of himself as has been unfortunately found throughout Church history when people have submitted themselves to such ecstatic states that moral judgment and self-control were cast to the winds.

We do indeed read of most remarkable experiences, and that in deeply approved saints, in which their spirits were overwhelmed by the vision of Divine things, and we must adduce that in such experiences they were rapt and ecstatic; but never to the losing of that self-control which, we read in Galatians 5:22, is a fruit of the Spirit. Even in the exercise of the gifts spoken of by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, it is definitely declared, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

It is in the abandonment of the sense of moral responsibility into unscriptural surrender of the mental and spiritual faculties,--into other control than self-control directed by the Holy Spirit, that such awful extravagances have occurred in Church history.

2. To be led by the Spirit does indeed involve the surrender of our wills to God. But God, on His side, does not crush into fatalistic abandon those very faculties with which He has endowed men. On the contrary, the surrendered saint immediately finds His faculties marvelously quickened,--his faculties both of mind and of sensibility. All the powers of his soul-life (which include his intellect, tastes, feelings, emotions, and recollective memory) are renewed. His will being yielded to God,

God now "works in Him to will" as well as "to do of His good pleasure,"--in which the surrendered saint rejoices. But while it is indeed God who works in us even to will, yet it is true that walking in the Spirit is still our own choice: "If ye by the Spirit put to death the doings of the body"--we read. The Holy Spirit is infinitely ready, but God leads rather than compels.

There is deep mystery, no doubt, in the great double fact of God is working in us to will, and on the other hand, of our choosing His will, moment by moment. We can only affirm that both are taught in Scripture, and we ourselves know both to be blessedly true.

Romans 8:14-15 : For as many as are led by [the] Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not a spirit of bondage again unto fear;--Let us look first at the words "sons of God"; and second at what is meant by being "led by the Spirit"; third, let us see that our being thus in the Spirit's sphere and control is the proof of the reality of our sonship.

1. "Sons" means "adult-sons," sons come of age (see footnote, Romans 8:15). The term, when referring to saints, is applied in Paul's epistles both to Christ (Romans 1:3-4; Romans 1:9); and to those associated with Him since His resurrection (Galatians 4:4-7); therefore to His own saints, sealed by the Spirit--those sons whom God is "bringing unto glory."

2. Being "led by the Spirit" does not refer here to service, nor to "guidance" in particular paths. It refers to that general control by the blessed Spirit of those born of the Spirit, living by the Spirit, in the Spirit. He is the sphere and mode of their being, and is their seal unto the day of redemption.

3. That our being thus in the Spirit's sphere and control is the proof of the reality of our sonship, is evident from what has been said; but let us avoid the thought that assurance of our sonship is based on our perfect obedience to the Spirit. Nothing is based upon us. If one of God's true saints disobeys, it is the office of that same Spirit to convict him of his sin, interceding in Him "according to God" (Romans 8:27), while Christ intercedes for him above (1 John 2:1).

Israel received a spirit of bondage when they were placed under the Law. And how sad that perhaps the most of Christians regard themselves as under the Law and so under bondage. In this they are like the world, which fears Christ as (they think) a hard taskmaster. Now the result of a spirit of bondage was fear. When Israel walked in the wilderness with Jehovah dwelling in darkness in the holy of holies in the tabernacle, they were taught to fear. For Jehovah was teaching a sinful people His holiness and separateness from them, and how to draw near Him only by sacrifices. But when Christ came, all was different. He came not noticing or marking sin. Quickly the common people became glad. Proud religion called Him "a friend of publicans and sinners"--and He was. We have no words to express the limitless graciousness of God manifested in the flesh--in Christ. But how much beyond even those favored to see "the days of the Son of Man" on earth is the position of those in Christ Risen: sin put away forever, released from the old Adam life and responsibilities, and now the Spirit sent witnessing in our hearts--the very Spirit of God's Son. A spirit of fear and bondage is as out of place now as if one caught up with Christ in the Rapture were afraid to face God, in whose Son he is!

Ye received a spirit of adult-sonship, [177] whereby we cry Abba, Father!

[177] We have sought in vain for some simple English expression to set forth the Greek word so poorly rendered "adoption." This word is huio-thesia(G5206): from, huios(G5207), "son come of

age"; and thesia, a placing, or setting a person or thing in its place. In earthly affairs, "adoption" is the term applied to the selection as child and heir of one not born of us; and the execution of legal papers making such child our own, inheriting legal rights, etc. But God's children are begotten and born of God, and are called tekna(G5043 closest match), "born-ones," of God. Thus are they directly related to God, "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). All God's children, whether in Old Testament days or today, are thus born. But the word huios means, a child come of age; no longer "as a servant" (Galatians 4:7). And huiothesia means God's recognizing them in that position! This will be consummated fully at the coming of Christ, when our bodies, redeemed, and fashioned anew, shall be conformed to Christ's glorious body. Meanwhile, because we are already adult sons (huioi), God has given us a spirit of adult-sonship! No Jew called God "Father," or "Abba"; but "Jehovah." (Indeed) fearfulness, even prevented, generally, the use by the Jews of God's memorial-name--Jehovah--for that nation: they called Him Adonai(H113)--"Lord." And the English translations of the Old Testament, except the A.R.V., do the same thing,--only printing Jehovah as "LORD"--in capitals! But this is no translation; and is legal fearfulness.) "Because ye are adult-sons (huioi) God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6-7). Even as to the strong Roman law concerning "adoption" of those not born in the family, (and Paul is writing to Romans) the following is instructive: "The process of legal adoption by which the chosen heir became entitled not only to the reversion of the property but to the civil status) to the burdens as well as the rights of the adopter--made him become, as it were, his other self, one with him . . . We have but a faint conception of the force with which such an illustration would speak to one familiar with the Roman practice; how it would serve to impress upon him the assurance that the adopted son of God becomes, in a peculiar and intimate sense, one with the heavenly Father." (Merivale, quoted by Vincent.) Romans 8:16 : The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are born-ones of God. The manner of communication between the Holy Spirit and our spirit is a profound mystery. Indeed all man's vaunted knowledge is challenged by Jehovah's word to Job: "Who hath given understanding to the mind?" We do not speak now with the mere purpose of ridiculing man's vaunted knowledge, but simply to state facts. Human philosophy and science know absolutely nothing about the quality or nature of spirit.

God, in this passage in Romans, does not address Himself at all to human intellect, but to the consciousness of His saints. [178] The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit. There is no certainty comparable with this!

[178] 1.Much unnecessary and unfruitful questioning as to what is the witness of the Spirit has arisen. It is plain both in this passage (Romans 8:15-16) and from the great verse in Galatians 4:6 : "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father," that the "witness of the Spirit" is the producing of the consciousness of being born of God, of belonging to His family, in Christ. And for us today who are in Christ, there should be the consciousness, not merely of babes, but of adult-sons. "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father," It is a sense of the very relation to the Father which Christ Himself has as Son! Mark, in this we do not "know" the Son, for He is the second person of the Deity; but we do know the Father, and the Son "willeth to reveal Him" by sending the blessed Spirit for that purpose. (See Matthew 11:27.) How beautifully sweet is the recognition of its parents by a babe, a child! unconcious, instinctive, yet how real! Now the witness of the Spirit is to the fact of our relationship. How foolish it would be, and how sad, if a child should fall into the delusion that it

must have certain "feelings" if it is to believe itself a child of its parents. The unconscious certainty of the relationship is the beauty of it. There are, indeed, certain tests Divinely given us, by which to assure ourselves. Most of these, perhaps, are in the great Epistle of Fellowship, First John;--"fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ": "I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father (1 John 2:13). Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is (1 John 3:2). Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He gave us" (1 John 3:24).

"With our spirit"--We are not told that the Spirit bears witness to our spirit, as if the knowledge that we are God's children were some unheard of, undreamed matter to our own spirits. But He beareth witness with our spirit, showing that the child of God, having had communicated to him God's own nature (2 Peter 1:4), Christ's own life (1 Corinthians 6:17), is fundamentally, necessarily conscious of the glorious fact of filial relationship to God. Along with this consciousness, the Spirit indwelling witnesses, enabling us, moving us, to cry, "Abba, Father." There is life before this, just as the new-born babe has life and breath before it forms a syllable. It is significant that the Spirit indwelling is the power whereby we cry, Abba, Father,--by His enlightenment. His encouragement, His energy. The operations of a man's mind either in philosophy or in science constitute an eternal quest for certainty. The conclusions of philosophy are based upon theories and hypotheses and are always being challenged and perpetually overthrown by succeeding new schemes of philosophy. And even the dearest discoveries of science await new explanations--of the very constitution of the universe they are invented in. But with the child of God--the born-again family, there is no such uncertainty! A child of God knows. And the blessed Holy Spirit, by whose inscrutable power he was born again, keeps forever witnessing with his consciousness,--and that through no processes of his mind, but directly, that he is a born-one of God. This is most natural and could not be otherwise. Children in an earthly family grow up together as a family, their parents addressing them as children, their brothers and sisters knowing them to be such. It is the most beautiful thing in the natural world!

How much more certain, yea, how much more wonderful and beautiful, is the constantly witnessed relationship of His children to God: the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are born-ones [179] of God. Believers will find themselves calling God Father, in their prayers and communion. This witness will spring up of itself in the heart that has truly rested in Christ and His shed blood.

[179] This word tekna means "born-ones," offspring. The several other Greek words for child are used accurately in Scripture: brephos(G1025),--an unborn child or a newborn child (Luke 1:44; Luke 2:12; Luke 2:16); nepios(G3516), babes or small children,--children not come of age (Matthew 21:16; 1 Corinthians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 4:1; Galatians 4:3; Ephesians 4:14), as over against adults or those come of age; pais(G3816), paidion(G3813) and paidarion(G3808), children, generally; and with regard to their need of training and teaching. (The verbal for paideo means to train children, or to cause any one to learn; thus arises its use in Hebrews 12:6.) Finally, huios(G5207), which is the word of sonship, of adult understanding: Paul contrasts this word, with nepios(G3516) in both Galatians 4:6, and 1 Corinthians 13:11, as adulthood over against childhood, or infancy. These distinctions are not absolute, but practically so.

Conversely, if we find ourselves always in our prayers saying Lord, Lord, and never Father, we should be concerned, and should go back to the beginnings of things,--that is, to the record concerning our guilt, in Romans Three, and our helplessness, and to the fact that God has set forth Christ as a propitiation; and resting there, in His shed blood, we should boldly call God Father, and cultivate that habit.

Nor, in our judgment, should Christians permit themselves habits of address in prayer not authorized and exemplified in Scripture. Our Lord Jesus prayed saying, "Father," "My Father," "O righteous Father." He did not say, "Almighty God," nor did He use the name "Jehovah," as Israel did in the Psalms and elsewhere. He said, "Father." And He said to us, "When ye pray, say, Father." (Note Luke 11:2 in the Revised Version.) "We have our access," says Paul, "in one Spirit unto the Father." "To us there is one God, the Father" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Today, also, some devoted Christians address God as "Father-God." But why not say, "Father," as our Lord directed and the Spirit witnesses? To say "Father-God," makes the first word an adjective!

Some may say, "It is foolish and unnecessary to make such discriminations." But if God "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father," we speak to the Father as did our beloved Savior Himself. This is infinite grace, and should be appreciated and cultivated by us. Moreover, if you were going into the presence of the King of England, you would take thought for a proper form of address. How infinitely rather when you address God!

Romans 8:17 : If born-ones, then heirs--We have noted that the word for children here, tekna(G5040), is different from the word for adult-sons (huioi(G5207)) of Romans 8:14. The word indicates the fact that we are really begotten of God through His Word by His Spirit, and are partakers of His nature. Heirship is from relationship. The young ruler who came running to the Lord saying, "What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" was a perfect example of a legalist. Indeed, Nicodemus, beloved man, "understood not these things"--of being born again. Now, if a man is really a child of God by begetting and birth, he becomes indissolubly God’s heir! This is a fact of such overwhelming magnitude that our poor hearts hardly grasp it. It is said of no angel, cherub, or seraph, that he is an heir of God. Believer, if you will reflect, meditate deeply, on this, I am born of God; I am one of His heirs! earthly things will shrink to nothing. Now, J. D. Rockefeller, Jr., has inherited his father’s wealth: why? Because he was his father’s born son. The young ruler said, "What must I do to inherit?" a contradiction in itself!

Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ--I could not have the presumption to write these words if they were not in God’s holy Book. That a guilty, lost, wretched child of Adam the First should have written of him, a joint-heir with Christ, the Eternal Maker of all things, the Well-beloved of the Father, the Righteous One, the Prince of life--only God the God of all grace could prepare such a destiny for such a creature!

And, we may humbly say, perhaps, that God could only do this by joining us in eternal union with His beloved Son, as the Last Adam, the Second Man; having released us from Adam the First and all his connections, at the cross, and having placed us in Christ Risen, in all the boundless and everlasting rights of His dear Son, whom He has "appointed heir of all things!" Ages after ages of ever-increasing blessing forever and forever and forever, lie in prospect for believers--for the joint-heirs!

If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.--Here two schools of interpretation part company, one saying boldly that all the saints are designated, and that all shall reign with Christ; the other, that reigning with Christ depends upon voluntary choosing of a path of suffering with Him. Well, the Greek word eiper(G1512) translated "if so be," will support either of these interpretations. [180]

[180] Eiper--"if so be that," Is used six times in the New Testament; Romans 8:9; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 8:5; 1 Corinthians 15:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:3. An examination of these references shows that this word eiper can only be interpreted in one passage, 1 Corinthians 15:15, as introducing a non-existent state of things; and here it is only most evidently for the sake of argument only: "if so be that the dead rise not." This use in Romans 8:9, the text proves to be in connection with a positive asserted fact. "if so be the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." This word eiper can be rendered in all six passages by "if, as is supposed." I would suggest the rendering, "inasmuch as," for Romans 8:17.

"That we may also be glorified together." This is the key to our question: WHO are to be glorified with Christ when He comes? In Chapter Five Paul says (and that of, and to, all the saints), "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 we read, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed." And in 1 Corinthians 15:23 : "Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s, at His coming." And again (Colossians 3:4): "When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also [evidently all the saints!] with Him be manifested in glory." Again (1 John 3:2): "Now are we [all the saints] children of God . . . We know that, if He shall be manifested, we [all the saints] shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is!"

Such passages leave no room at all for a "partial rapture!" All the saints will share Christ’s glory.

Now, as to places in the Kingdom, what reward we shall have, what responsibilities of kingdom government (in the 1000 years), we shall each be able to bear, or be entitled to, our "suffering with" Christ Jesus, seems to determine. "If we died with Him [as did all believers] we shall [all] also live with Him [in glory]; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12, R. V.)

Now the Greek word used in Romans 8:17 for "suffer with" (sumpascho(G4841)) is used just once more in the New Testament: in 1 Corinthians 12:26 : "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Here Paul is speaking of the Body of Christ into which all believers have been baptized by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13): "As the [human] body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ; For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one Body." Here note all believers are in this Body. And then, 1 Corinthians 12:26 : "Whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it." Here (and mark again this is the only occurrence of the word besides Romans 8:17) "suffering with" is not a voluntary matter, but one necessitated by the relationship. If someone should tread upon your foot, your whole body would be exercised. So it is with Christ and His members.

Now as to the other word, of 2 Timothy 2:12 : "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him"; this word is entirely different: but (and note this), the subject of which it treats is different. Being a joint-heir with Christ, and being a member of His Body, and therefore, sharing necessarily those sufferings that every member of a living Christ will suffer in a world where Satan is prince, is one

thing; gaining the ability to have victory over Satan and the world, entering gladly into the conflict those sufferings involve, and enduring, is perhaps an additional thing, fitting one for reigning with Christ, though all His members are joint-heirs with Him.

(Notice "endure"--(Gr. hupomeno(G5278))--of 2 Timothy 2:12 in several instances: Hebrews 12:2; Hebrews 12:3; Hebrews 12:7; James 1:12; James 5:11; 1 Corinthians 13:7.)

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope: 21 because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For unto [a state of] hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? 25 But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Romans 8:18 : The word I reckon (logidzomai(G3049)), is a favorite with Paul. It expresses faith in action. Paul had known abundant sufferings: read II Corinthians Eleven, and all his epistles. But like our Lord, "the File-Leader" (archegos(G747)-- Hebrews 12:2) of the column of believers, who endured the cross in view of the joy set before Him, despising the shame, Paul "reckoned" in view of the coming glory: which should be the constant attitude of all of us. The sufferings of this present time--"This present time"; it is necessary to have God’s estimate of these days in which we live or we will be deluded into man’s false thoughts. Note: "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4); "the days are evil"; "this darkness" (Ephesians 5:16; Ephesians 6:12); "the distress that is upon us"; "the fashion of this world is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:26; 1 Corinthians 7:31). Are not to be compared with the glory--These Words need to be pondered in view of passages like Hebrews 11:35-38; "tortured . . . mockings and scourgings . . . bonds and imprisonment, stoned . . . sawn asunder . . . tempted . . . slain with the sword . . . went about in sheepskins, in goatskins . . . destitute, afflicted, evil-treated . . . wandering [through] the earth." In spite of the horrors of the days of Nero, Diocletian and the rest; and the nameless terrors of the Spanish Inquisition: the "glory which shall be revealed" so swallows up these brief earthly troubles, that they shall not be named nor remembered in that day when Christ shall come.

It is difficult, impossible, to depict in language all of, or any real measure of, what is meant by the glory which shall be revealed toward us. In fact, as we know, we are to be glorified with Christ, to share His glory, and appear with Him in glory. [181] In Colossians 3:4 we read, "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory"; and in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 : "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed." Such passages show that not only will the saints behold Christ’s glory, but, beholding, they will share that glory, and be glorified with Him. This is the great object before God’s mind now, to "bring many sons unto glory" (Hebrews 2:10), that they may be conformed to Christ’s image (Romans 8:29).

[181] The expression "the glory which shall be revealed toward us," is translated "in us" in the King James. This preposition (eis) is used twice, for example, in 2 Thessalonians 2:14 : "Unto which

also He called you through our gospel unto the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ," This "glory" is to be revealed "to usward": not only to us, but in us, and therefore through us, to an astonished universe; and that forever! In constant view of that glory to be revealed in and through the Church, the sufferings which God called the saints to go through, no matter what they were, seemed as nothing.

Romans 8:19 : For the earnest expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. The world knows nothing of this astonishing verse. All the saints should always have it in remembrance! Man’s philosophy and science, taught in their schools, continually prate of "evolution" and "progress" in the present creation. And they go back in pure imagination millions of years and forward millions of years, telling you confidently how things came to be, and when, and what they will come to be; but they know nothing. Here God tells us unto what creation is coming--for what it is waiting: "earnestly." Whether inanimate things on earth (for even the rocks and hills shall sing for joy shortly!) or whether the moving creatures on earth or sea; or whether, may we say, the hosts on high--all are waiting in expectation for that "unveiling of the sons of God." For the word here translated "revealing" is apokalupsis(G602), a removal of a covering,--as when some wonderful statue has been completed and a veil thrown over it, people assemble for the "unveiling" of this work of art. It will be as when sky rockets are sent up on a festival night: rockets which, covered with brown paper, seem quite common and unattractive, but up they are sent into the air and then they are revealed in all colors of beauty, and the multitude waiting below shout in admiration. Now the saints are wrapped up in the common brown paper of flesh, looking outwardly like other folks. But the whole creation is waiting for their unveiling at Christ’s coming, for they are connected with Christ, one with Him, and are to be glorified with Him at His coming.

Romans 8:20 : For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope:

Now God, in His infinite wisdom, thus subjected the creation, [182] --that is, the earth. "The whole creation" must refer to the earth, for the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and the holy angels were not "subjected to vanity"!

[182] The expression creation seems to refer to this earth, even although the words in Romans 8:22 are the whole creation. In Colossians 1:23, Paul speaks of the gospel having been preached "in all creation under heaven." God announced as a result of man’s sin, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee," The creation--the old version here reads "creature," which is not accurate or clear. The reference is especially to the present world and the order of life upon it.

Vanity--Here look back to the garden of Eden, and to Adam’s first sin, the judgment of which fell not upon the man, but we read: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Here we find God subjecting the whole creation to "vanity,"--that is, to unattainment. The book of Ecclesiastes dwells long, with a mournful tone upon this vanity, this unattainment; things "putting forth the tender leaves of hope" only to have the "sudden frost" of disease and death end earthly hopes. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding," as David said in his great prayer (1 Chronicles 29:15). Not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope--God had a vast plan, reaching on into eternity, and "hope" lies ahead for creation: for the Millennium is coming, and after that, a new

heaven and earth.

Romans 8:21 : Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption--Now although we who are in Christ are new creatures, yet God has left our bodies as the link with the present "groaning" creation. Meanwhile, how "the bondage of corruption" appears on every side! Death--are not all creatures in terror of it, seeking to escape it? Every decaying carcass of poor earth-creatures speaks of the bondage of corruption." What ruin man's sin has effected throughout the creation, as well as upon himself! It was God's good pleasure, that when man sinned and became estranged from his God, all creation, which was under him, should be subjected to the "bondage of corruption" along with him, in decay and disease and suffering, death, and destruction, everywhere,--of bondage, with no deliverer.

Into the liberty of the glory of the children of God--As Paul shows) we already have liberty in Christ,--the liberty of grace. The "liberty of the glory of the children of God" awaits Christ's second coming. How blessed it is to know that into that glorious liberty, creation, which has shared "the bondage of corruption," will be brought along with us!

Contrast the state of creation now with the Millennial order described in Isaiah 11:6-9 : The wolf dwelling with the lamb the leopard with the kid; the calf, the young lion, and the fatling together, and the little child leading them. The cow and the bear feeding, their young ones lying down together; the lion eating straw like the ox; children playing over the serpent's hole: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."

Romans 8:22 : For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

We know--Always this is the expression of Christian knowledge. This earth's poets, philosophers, scientists, face to face with death with a capital D,--in every crushed ocean shell, in every rotten log, in the very minor keys in which the voices of beasts and birds are pitched, seem never even to get a glimpse of the bondage of corruption in which all creation is groaning; but talk in sprightly ways of "progress," of "evolution"! How far from understanding the creation around them are human beings all,--except Spirit-taught Christians! "Their own poets" write thus,--of a "groaning creation":

"The year's at the spring, And day's at the morn;

Morning's at seven; The hill-side's dew-pearled; The lark's on the wing; The snail's on the thorn;

God's in His heaven-- All's well with the world!" To think of writing "All's well," in a world where all are dying! Christians, and only Christians see the present creation with new vision, as the work of their dear Father. As Wade Robinson's hymn says, "Heaven above is softer blue, Earth around is sweeter green!

Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen:

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow, Flowers with deeper beauties shine, Since I know, as now I know, I am His, and He is mine."

Groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now--Ever since Adam’s sin, the curse lies on all the earth. The earth and the creatures are away from God. All is estranged, consequently "groaning" and "travailing" are everywhere. (But travailing, though painful, looks toward a birth!)

Until now--No "evolution," "progress,"--but the opposite,--until Christ shall come with the "liberty of the glory."

Romans 8:23 : And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body.

Let us note that the Spirit does not take us out of sympathy with groaning creation, but rather supports us in such sympathy! Being ourselves, as to the body, in a groaning condition,--"longing to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:2) we are able to sympathize with the creatures about us, which is a precious thing! No one should feel as tender as should the child of God toward suffering creation. No one should be as gentle. Not only should this be true about us as concerns unsaved people: as Paul says, "Be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men," but, I say, we should be tender and patient toward animals, for they are in a dying state--until our bodies are redeemed.

What a marvelous position, then, is the Christian’s! On the heavenly side, the side of grace, in Christ, sharing in His risen life, delivered from sin and law and all worldly things. On the other hand, not yet partaker of glory (though expecting and awaiting it), but kept in an unredeemed body,--not fitted yet for heaven: and in which the longing spirit, knowing itself "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light," can only "groan"! This groaning is not at all that of the "wretched man" of Romans Seven. For not only is spiritual victory known; but the "redemption body" is longed for and awaited as that which the Lord’s coming will surely bring!

Thus, then, does the Christian become the true connection of groaning creation with God! He is redeemed, heavenly; but his body is unredeemed, earthly. Yet the blessed Holy Spirit as the "firstfruits" of coming bodily redemption, dwells in him. Thus the believer and the whole creation look toward one goal the liberty of the coming glory of the sons of God! [183]

[183] Major D. W. Whittle--of blessed memory! used to say, "The trouble with most Christians is that they are not willing to groan! Unwilling to face constantly the fact of being in a tabernacle’ our earthly body, in which we groan, being burdened; and thus to long for the coming of Christ in the redemption of their bodies, most Christians get weary and long for death--disembodiment, which is not the Christian’s hope. Or else they turn back for some kind of satisfaction ,to the things of this poor wretched dying world. Or they seek to have sin eradicated’ from their bodies."

Ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan--Here then is a wonderful scene: (1) new creatures in Christ, whose citizenship is in heaven; (2) the presence of the Spirit within them as "firstfruits" of their coining inheritance--witnessing of it, giving them to taste of its glory; (3) a state of groaning despite all this; (4) a waiting for bodily redemption.

Waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body--The instructed Christian, knowing that his body belongs to the Lord, and is not yet redeemed, longs for, yearns for, groans for that day when his body will be placed in a position of openly acknowledged sonship and glory, even as his spirit now, is. Till that day he cannot be satisfied. This scene is deeply touching. One who,

redeemed, belongs in heaven, yet kept in a body in which he groans with groaning creation. Then--amazing goodness! the blessed Spirit, we may say, represents God’s tender feeling toward His creation, abiding, as He does, in us the while our bodies are not redeemed. We repeat and repeat that the Christian’s hope is not disembodiment, or mere "going to heaven." For, knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven; we patiently wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory." There is an element, we fear, of cowardice, as well as of unbelief in setting our hope on "getting to heaven," and leaving, so to speak, our body behind. God began with man’s body in Eden (Genesis 2:1-25); and He will end with redeeming our bodies. The heart of God and of Christ,--yea of the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:11) is set upon that. Let our hearts, also, be set upon it.

Romans 8:24 : For unto [a state of] hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? This places us, along with all creation, in hope. For, as Romans 8:24 announces, unto [a state of] hope were we saved. There is a longing for and expectation of something better, no matter what spiritual blessing comes to the believer. This that is longed for, is, of course, "the liberty of the glory," that belongs, by God’s grace, to the children of God (Romans 8:21). Creation will share this "liberty." Therefore we have a double feeling toward creation: sympathy with its suffering, and joy in its prospect of sharing the "liberty of the glory" into which we shall shortly come.

Romans 8:25 : But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Now hope is expecting something better! The very fact that we have not seen it realized as yet, begets within us that grace which is so precious to God--patience. But note, it is not patience in the abstract that is set forth here: but patient waiting for the coming liberty of the glory of the children of God.

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered! 27 and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God. 28 And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, to them that according to His purpose are called ones. 29 For whom He foreknew He also foreordained conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren! 30 and whom He foreordained, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

Romans 8:26 : And in like manner also--We have just read that "we that have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves," waiting for that blessed day of "the liberty of the glory of the sons of God." These words "in like manner," refer to that operation within us of the Spirit, which makes us in real sympathy, one with the groaning creation about us. "In like manner," then, with this truly wonderful help, the Spirit "helps our infirmity,"--in its ignorant and infirm dealing with God. Note, the word "infirmity" is singular number: for we have nothing but infirmity! We know not how to pray as we ought. Oh, beware of the glib and intimate chatter of the "Modernist" preacher in his prayers! He would flatter both the Almighty and his hearers, and most of all, himself, in his "beautiful" and "eloquent" addresses to God! Not so with Paul, and the real saints of God, who have the Holy Ghost. There is with them the sense of utter and boundless need, and along with this the sense of ignorance and inability. Yet, still, bless God! there is, with all this, the sense of the

limitless help of the Holy Spirit! The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered--We know that Christ maketh intercession for us at the right hand of God, but here the Spirit is making intercession within us: The Spirit, who knows the vast abysmal need of every one of us, knows that need to the least possible particular.

Groanings which cannot be uttered--expresses at once the vastness of our need, our utter ignorance and inability, and the infinite concern of the blessed indwelling Spirit for us. "Groanings"--what a word! and to be used of the Spirit of the Almighty Himself! How shallow is our appreciation of what is done, both by Christ for us, and by the Spirit within us! Which cannot be uttered--Here then, are needs of our, of which our minds know nothing, and which our speech could not utter if we could perceive those needs. But it is part of God's great plan in our salvation that this effectual praying should have its place--praying, the very meaning of which we cannot grasp. Men of God have testified to the spirit of prayer prostrating them into deep and often long-continued "groanings." We believe that such consciousness of the Spirit's praying within us is included in this verse, but the chief or principal part of the Spirit's groaning within us, perhaps never reaches our spirit's consciousness.

Romans 8:27 : And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God.

It is God the Father here that is "searching the hearts." How we used to shrink from the thought of such Divine searching! But here God is "searching hearts" to know what is the mind of the indwelling, Holy Spirit concerning a saint, to know what the Spirit groans for, for that saint; in order that He may supply it. For in the plan of salvation, God the Father is the Source, Christ the Channel, and the Spirit the Agent.

Because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God--We feel that the introduction of the words "the will of" before the word God, merely obscures the meaning. "According to God"--what an all-inclusive, blessed expression, enwrapping us as to our salvation and blessing, wholly in Divine love and power. We know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit makes intercession in us, "according to God," according to His nature (of which we are partakers); according to our needs, which He discerns; according to our dangers, which He foresees--according to all the desires He has toward us.

Romans 8:28 : And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good--The words we know are used about thirty times as the expression of the common knowledge of the saints of God as such, in the Epistles: (in Romans, five times)--indicating always Christian knowledge; also 1 Corinthians 8:4, 1 John 5:19,--and John 21:24, are perfect examples. Lodge members, having been "initiated," go about as those that "know." The Christian is traveling to glory along with a blessed company that can say "We know," in an infinitely higher and surer sense. [184] And here, what a knowledge! that to them that love God all things work together for good!

[184] As for the "Modernist," his shallow, ignorant, blatant boast if, "We do not know; we are not sure," thus giving continual open evidence that he does not belong to that company of whom John writes: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Now as to them that love God John tells us in his first Epistle, "We love, because He first loved us"; and, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us"; and "We know and have believed the love which God hath in our case." Real faith in the God who gave His Son, will, Paul tells the Galatians (Galatians 5:6)), be "working through love." Only those can and do really love God whose hearts have been "sprinkled from an evil conscience"--delivered from fear of God's just judgment. The question therefore, comes right back to this: Have we believed, as guilty lost sinners, on this propitiation by the blood of God's Son on the cross? Is that our only hope? If so, 1 John 4:16 becomes true: "We know and have believed the love which God hath in our case," and verse 19 follows: "We love, because he first loved us." We cannot work up love for God, but His redeeming love for us, believed in, becomes the eternal cause and spring of our love to God.

Now we find in Romans 8:28 a great marvel: all things work together for good to these believing lovers of God. This involves that billion billion control of God's providence,--of the most infinitesimal things--to bring them about for "good" to God's saints. When we reflect on the innumerable "things" about us,--forces seen and unseen of the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds; of man at enmity with God; of Satan, and his principalities and powers, in deadly array; in the uncertainty and even treachery of those near and dear to us, and even of professed Christians, and of our own selves,--which we cannot trust for a moment; upon our unredeemed bodies; upon our general complete helplessness:--then, to have God say, "All things are working together for your good,"--reveals to us a Divine providence that is absolutely limitless! The book of Proverbs sets forth just such a God: for it describes the certain end, good or bad, of the various paths of men on earth--every minute detail ordered of God. So also Ephesians (Ephesians 1:11): "The purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will"; and David: "All things are Thy servants" (Psalms 119:91); as also the whole prophetic Word,--yea, the whole Word of God; for the God of Providence is in all of it! For good--Dark things, bright things; happy things, sad things; sweet things, bitter things; times of prosperity, times of adversity. The "great woman," the Shunammite, with her one child lying at home dead, answers Elisha's question, "Is it well with the child?": "It is well." "A soft pillow for a tired heart," Romans 8:28 was called by our beloved Brother R. A. Torrey. To them that are called according to His purpose--We come now up on the high, celestial mountains of Divine Sovereign election, and find those who love God are further defined as those that are "called" (not "invited," [185] but given a Divine elective calling) according to His Purpose. Meditation upon the purpose of the eternal God greatens every soul thus occupied. God is infinite; man, a bit of dust. If God had a purpose, a fixed intention, it will come to pass, for He has limitless resources,--as David says, "All things are Thy servants."

[185] "Called" here does not mean invited,--as in Proverbs, for instance. "Unto you, O men, I call"; for this would be an appeal to man's will instead of a description of those who are the objects of God's will, His purpose. "Called," in the sense of Romans 8:28, is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 1:24 : where "Christ crucified" is declared to be a "stumbling-block" to Jews (to people whose thought was religion) and "foolishness" to Greeks (to those whose life lay in philosophy): but to the called themselves" (Gr. margin) "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Here "the called" are seen to be a. company whose mark is neither religious response nor intellectual apprehending; but the electing grace of God which has so marked out the sphere of their being, that they are named "the called." They are called according to His (God's) purpose! Now, that purpose is not merely an expressed Divine desire, but a fixed and vast will, that itself subordinates, necessarily, all things;

submerges all opposition; effects its object. God’s purpose, in regard to "the called," His "elect," does, indeed, arise out of His desire, as well as being according to His infinite wisdom. This is shown in:

"Jehovah hath chosen Zion;

He hath desired it for His habitation.

Here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psalms 132:13-14). Also, "Because He [Jehovah] loved thy [Israel’s] fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them" (Deuteronomy 4:37). Even those "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," are said to be "loved in Christ Jesus our Lord." "God is love, " and acts according to that nature. Out of His infinite, holy desire arose His Purpose. Reverse this order, and you have the god of the fatalist, not of the Bible.

We have been dealing in the first part of the chapter with the human will and its consent to walk by the Spirit. Not so from Romans 8:28-39. It will be all God from now on! Purpose means an intelligent decision which the will is bent to accomplish. The Greek word, prothesis(G4286), is used twelve times in the New Testament. As to man, the word is seen to indicate what he is entirely unable to carry through, as in Acts 27:13 : They supposed "that they had obtained their purpose," but the ship was wrecked. In the saints, their purpose is carried on by Divine grace, often with many failures: Acts 11:23, "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." And in 2 Timothy 3:10, Paul refers Timothy to that "manner of life, purpose, faith," which the apostle had shown at Ephesus, a purpose carried out to final victory in finishing his course. But, as he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

02.17. Chapter 8C

CHAPTER 8C In God, however, purpose is absolute,--wholly apart from contingencies. In the very next occurrence after Romans 8:28 we read, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand"--everything subordinated, and the end predicted. We read also in Ephesians 3:11 of a "purpose of the ages" which God has ordained and will carry through, just as our salvation is referred to as "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Therefore we beg the reader in examining the great Romans 8:29-30, to distinguish the things that differ, utterly refusing to confuse or mix them: (1) First, we shall find many Scriptures in which the consent of man’s will is asked, and blessing is contingent upon his consent; and some ("rocky ground people) will receive the Word "immediately with joy, and for awhile endure," but in time of tribulation or persecution "fall away." (2) Second, we shall find plainly written in Scripture the purpose of God according to which He works effectually; and all His elect are brought safely in, and there is no separating them from His love which was given them in Christ Jesus, in whom they were "chosen before the foundation of the world."

Now do not seek to mix these two things; and still more emphatically we say, do not try to "reconcile" them! Profitless controversy and partisan feeling will be the only result. Who told us to "reconcile" in our little minds, these seemingly contradictory things? Have we ceased to believe where we do not understand?

Every system of theology undertakes to subject the words of God to categories and catalogs of the human intellect. Now, if you undertake to "reconcile" God’s sovereign election with His free offer of salvation to all, you must sacrifice one truth or the other. Our poor minds may not "reconcile" them both, but our faith knows them both, and holds both, to be true! And Scripture is addressed to faith, not to reason.

Romans 8:29 : For whom He foreknew He also foreordained conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. For whom He foreknew--This for looks back at the word purpose, and opens out that great word before us. And first we have, foreknew. This foreknowledge of God.--what is it? In seeking its meaning we dare not turn to men’s ideas, but to Scripture only. [186] In Amos 1:2-15, Amos 2:1-8, Jehovah gives in detail His exact knowledge of the sins and of the coming judgments of Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab; and then also of Israel. But to Israel He says, "You only have I known, of all the families of the earth." What did such language mean? That He had acquaintanceship with "the whole family which He brought up out of the land of Egypt." Of Israel again--especially the godly Remnant, He speaks: "God did not cast off His people which He foreknew." Now, even of Christ it is written in 1 Peter 1:20, "He was foreknown indeed before the foundations of the world." This is the same Greek word as in Romans 8:29. Now Christ was the Eternal Son of God, the Eternal Word. But, "The Word become flesh": that occurred when He came into the world. And as thus manifested, "He was foreknown." It was not a mere Divine pre-knowledge that He would be manifested; but a

pre-acquaintanceship before His manifestation,--with Him as such! From which "foreknowledge," or pre-acquaintance, flowed the most intimate prophecies of Him, His lowly coming, His rejection, and the manner of His death. All this is wrapped up in this word foreknowledge!

[186] "It is important to observe that the apostle does not speak of a passive or naked foreknowlege as if God only saw beforehand what some would be, and do, or believe. His foreknowledge is of persons, not of their state or conduct; it is not what, but whom' He foreknew" (Kelly).

He also foreordained--Foreknowledge is first--by the God that "calleth the things not being, being" (Romans 4:17, Gr.). Then, the marking out a destiny befitting such foreknown ones. The words "to be" need not be here: but we may read, foreordained conformed to the image of His Son. Here we come to words of plain meaning, but limitless reach! Christ the Son, for whom and by whom all things were made; Christ the Son, the appointed Heir of all things; Christ the Son--center of all the Divine counsels! Christ the Son, God's Son, the Son of His love! Conformed to His image,--nothing lacking, nothing short: like Christ--conformed to His image: in glory, in love, in holiness, in beauty, in grace, in humility, in tenderness, in patience! Our very bodies at last alive unto God! For we know that this also shall be: "When Christ, our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory!" And thus to be with Christ, like Him forever and ever! Only God can show, and only simple faith respond to, grace such as this! That He might be the First-born among many brethren--In Christ, like Christ, brethren there with the First-born! This is the highest place, shall we not say, that God could give creatures! God puts us there: and of Christ it is written, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren"; because we are "all of one with Christ! (Hebrews 2:11). "This, in fact, is the thought of grace, not to bless us only by Jesus, but to bless us with Him".

Romans 8:30 : And whom He foreordained, them He also called--Since we are here considering God's unfolding of His purpose (of verse 28), we must regard called from God's side,--who counts things not being, being. Further, calling is here that determination by God of the sphere and mode of life those should have whom He foreknew and foreordained. This "calling" belongs to Eternity past; as "calling," for example in 2 Thessalonians 2:14; Galatians 1:6, belongs to experience in present time. And whom He called, them He also justified--God does not here speak of that entering upon justification by faith--of which this Epistle is full. For only believing souls are accounted righteous, justified, as we well know. Yet in God's counsels are all His elect already before Him, accounted righteous--justified. This is wonderful truth: and its power to stay the soul will be seen in the last part of this great Chapter! And whom He justified, them He also glorified--This is the necessary end of this amazing series--glorified! Thus must these foreknown ones be ever, before God, since God foreknew them in Christ. None has yet been glorified in manifestation. Indeed, Christ Himself has not yet been "manifested"; although He has entered into His glory. And it is in this glorified Christ that God chose us long ago,--before the foundation of the world! God, who could thus connect us with Christ, can also say of us, I have glorified them! And so the saints go on to a glory already true of them by the word of their God!

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He that even spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? 34 Christ Jesus [God's own Son] is the one that died,--yea rather, that was

raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who is also making intercession for us! 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Even as it is written, On account of thee we are killed all day long: We were reckoned as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us! 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other createdthing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Concerning this great passage, Bengel says, "We can no farther go, think, wish." Olshausen emphasizes "the profound and colossal character of the thought"; and Brown says: "This whole passage, to verse 34 and even to the end of the chapter, strikes all thoughtful interpreters and readers as transcending almost everything in language."

Paul here arrives at the mountain-height of Christian position! And that, so to speak, by way of experience. He does, indeed, in the word "us" bring all the saints with him. There was first our state of awful guilt--and Christ's work for us, and justification thereby. Then came the knowledge of indwelling sin, and the Spirit's work within us, and deliverance from sin's power thereby. Now he has arrived upon the immovable mountain-top of Divine sovereign election, and he sees God Himself for us! Not at all meaning, here, God merely on our side in our struggles, but God's uncaused unalterable attitude with respect to those in Christ. God is for them: nothing in time or in eternity to come has anything whatever to do with matters here. Our weak hearts, prone to legality and unbelief, with great difficulty receive these mighty words: God is for us. Place the emphasis here where God places it--on this great word "for." God is for His elect. They have failed, but He is for them. They are ignorant, but He is for them. They have not yet brought forth much fruit, but He is for them. If our hearts once surrender to the stupendous fact that there are those whom God will eternally be for, that there is an electing act and attitude of God, in which He eternally commits Himself to His elect,--without conditions, without requirements; whose lives do not at all affect the fact that God is for them--then we shall be ready to magnify the God of all grace!

Romans 8:31 : What then shall we say to these things? By "these things" Paul evidently indicates not only the whole process of our salvation by Christ, from Chapter Three onward, with that great deliverance by the help of the Holy Spirit set forth in this Eighth Chapter; but he also points most directly to what He has been telling us of the purpose of God: "Whom He foreknew, foreordained, called, justified, glorified!" Now it is a sad fact that many dear saints have said many poor, even lamentable things, to these things of Divine sovereign foreknowledge and election. Some, indeed, will not hear "these things," as Paul sets them forth. Let us not be of this company! What shall we say to these things? To doubt them is to deny them: for God asserts them--from foreknowledge to glorification. To question whether they apply to us is to question--not election, but the words "whosoever will," of the gospel invitation. You can let God be absolutely sovereign in election, and yet, if you find the door opened by this sovereign God, and "whosoever will" written over it by that same sovereign God, by all means enter! Set your seal to this, that God is true, by receiving His witness (John 3:33). Do not allow any "system of theology" to disturb you for one moment! What will you say to these things? Say, with Paul: God is for me: He spared not His own Son--for me! This question, What shall we say to these things? is a testing word, as well, as a triumphant word.

Concerning "these things," if we simply rejoice, with Paul, saying, "God is for me, who is against me?" it is well! But if we cannot rejoice in Divine, sovereign foreknowledge, foreordination, and calling, this also is the fruit of subtle unbelief and self-righteousness. "I know," said Spurgeon, "that God chose me before I was born' for He never would have chosen me afterwards!" Let us not be of the Little-faiths, or of the Faint-hearts; but let Mr. Greatheart himself, even Paul, set forth the case: If God be for us, who is against us? This "if" does not imply doubt, but amounts to since. We are expected to have heard, understood, and believed all the previous marvels of our salvation written in this epistle. The conclusion is: GOD IS FOR US. The Creator of the universe, the Upholder of all things, the Redeemer God Himself, for us!

Therefore the challenge: who is against us? Paul knew as none have ever known, the power and malignity of Satan and his hosts, the persecuting energy of the haters of the gospel, the relentless watchfulness of the Roman Empire-- that had flung justice to the winds, and crucified Paul's Lord, and ever stood ready, upon occasion, to seize him. Yet he challenges all! It is not a question of logic, as the King James puts it: "Who can be against us?" But it is a direct challenge in the lists: to all and any in the whole possible universe: literally. If God for us--who against us?

Romans 8:32 : He that even [187] spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all--This is the God who is for us; and this is the proof! Spared not--what that word shows! Of the infinite price of redemption! of the measureless unconquerable love of God that would not be stopped at such frightful cost! "His own Son"; His only Son; His well-beloved Son,--from all eternity! And for us! Ah, how wretched we are, even in our own sight! guilty, undone, defiled, powerless, worthless,--for us all! Verily, "the most miserable of sheep!" (Zechariah 11:7).

[187] Both the R.V. and the King James neglect to translate the little particle (Gr. ge) which gives this passage its peculiar emphasis: Literally: "God for US . . . . who even spared not His own Son!" went even that length.

Then, delivered Him up--We remember immediately the same word in Romans 4:25 : "delivered up for our trespasses." Yea, we know for why: but unto what? gainsaying, mocking, spitting, scourging, crucifying--by men; and to the awful cup of wrath for our sin at God's hand--infinitely more appalling than any creature stroke! Yet God spared not--His own Son, but delivered Him up! For us all--Here the saints are spoken of. (Paul never uses "us" of any others!) And who are the saints? Sinners who have heard God's good news concerning His Son, and have simply believed! Only faith can walk here! Unbelief, coming to the fearful gulf between the infinitely holy God and the awful guilt of the sinner, shrinks back; while faith, seeing Christ crucified, cries, God is for me! and passes gladly over the bridge God made--who spared not His own Son!

How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?--The great gift, the unspeakable gift, being made, all must follow! "How shall He not, with Him?" If you buy a costly watch at the jeweller's, he sends it to you in a lovely case which he gives you freely--with your purchase. It is as in Chapter Five, with the "much mores." God has not spared His Son: what are all else to Him? God has opened to us His heart, He has spared not,--giving us His best, His all--even Christ. Now, with Him, all things come! God cannot but do this. Shall He give us His dear Son, and then hold back at trifles? For "all things" of this created universe,--yea, even all gifts or blessings God may give us, here or hereafter, are but nothing, compared with Christ!

"All things": It will greatly please God for us boldly to beg Him for this or that, saying: Thou didst not spare Thy Son, but gavest Him for me. Now I need a thing from Thee; and I ask it as one to whom Thou gavest Christ! "How shall He not?" not, "How shall He?'--as doubt would put it! Let "all things" be all things indeed to thee,--only seeking wisdom in asking. This verse is a great feeder of faith!

Romans 8:33 : Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Note (1) It is God's elect whom this passage concerns. (2) God's elect not only believe, but are confident! For there can be no charge laid against them. (3) They boldly challenge any and every foe, concerning any possible charge against them before God! It is not that those triumphing are without fault in themselves--they know that! But God is for them! They are His "elect," and we know from the next chapter that the purpose of God according to election is not of works": but on the contrary, "of Him that calleth" (Romans 9:11). As absolutely as righteousness is "not of works," so neither is election! Both have God Himself as the only Source! So, "the purpose of God according to election stands!"

It is God that justifieth: [188] who is he that condemneth?--Here the emphasis is upon God. He is the Judge; and He has declared His elect,--those "of faith in Jesus," righteous. Now will any condemn? Shall any stand before God's High Court and condemn whom He has justified? Never! Satan may accuse us in our consciences; but the day of our condemnation was past forever--when Christ our Substitute "bore our sins in His own body on the tree!" When it is announced as toward all possible foes: "It is God that justifies," we feel in our hearts God taking our part!

[188] Note that the last statement of Romans 8:33 --"It is God that justifieth," is connected with the opening question of Romans 8:34. The verse division is unfortunate, and beclouds the meaning. The second sentence of Romans 8:34, Christ Jesus is the one that died, etc., is entirely separate from and an advance upon, the preceding verses.

Romans 8:34 : Christ Jesus [God's own Son] is the one that died,--yea, rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who is also making intercession for us!

Some would render the answer to the question of Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge," etc., entirely in the question form: "Shall God that justifieth? Shall Christ that died?" We have not yielded to rendering it thus; for this question-form does not fit the bold challenge here: for this whole passage is governed by the great word: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? And further, Romans 8:35, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? God then, is seen "for us," as justifying; His own Son Christ Jesus as dying and as interceding for us. All of which commits God to us irreversibly! The Yea, rather, that was raised from the dead, follows the exact order of the development of the truth of Christ's work in this epistle: set forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood in Romans 3:1-31; God seen raising Him who was delivered on account of our trespasses in Romans 4:1-25. There is no crucifix, no Romanism, here; no dead Christ, but One raised.

Nay, more, Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God,--We have here the first of seven historical statements in the Epistles that He is there, [189] and not merely there in the place of honor and power, but occupied (as ever) for our benefit: who also is making intercession for us. In Romans

8:22 the indwelling Spirit is making intercession for the saints; in Romans 8:31, God is for us; in Romans 8:34, Christ Jesus is making intercession for us. What a wonderful salvation this is, in which all three persons of the Trinity are constantly occupied in our behalf! [190] [189] The other instances: Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 3:1.

[190] Christ Jesus making intercession for us at the right hand of God in Heaven, is not properly Romans truth, but is brought in here simply to show His eternal commitment to our cause. We say this because the remnants of Romish unbelief lie in most or all of us. For instance, take the lines, "O blessed feet of Jesus, weary with seeking me,

Kneel at God’s bar of judgment, and intercede for me!" What a mixture and hodge-podge such words are! Christ is not "appeasing God" in Heaven. That was all done forever on the cross where our sins were put away. Our Lord as our High Priest in Heaven now leads our worship and praise, and looks after us in our infirmity. The book of Hebrews opens out this. But it is that same book which says, "He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). The work on which faith rests has been done, and those who rely on Christ’s work on the cross will find their needs taken care of by Christ in Heaven.

Romans 8:35 : When Paul says. Who shall separate us from Christ’s love? and then begins to enumerate things, it is plain that in the word "Who" he has in mind the great enemy who opposes "things" to God’s saints! Satan is "prince of this world," and "god of this age": this the apostle always has before him: "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices." So he says: Who shall separate us? shall tribulation? Thirty-seven times this word rendered "tribulation" (thlipsis(G2347)) and its verb are used to denote those direct troubles that afflict the saints,--because of the gospel! Satan has sought,--and, oh, how desperately,--but has never succeeded in separating one saint from Christ’s love by tribulations! (See this word in Matthew 13:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; John 16:33.) And God sees to it that the path of the Christian is a narrow, "straitened one! (Matthew 7:14 has the same word--"narrow." See also 2 Corinthians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 7:5) And now the next word--distress. This word (stenochoria(G4730)) is rightly translated "anguish" in Romans 2:9; for there it evidently means a fixed place in which "every soul of man that doeth evil" is held while Divine judgment is visited. The word means a narrow, cramped place, where one is "in straits." For the lost this is unendurable; for the saved, it only affords room for God’s help, when naught else can avail. So, distresses--how terrible soever--cannot separate from Christ’s love. (See the note on the Russian women in Chapter Five.) Remember Christ, the Lord of glory, had not a place to lay His head: He knows what distresses are! Or persecution--(diogmos(G1375)). This is a word used ten times in the New Testament, and always in reference to the gospel. It’s verb means, "to make to run," or "to run swiftly to catch" those pursued; so, to persecute. No saint thus persecuted has yet been forsaken by Christ,--nor ever will be! "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." Christ never forsakes, but has the sweetest fellowship with those persecuted by the world,--directed (under God’s permissive decree only!) by Satan. Christ is always saying, "Be of good cheer!" (Acts 23:11.)

Famine--comes next. And you would think that the Lord of all would ever provide liberally for His saints. Not always! The "present distress" is on. Christ the Heir was cast out of Israel’s vineyard

and slain! The Head of the new Body has indeed been glorified. But why should not the members of His Body know by experience what the Head passed through and thus find fellowship with the Head? Thus they come to have one heart with Him! "Famine?" Yes. But not to separate us from Christ's love! "I know how to be in want," says Paul. Twelve times is "famine" (limos(G3042)) mentioned in the New Testament: though only twice (here in Romans 8:35; 2 Corinthians 11:27 --this last concerning an apostle!) does it directly touch the saints. In Acts 11:28, indeed they get relief (though by other saints, not by government agency!). Yea; you may be hungry in this Christ-rejecting world, and yet be beloved of your Lord. "The meek shall inherit the earth"--but not yet! Not till He comes back!

"All here is stained with blood!-- Thy blood, O glorious Christ! And man and Satan do today Whate'er they list!"

(Yet do not forget that, amidst it all, God lives! The God of Elijah still looks after His own!) Or nakedness--In 1 Corinthians 4:11, Paul says, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." (Read the whole passage.) How ashamed we feel, who are not as devoted to our Lord as was Paul, to hear him speak thus! This whole part of Romans Eight shows us as partakers with a Christ the world cast out. Or peril--Eight times in one verse, 2 Corinthians 11:26, does Paul use this word. Read that verse, remembering the same word in 1 Corinthians 15:30 : "We stand in jeopardy [peril] every hour." In Paul's bringing you this gospel, Jewish hatred, Roman jealousy, pagan blindness (Acts 14:8-20) and false brethren (Acts 15:1-41) beset him round,--striving that "the truth of the gospel" might come unto us! God grant we cherish it! Many have suffered, that we might have these wondrous truths! Or sword--The first use of this word (machaira(G3162)) is connected with our Lord Himself: Matthew 26:47 : "A great multitude with swords and staves" to take Him; while Acts 12:2 ("Herod . . . killed James the brother of John with the sword"), and Hebrews 11:37 ("They were slain with the sword"), give only examples of the attitude of this world toward Christ and His saints. The world hates the saints; though sometimes those making most hideous use of the sword have worn "the sign of the cross." That was the world's religion; and, like Cain, it killed God's people. But, even in the hour of death most terrible, Christ was there: they were not separated from His love!

Romans 8:36 :

Even as it is written, On account of Thee we are killed all the day long:

We were reckoned as sheep for the slaughter.

Here, then, is the description of God's saints: "killed perpetually," and "sheep for slaughter." We know that this quotation is taken from a Psalm (Psalms 44:22) which describes that terrible hunting down by the Antichrist of the godly remnant of Israel in the days of the Great Tribulation. But today--all the day [of grace] long, this is the real state of real saints: killed, and slaughter-sheep! To the student of God's Word, the many years of outward peace--from persecution, horrors, and death,--that have come to us is the unusual, the astonishing thing. Look at the "deaths oft" of the early Church, the martyrs; and again when truth burst out afresh at the Reformation! (See [1]footnote) But now again! look at Russia, look at Germany, look all around! Ruthless hatred of God's saints is breaking out everywhere, as of old!

Now, we ought not to view such things with alarm, but, on the contrary, to remember that Christ has not yet set up His kingdom, [191] nor will till His second coming! Satan is the prince of this world, and shall yet be exhibited as the "god of this age"--see Revelation 13:1-18. For,

[191] As we say elsewhere, the mouthings of the "Modernist" who knows not the prophetic Word (and would not bow to it if it were shown to him) must not be listened to for a moment. The "Stone" of the Second of Daniel strikes that great prophetic Image of Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron, and Iron-Clay feet, with a sudden unexpected impact, destroying the whole Gentile order of things,--away down in the feet and toes period. The Kingdom of the Most High is then, and not till then, set up. We all know that those born again shall "see the Kingdom of God"--indeed, are in that Kingdom, as spiritually existing. But no others, no "social order," no man-made conditions, are in the Kingdom! Further, to those born again, God says, "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and joy and peace, in the Holy Ghost." Outside the Spirit, the Kingdom of God does not exist. Indeed, the Kingdom has not yet been given to Christ in heaven by the Father. When it is given to Him (Revelation 5:1-14; Psalms 2:7-9), He will Himself come and set up His Kingdom in power according to Matthew 13:36-43; Matthew 25:31-46. Read these words of Christ, and believe them,--hearkening to no "peace, peace" words of the "Modern" dreamers.

"The whole earth wondered after the Wild Beast [Satan's man, the Antichrist]; and they worshipped the dragon [Satan] . . . and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain."

Let the saints rouse quickly from these false dreams of "peace." The saints are sheep for slaughter! Name yourself among them, and cease contending for your "rights" in a world that has cast out Christ! Persecution is shaping itself up again throughout Christendom--yea, even in the United States. Intolerance unto death for any who will not bow to a totalitarian state is ready, as in the days of the Roman emperors (who demanded worship) to assert itself,--is asserting itself, throughout the world. This "totalitarian" movement is setting the stage for Antichrist more rapidly than you dream! Therefore get ready. Put up over your mirror the motto: "I am Christ's: a sheep for slaughter."

Romans 8:37 : Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!

What a wonderful book this Word of God is! "Sheep for slaughter" naming themselves more than conquerors! [192]

[192] It is evident that those whose description is "killed all the day long" "sheep for slaughter" will never become more than conquerors, or conquerors at all, through moral influence," human "merits," "the ballot box," "the betterment of humanity," "interracial understanding"! No, not with Satan prince and god, here! And he will be such until cast into the abyss (Revelation 20:1-15) at Christ's coming.

Now note three things in Romans 8:37 : (1) We are conquerors in all this terrible situation, in all these things. (2) We are more than conquerors. (3) It is altogether through Him that loved us, and not through human energy of any kind, that we are more than conquerors.

Now, what is it to be "more than conquerors?" (a) It is to come off conqueror in every difficulty, (b) It is to know that Divine, and therefore infinite, power has been engaged for us in the conflict, (c) It is the absolute confidence that this infinite and therefore limitless Divine help is granted to us against any possible future emergency, (d) It is to "divide the spoil" over any foe, after victory! (Isaiah 53:12.)

Him that loved us--Note first the past tense. That preaching which always emphasizes the present love of God or Christ for the soul, as the great persuading power over the human heart, falls sadly short. When our Lord described God's love for the world, it was, "God so loved that He gave His Son." Again, "Herein is love, that God loved us, and sent His Son." Again, when Paul describes Christ's love for His own it is by pointing to His sacrifice. Here (in Romans 8:37) the cross is indicated, as in Romans 8:32 : "He that spared not His own Son."

Further, when Christ's love for the Church is described, it is again the past tense--"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it" (Ephesians 5:25). And, "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). It is this past tense gospel the devil hates,--for "the Word of the Cross is the power of God." Let a preacher be continually saying, "God loves you, Christ loves you," and he and his congregation will by and by be losing sight both of their sinnerhood and of the substitutionary atonement of the cross, where the love of God and of Christ was once for all and supremely set forth,--and in righteous display!

Now whether God or Christ is indicated in Him that loved us in this verse, what we have said holds true.

Frankly we personally feel that the rendering "the love of God" in Romans 8:35, is correct. And this because it is the love of God that is emphasized throughout this passage, from Romans 8:31-39. For note, it is God that is for us, God spared not His Son; God justifieth. And it is Christ Jesus whom He had "not spared," that died, that was raised, who is at the right hand of God, and who intercedes. From such love of God (as good authorities read in Romans 8:35), no difficulties can separate us.

We know, however, that Romans 8:39 definitely declares that it is "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" from which nothing can separate us.

Therefore, we are also quite strongly drawn to read "the love of Christ" in Romans 8:35, because (1) Christ's work for us has just been described in the immediately preceding verse; and also (2) because of the glorious historical fact that the martyrs were directly conscious, in the midst of the flames and when they were thrown to the beasts, of the presence and love of Christ, their Redeemer, Lord and Head.

But, however we read, both are correct!

Romans 8:38 : For I am persuaded--Before we quote the last two verses of this triumphant paean, let us lay to heart this word persuaded, for it is the key to Paul's triumph as he goes shouting up these mountain heights of Christian faith. "Persuaded" is a heart word. The difference between knowing a truth and being heart-persuaded of it, Paul brings out in Romans 14:14 : "I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself." (See that passage.) Many people know, for example, that in this dispensation all distinctions of meats have been removed;

yet their consciences are not relieved. Weakness and fear still trouble them--about meats and days and many things. To know a Bible truth, you have only to read it: to be "persuaded of it in the Lord Jesus" involves the fact, first, that the truth in question touches your own personal safety before God; and, second, that your heart has so been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and your will so won over--persuaded"--that confidence, heart-satisfied persuasion, results.

Now Paul says in Romans 8:38 : I am persuaded--Dear saints, had not Paul passed through all these terrible things of Romans 8:35, tribulation, anguish, persecution,--all? Look at the scars on his body! Assurance? He had it: "In the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 12:19); "Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me" (2 Corinthians 13:3). Confidence? Hearken to his last epistle: "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory unto the ages of the ages" (2 Timothy 4:18). "Persuaded?" His mind, his conscience, his heart, his whole being, were sublimely committed to what he is about to say. The days of doubt and uncertainty were forever passed for him!

Romans 8:38-39 : For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How we do misquote this verse, putting it according to natural thought, "neither life nor death." But God says, neither death nor life. To the instructed believer, the fear of death is gone (see Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:15). Christ partook of it: "That through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But life! Ah, life is so much more difficult than death!--life with its burdens, its bitternesses, its disappointments, its uncertainties; often with its physical miseries,--as Job said, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than these my bones." But just as death cannot separate us from this unchangeable love of God in Christ, neither can any circumstances of life do it! Nor angels--Whether we speak of the elect angels--the angels of God’s power, in the presence of whom the saints have felt overwhelmed by their utter unworthiness (as Daniel, Daniel 10:8-17); or whether it be the malignant angels, who chose Satan’s captaincy, and are a unity with him in evil;--no angels can separate us from that love of God which is fixed forever in Christ. Nor principalities--Here we touch a mysterious word. We know from Ephesians 1:21 that there is an ordered realm of unseen authorities whether of good or of evil (Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 6:12). But with none of them have we anything to do, for whatever they are, they cannot separate us from God’s love in Christ. Nor things present nor things to come--In Job’s case, Satan dealt in "things present"--and they were as bad as hellish enmity could make them. But they did not separate from God’s love, for look at "the end of the Lord," with Job. In the cases of David and Elijah, Satan dealt in "futures": David said, "I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul." Yet shortly he sat on the throne! And Jezebel threatened, "I will make thy life as the life of one of them [the slain prophets] by tomorrow about this time." When Elijah saw that, (alas, these "thats" of the devil!) "he arose, and went for his life." Yet God took him up by a chariot of fire into heaven! Nor powers--The word translated "powers" [193] here is dunamis(G1411), energy: and has reference evidently to those uncanny and horrible workings of Satan and his host seen in spiritism, theosophy, and all kinds of magic. Indeed, this very word is used in Acts 8:10 concerning Simon the Magician: "They said, This man is that power (dunamis) of God which is called Great." All kinds of bewitchment, sorcery, necromancy, "evil eye," and "mystic spells" cast upon people

are included. Now I know that sorcery, the "evil eye," "spells," are potent over the unsaved. But, it is a sad fact that many dear saints are troubled by these things. They are afraid--of Friday the thirteenth, of passing under a ladder, of seeing a black cat, of breaking a mirror! Now this simply leaves God out! Who rules in earth's affairs, Satan or God?

[193] In Ephesians 6:12, in the expression "principalities and powers," the first word, (archai(G746)) is the word translated "principalities" in Romans 8:38, meaning one in high position in the unseen world. The second word, "powers," in Ephesians 6:12, is the Greek exousia(G1849),and is directly connected with "principalities," being a word indicative of authority, rather than energy. See Matthew 10:1; Acts 26:10; Acts 26:12.

People say to me, "Do you believe there is anything in spiritism?" I say,"I certainly do--the devil's in it!" But none of these "powers" can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. There is no such thing as "luck." Let us cease to dishonor God by mentioning it! "God worketh all things after the counsel of His will." I have seen professing Christians "knock on wood" if making some confident statement! (I am ashamed as I write this.) Let us be "persuaded" of the love which God, without cause in us, has unchangeable toward us in Christ Jesus our Lord. No matter how real, insidious, terrifying these demon powers may be, we are safe in Christ! If you want to be free from superstition and fears, do as James directs: "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that." That brings God in!

Romans 8:39 : Nor height, nor depth--The astronomers would frighten us with their figures of the vastness of the universe But Christ has passed through all the heavens, and is at the right hand of God! And God has loved us in Christ--there is no separation from that love. But "depth"--Ah, poor mortals we are afraid, even of earthly cliffs and chasms. Yea, but Christ descended into "the lower parts of the earth," into "the abyss" at "the heart of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9; Romans 10:7; Matthew 12:40). Moreover, He has said that His Church would not enter the gates of Hades (Matthew 16:18). And they shall not! But even if God had arranged that they should, Christ says to John, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades!" This is indeed a glorious salvation! No "depth" can separate us from God's love in Christ. Nor any other created thing--There! That should banish all our fears, no matter what they be. The ability of the human heart to conjure up possible trouble and disaster is without limit, it seems: but this word gives us peace. No created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in. Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Notice that this love of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Why God set His love upon us, we cannot tell. Why He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, connecting our destiny eternally with Christ His beloved Son, we cannot tell. But, "Whatsoever Jehovah doeth, it shall be forever." We must therefore hold in mind this fact, that God has loved us even as He loved Christ (John 17:26): for He loved us in Him.

Some dear saints seem to think that it is a mark of humility to doubt the security of God's elect. But Romans has surely shown us the way to be certain! Do not try to assure your heart that you are one of God's elect. If you are troubled with doubts, go and sit down on the sinner's seat, and say, "God declares righteous the ungodly who trust Him. I renounce all thoughts of my own righteousness, and as a sinner I trust the God who raised Christ from the dead,--who was delivered up for my trespasses." This is the path our God in Romans shows us. Uncertainty about

election arises from some kind of self-righteousness! As we have elsewhere noted, the saints are those who have received Him whom God in His great love gave to the world, and they by Divine grace welcomed this only-begotten Son whom God has given. Therefore the love of God in Christ Jesus is forever theirs. However the world of men may treat this astonishing unspeakable gift which God has proffered, and may go on rejecting Christ till a day when it must be eternally withdrawn; yet God's elect, the saints, "those who have believed," find themselves borne upon the irresistible tide of this Divine affection which "is in Christ Jesus," out into an eternity of bliss! "God is love," and "the Father loveth the Son." And now these connected with Christ find themselves wrapped in this same eternal affection shown by God to His dear Son. When we fail utterly, and are overwhelmed, then is the time to say: We have been accepted in Christ--only in Christ, wholly in Christ. Our place is unchanged by our failure. We are ashamed before God, but not confounded. Just now His eyes are on us in Christ, as they ever have been. His love is as deep and wonderful as ever, being "the love wherewith He loved Christ"! We do not resolve to "do better," for we are weak. We trust the grace of God in Christ and cast ourselves anew, and all the more wholly, upon His grace alone. We trust Him never to forsake or fail us: for He hath loved us in His beloved Son; and God will never forsake Christ! For His sake will He deal with us now and ever.

How hard it is to turn away from its object the love even of a man, a creature, a bit of dust! How eternally impossible, then, that the infinite God should be turned away from His love to those that are in Christ Jesus! The wonderful text of this passage, GOD IS FOR US, fills our amazed and grateful hearts more and more. MY HIGH TOWER By Paul Gerhardt: A.D. 1676 IS GOD FOR ME? I fear not, though all against me rise;

I call on Christ my Savior, the host of evil flies. My friend the Lord Almighty, and He who loves me, God!

What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood?

I know it, I believe it, I say it fearlessly, That God, the Highest, Mightiest, forever loveth me; At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side, He rules the battle fury, the tempest and the tide. A Rock that Stands forever is Christ my righteousness, And there I stand unfearing in everlasting bliss; No earthly thing is needful to this my life from Heaven, And nought of love is worthy, save that which Christ hath given.

Christ, all my praise and glory, my Light most sweet and fair, The ship wherein He saileth is scathless everywhere! In Him I dare be joyful, a hero in the war The judgment of the sinner affrighteth me no more!

There is no condemnation, there is no hell for me, The torment and the fire mine eyes shall never see; For me there is no sentence, for me death has no stings, Because the Lord Who saved me shall shield me with His wings.

Above my soul's dark waters His Spirit hovers still, He guards me from all sorrow, from terror and from ill; In me He works and blesses the life-seed He hath sown, From Him I learn the Abba, that prayer of faith alone. And if in lonely places, a fearful child, I shrink, He prays the prayers within me I cannot ask or think; In deep unspoken language, known only to that Love Who fathoms the heart's mystery from the Throne of Light above. His Spirit to my spirit sweet words of comfort saith,

How God the weak one strengthens who leans on Him in faith;

How He hath built a City, of love, and light, and song, Where the eye at last beholdeth what the heart had loved so long. And there is mine inheritance, my kingly palace-home; The leaf may fall and perish, not less the spring will come; As wind and rain of winter, our earthly sighs and tears, Till the golden summer dawneth of the endless Year of years. The world may pass and perish, Thou, God, wilt not remove-- No hatred of all devils can part me from Thy love; No hungering nor thirsting, no poverty nor care, No wrath of mighty princes can reach my shelter there. No Angel, and no Heaven, no throne, nor power, nor might, No love, no tribulation, no danger, fear, nor fight, No height, no depth, no creature that has been or can be, Can drive me from Thy bosom, can sever me from Thee. My heart in joy upleapeth, grief cannot linger there-- While singing high in glory amidst the sunshine fair! The source of all my singing is high in Heaven above; The Sun that shines upon me is Jesus and His Love!

02.18. Chapter 9A

CHAPTER 9A Paul’s Great Sorrow for Unbelieving Israel--Unbelieving Despite an Eight--Fold Preeminence. Romans 9:1-5. The Real Israel, however, were an Elect, not a Natural Seed: God’s Sovereignty in Election Defended. Romans 9:6-29. The Astonishing Conclusion! The Gentiles, not Following after Righteousness, Attain to it by Simple Faith; Israel, Following after a Law--Method, Stumble at the By--Faith Way,--at Christ! Romans 9:30-33. IN Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36, Paul turns aside from that glorious exposition of Grace, in Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, to the explanation of God’s present dealing with Israel. God had committed Himself to bless this nation; and lo, now it is nationally set aside, while Paul’s message goes out to all nations without distinction between Jew and Greek! Where, then, is the Divine faithfulness? How reconcile God’s former condition of blessing,--through circumcision, the Law with its observances, the temple with its presence of Jehovah in the Holy of Holies, and the separateness of the elect nation, Israel, from all others:--how reconcile all this with such a by faith "no difference" message as Paul has been preaching to us--in Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39? A message, indeed, which he resumes from Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-33, Romans 16:1-27, magnifying God’s present mercy to the Gentiles; and ending up the Epistle as he began it, with the words: "My gospel, (revealing a heretofore hidden secret), is sent forth unto all the nations unto the simple obedience of faith"! The question, therefore, is, how to reconcile the "no distinction between Jew and Greek" message that Paul is here preaching, with God’s former manner of speech to Israel, concerning which the Psalmist sings:

"He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances unto Israel.

He hath not dealt so with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them"

(Psalms 147:19-20). And not only so, but the whole book of Psalms, for that matter; yes, and the prophets, also!

Now it will not do merely to go back to Israel’s idolatrous history, and denounce the nation; or even to our Lord’s awful utterance, as He finally left their temple:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Luke 13:34-35).

It will not do to say they were a disobedient people, and God has rejected them entirely, and has brought blessing out to the Gentiles instead. Nor will it do, in these three chapters, merely to go forward to Ephesians (Ephesians 2:14-16) and say, "Christ is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity [between them], even the Law of commandments in ordinances; that He might

create in Himself of the two One New Man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in One Body unto God through the cross." Furthermore, it will not do to go on into Colossians and say concerning this new man, the Body of Christ, that "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11). All these things are true for us who are in Christ. But it is the facts as they are set forth in Romans, that we must examine if we are to study Romans. And God, here in Romans, sets forth His ways in the past, and His ways in the future, with this chosen earthly nation, Israel. That God should so signally honor this nation Israel as to reveal His awful presence on Sinai, and speak in an audible voice to them, giving to them and them alone His holy "fiery Law,"--this fact must have its true place with us.

"For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou has heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Jehovah your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" (Deuteronomy 4:32-34.)

I say, for God to do all this, and then publicly set this nation aside, and send a Paul to all nations without distinction of Jew or Gentile, preaching salvation apart from the Law, and by simple faith, instead of by "the Jews' religion"; promising blessings, and that even heavenly blessings, inconceivably beyond those promised to Israel,--this was an astounding thing! The trouble with us Gentiles is, that we have become accustomed to it, we take it for granted. God's plans and ways with Israel do not concern most Christians.

There is no more striking example of the deadly and deadening self-confidence into which human beings so quickly drift when they find themselves objects of Divine goodness: "Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Psalms 49:20).

One has only to look about Christendom to see at once the evidence of this fateful delusion. Behold the "state" churches, the great cathedrals, the vested choirs and magnificent music; and the "church calendars" with their man-invented feast days, "holy" days, "Christmas-tides," "Lenten" periods, "Easter" services,--all that goes to make up the so-called "Christian religion"! And the high talk of the Gentiles about Israel as God's "ancient people": whereas God has never had and never will have any people, any elect nation, but earthly Israel! When we reflect that, after He has "caught up in the clouds" His Church saints, our Lord is coming back to this earthly people Israel, and will establish them in their land, with a glorious millennial temple and order of worship, to which the Gentile nations must and will submit: then we see that the present time is altogether anomalous! It is a parenthesis, in which God is making a "visit" to the Gentiles, to "take out of them a people for His name";--after which, James tells us, our Lord "will Himself return," and "build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen" (Acts 15:16), on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, where David lived.

Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21 and Romans 11:1-36 become an essential part of Christian doctrine in this respect: that while they do not set forth our salvation or our place in Christ, as do the first eight chapters, yet they unfold to us our relative place in God's plans, along with national

Israel’s place. They also reveal to us several matters absolutely essential to our proper estimate of God and His ways; and, properly believed, they "hide pride" from us: bringing in as they do the great fact that both ourselves and (in the future), the saved Remnant of Israel, are the objects of sovereign Divine mercy. We discover ourselves in Romans 9:23 to be "vessels of mercy," as will future Israel discover themselves to be, by the example of the mercy shown to us. The grace of God has been spoken of in this Epistle often before; but not until these chapters is mercy named; and until mercy is understood, grace cannot be fully appreciated. In Luke 1:78 (margin) we read of the "heart of mercy" of our God; and in Ephesians 2:4, that God is "rich in mercy." God proclaimed His name to Moses: "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). God’s mercy is the sovereign going forth of His heart to us sinful wretched creatures; His grace follows, in His pardoning our guilt; and His loving-kindness is His proceeding with us in abundant goodness thereafter.

1 I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. 3 For I could pray that I myself were [cast out] accursed from Christ for my brethren’s sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 who are Israelites; whose is the [Divine national] adoption and the [earth-manifested] glory, and the covenants, and the custodianship of the law, and the sanctuary service, and the promises; 5 whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed unto the ages. Amen. This most remarkable paragraph naturally divides itself into two parts:

1. Romans 9:1-3 : Paul’s constant yearning pain for the unbelieving Israelites, his brethren and kinsmen,--a yearning to which he declares the Spirit bears witness, which could, were it right, go the length of his being lost if they could be saved! Thus Moses prayed: "If thou wilt not forgive them, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book, which Thou hast written!" (Exodus 32:32-33) [194] Dear old Bengel searchingly says, "It is not easy to estimate the measure of love in a Moses and a Paul. For our limited reason does not grasp it, as the child cannot comprehend the courage of warriors!"

[194] Bishop Moule remarks upon the impossibility of Paul’s really making such a prayer: "To desire the curse of God would be to desire not only suffering, but moral alienation from Him, the withdrawal of the soul’s capacity to love Him. Thus the wish would be in effect an act of greater love for our neighbor than for God.’ Again, the redeemed soul is not its own’: to wish the self to be accursed from Christ would thus be to wish the loss of that which He has bought and made His own.’ But, the logical reason of the matter apart, we have only to read the close of Chapter 8, to see how entirely a moral impossibility it was for Paul to complete such a wish."

2. Romans 9:4-5 : The rehearsing of eight matters which belonged to Israel,--yea, and yet belong to Israel, in spite of all their unfaithfulness. As Jehovah says to Jeremiah:

"If these ordinances [of the sun, of the moon, of the stars and of the sea] depart from before Me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

Therefore, first, let us deeply reflect on this thing of Paul's unceasing pain over Israel, lest in our Gentile shallowness we miss the correct judgment of the importance of this event before God, that Israel, among whom He had dwelt, became disobedient, and were broken off from blessing; and lest in our own affections we become so narrowed as to have no yearning over Israel. Shall we let Paul, our great apostle, have this "unceasing pain," this "great sorrow," in his heart, all alone? Nay for Paul would not have shared the fact with us except he expected our sympathy in the Spirit. Let us not be like those thousands of grace-hating Jews in Paul's day who kept following him in his blessed ministry, declaring that he was an apostate Jew, one really denying the faith of his fathers, bitter against his own race in order to curry favor among the despised Gentiles. They spread the report that Paul "taught all men everywhere against Israel and the Law and the temple" (Acts 21:28). How Christ-like was the love in Paul's heart, that persisted even to be willing to be lost, for the unbelieving Israelites who were reviling him!

Second, let us enumerate and examine the eight respects in which the apostle here declares the nation of Israel differed before God from all other nations:

1. The Divine national adoption--"Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, my first-born" (Exodus 4:22). "Thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God: Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for His own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). Let the nations, British, Americans, French, Germans, or whatever they be, lay this to heart before it is too late! For as to God's election of Israel as His chosen nation, it is absolute and eternal, [195] as He says in Isaiah 66:22 : "As the new heavens and new earth [of Revelation 21:1-27 and Revelation 22:1-21] shall remain before Me, so shall your seed and your name [Israel] remain."

[195] The envy of other races and nations towards God's elect nation Israel has always existed. But there is a mild phase and a virulent phase of this Gentile sin-disease that should be noted: First, the mild phase: this is Anglo-Israelism, the teaching that the Anglo-Saxons, especially Britain and America (Britain as Ephraim and America as Manasseh!) are the "lost ten tribes" who, carried away East across the Euphrates in God's Judgment,--turned East into West and landed at the British Isles! No; British and Americans are lost, but they are not The Ten Tribes! Second, the virulent phase of this jealousy and envy towards elect national Israel appears in "anti-Semitism," or anti-Jewism; and has lately been carried to new depths of pagan infamy by Hitler in Germany. For this phase of Gentile envy rejects Scripture. Mr. Hitler hates the Jews and declares for "pure Aryan blood"--(pray where would you find it?). Carrying his boasting hatred to its logical conclusion, he rejects the Word of God as authority, and turns back to the old pagan gods of Northern Europe. Now all hatred of national Israel arises from rebellion against Divine sovereign election. We know that Israel has failed God: but God declares He will not fail them finally, whereas the hate of modern Gentiles (wiser than God--for are they not the "moderns"?) would seek to crush Israel and exalt Gentiledom. Of course, it will end in the Antichrist, but the Lord Jesus will end him, and all Gentile boasting, at "the forthshining of His arrival" (2 Thessalonians 2:8, Rotherham).

2. The glory--We all know how God's presence accompanied Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night through the sea and through the wilderness, and then filled the tabernacle! No other nation has had or will have God's presence thus. God said:

"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them . . . And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee . . . And there I will meet with thee" (Exodus 25:8; Exodus 25:21-22). And concerning the dedication of Solomon's temple we read,

"It came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Jehovah, saying. For He is good; for His loving-kindness endureth forever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God" (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

3. The covenants--With "covenants" Gentiles have absolutely nothing actively to do. [196] In Genesis fifteen God made a covenant with Abraham, and gave to his earthly seed the token of circumcision. In Genesis twenty-two, God "confirmed" the promise to Abraham's Seed, which is Christ (Galatians 3:16). With David God made an earthly kingdom-covenant,--that one of David's descendants should sit upon his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:13); as we find Gabriel announcing to Mary in Luke 1:32-33. God says He will make a New Covenant in the future with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (Hebrews 8:8-12 , quoted from Jeremiah 31:31, ff), in connection with which He promises to "bring Israel back into their land," to "take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, to put His Spirit within them, to cause them to walk in His statutes, and keep His ordinances, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:24-27).

[196] It is indeed an infinitely blessed fact that all who believe share in the benefits of that "everlasting covenant" of Hebrews 13:20, made between the Father and the Son, on these conditions: that if the Son would come to earth and die for our sins, the Father would bring Him again from the dead as the great Shepherd of the sheep, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:25, "In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood." (The "New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" has not yet been made; for we read that it will be made after these [Gentile] days. See Acts 15:13-16.) When our Lord said therefore, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood," He must, we believe, refer to that covenant of Hebrews 13:20; to which covenant, as we have said, the Father and the Son were parties. Even concerning the New Covenant to be made in the future with Israel, God says in Romans 11:27 : "And this is the covenant from Me unto them, when I shall take away their sins." It is no longer blessing conditioned on their obedience, but it is the day of Jehovah s "power" to Israel (Psalms 110:3), not merely a "visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

4. And the custodianship of the Law--It was a great thing to be entrusted with God's holy Law, as we have seen in Romans 3:2. Let me here repeat that every writer of Scripture is an Israelite. No other nation has ever been even directly spoken to, as a nation, by God: except to be warned, as were Egypt by Moses, and Nineveh by Jonah. There were written messages,--as Isaiah 13:1-22, Isaiah 14:1-28, Isaiah 15:1-9, Isaiah 16:1-14, Isaiah 17:1-14, Isaiah 18:1-7, Isaiah 19:1-25, Isaiah 20:1-6, Isaiah 21:1-17, Isaiah 22:1-25, Isaiah 23:1-18; but these were given to Israel, concerning other nations.

5. And the sanctuary-service--The Greek word here (latreia(G2999)), refers to those religious ordinances prescribed to Israel by God in connection with the tabernacle-worship, and afterwards

the temple-worship, which will be resumed in the Millennium, as we read in Ezekiel 40:1-49, Ezekiel 41:1-26, Ezekiel 42:1-20, Ezekiel 43:1-27, Ezekiel 44:1-31, Ezekiel 45:1-25, Ezekiel 46:1-24, Ezekiel 47:1-23, Ezekiel 48:1-35. (The ordinances and offerings then will be memorial, rather than prophetic, as in the days before Christ died.)

Note carefully that such outward form-worship belongs to the nation of Israel, and not to Christianity. To introduce it into Christianity is to return to paganism. For Paul plainly classifies the forms and ceremonies of Judaism as now belonging with "the weak and beggarly religious principles" which heathen Gentiles engage in! (Galatians 4:9-10.)

Until the "Aryans" (whoever they are) have been led out from all other races by God Himself in manifest presence, and have had a "fiery law" given them from heaven as had Israel, let them stop their mouths, and also stop their ears from any vain pagan prophet! And let the Gentiles all humble their miserable pride. What have they to do with the Law that God committed to Israel? or with the Jewish Sabbath, which God said was a token of His covenant with that chosen people? (Exodus 31:12-17.)

6. And the promises--God’s salvation-promises were lodged in Abraham; His kingdom-promises, in David. No promises were made to Gentile nations as such. For the gospel now proclaimed is not a promise, but the announcement of a fact to be believed; and it is not preached to nations as such, but to individuals--good news to sinners everywhere. But to Israel, promises, thousands of them, were committed,--as a nation.

Now we do not have to become "Israelites" in any sense whatever to enjoy God’s salvation in Christ. [197] The nation of Israel has been set aside for the present as the vessel of Divine blessing to the world, while the Gentiles, as set forth in Chapter Eleven, have now the privileged place, and Jews and Gentiles come individually, upon believing, into a heavenly inheritance. Nevertheless, "the promises" pertain nationally to Israel, and to no other nation as such.

[197] Some accurate book setting forth the absolute difference between the Church and Israel should be read, such as Israel and the Church, by James H. Brookes; or Mr. Blackstone’s (W. E. B.) always excellent Jesus Is Coming.

7. Whose are the fathers--Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are directly referred to; and Jacob’s sons also, especially Joseph, and Judah the vessel of royal promise and blessing to Israel (Psalms 77:15; Psalms 80:1; Psalms 81:5; Genesis 49:8; Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14). Our hearts include Moses, Samuel, David, and the prophets when we think of Israel and remember "the fathers." But it is especially to Abraham, "the father of all them that believe," that our grateful memory turns; for, although we have no connection with Israel, we do have indeed a vital connection with Abraham, as his "children."

8. And of whom is Christ as to the flesh--who is over all God blessed unto the ages! Amen. [198] In Romans 1:3 God’s Son is said to be "born of the seed of David according to the flesh"; in John 1:14, we read: "The Word became flesh"; in Hebrews 2:16 : "He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham"; and in Matthew 1:1, it is: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

[198] The questions concerning both Romans 9:5 and 1 Timothy 3:16 have arisen from the mists of doubt rather than from the heights of childlike faith in God's revelation of the deity of Christ. See Alford's excellent and exhaustive note on Romans 9:5, from the end of which we quote: "No conjecture arising from doctrinal difficulty is ever to be admitted in the face of the consensus of mss. and versions. The rendering given above is, then, not only that most agreeable to the usage of the Apostle, but the only one admissible by the rules of grammar and arrangement. It also admirably suits the context: for having enumerated the historic advantages of the Jewish people, he concludes by stating one which ranks far higher than all,--that from them sprung, according to the flesh, He who is God over all, blessed forever."

Now this is an astonishing honor to Israel,--infinitely outranking all others: our Lord, "the Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6), is, "according to the flesh," an Israelite! For two other things are immediately affirmed of Him: He is over all, and He is God blessed unto the ages. The words "over all" are partly explained in 1 Corinthians 15:27 : "He [God the Father] put all things in subjection under His [Christ's] feet." But in John 1:1; John 1:3 : "The Word was God. All things were made through Him." As in Colossians 1:16-17 : "All things were created through Him and unto Him; and by Him all things consist" (hold together); so that Christ is indeed "over all, God blessed forever"! (As to this ascription of deity to Christ, see Kelly's Notes on Romans, pp. 165-171.) And now Paul falls back upon the sovereignty of God, accomplishing thereby three things:

First he defends himself (and all of us) against the charge of teaching that God had been unfaithful in His promises toward Israel; (2) he shows that Israel's own Scriptures had foretold their temporary rejection, and the salvation of the Gentiles; and (3) he shows the great future blessing which will come to Israel, in God's sovereign MERCY. Let us read the text:

6 But it is not as though the word of God hath come to nought. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel; 7 neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but. In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, It is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. 9 For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a Song of Solomon 10 And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one,--by our father Isaac: 11 for [the children] being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, 12--it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. The great revealed truth of the sovereignty of God perplexes many, disturbs others, and some take occasion to stumble at it.

Romans 9:6 : But it is not as though the word of God hath come to nought--Paul here refers to those great promises God had made to Abraham, then to Isaac, then to Jacob; conferring blessing upon their seed, announcing Himself as God of Israel, giving them by oath the land of Palestine, placing in David's line the promise of perpetual royalty on earth; prophesying a great and glorious future for Israel, not only in the coming Millennium, or 1000 years kingdom here, but in the new earth which follows that (Isaiah 66:22). Paul's immediate explanation (for it looked as if these Divine promises had lapsed) was that not all that are of Israel are really Israel before God.

Romans 9:7 : Neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but. In Isaac shall thy seed be called. I know, said our Lord, that ye are Abraham's descendants; but if you were Abraham's children you would do the works of Abraham. "If God were your Father, ye would love

Me. Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:37-44). To regard religious privilege as spiritual reality is the very deadliest delusion. The real sons of Abraham are defined in Galatians 3:7 : "Know therefore, that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham." However, in the present passage, the point is not that Abraham's real children are those that believe, but that Divine sovereign calling lies behind all. As God said to Abraham concerning Ishmael, "Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Genesis 17:19-21). The direct quotation is from Genesis 21:12, when Ishmael was cast out. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." This is Divine sovereign action. Now Paul explains it:

Romans 9:8 : That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. What does the apostle mean by "The children of the promise are reckoned for a seed"? It is most necessary that we perceive that Paul is speaking here, not of man's believing a promise and therefore being written down as one of God's children; but on the contrary, of the promise (of God to Christ) that characterizes the existence and calling of all the real children of God. He expounds this in the next verse.

Romans 9:9 : For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son--The quotation is from Genesis 18:10. Read the connection there carefully. Isaac, the coming child, did not believe the promise in order to be born! But, God promised Isaac to Abraham, and kept His promise by a miracle. When Isaac was born, therefore, he was a child of promise,--a promised child, in God's sovereign will.

Romans 9:10-11 : And not only so, but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac--for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,-- In the former passage it is brought out that Isaac was a child of promise, not merely of natural generation. In the present passage the Divine sovereignty--"the purpose of God according to election"--is seen extending still further than birth, to the disposition of the condition and affairs of the children thus promised. The elder shall serve the younger, is not only a prophecy that Jacob would inherit and obtain the Divine blessing, and that his seed (as in the days of David and Solomon) would be temporarily triumphant over the Edomites, Esau's descendants; but also looks far into the future beyond the brief triumph of the Herodians, the Edomites, in the days of Christ and the apostles, to the day when, as Balaam was forced against his will to prophesy:

"There shall come forth a Star out of Jacob, And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, And shall smite through the corners of Moab, And break down all the sons of tumult. And Edom shall be a possession;

Seir also shall be a possession, who were his enemies;

While Israel doeth valiantly" (Numbers 24:17-18).

"And they [Israel and Judah when the Lord returns, agrees Isaiah], shall put forth their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them" (Isaiah 11:14).

Romans 9:12-13 : The elder shall serve the younger, and, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated--These words are chosen from the first and from the last books of the Old Testament. As to "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," a woman once said to Mr. Spurgeon, "I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau." "That," Spurgeon replied, "is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob!" All men being sinners, we must allow God to "retreat into His own sovereignty," to act as He will. You and I may say, Esau proved himself entirely unworthy of the covenant blessings, for he despised them. This, however, will be seen to be a shallow view of the statement of the eleventh verse, that the prophecy of their future was told to their mother while the children were yet in her womb, not having done anything good or bad. For the Divine statement concerning His own election, and His providence that carries out that election, is very plain, that it is not of works but of Himself, who gives the creature his calling. We have already in Romans seen and believed that righteousness is not of works but of Divine grace--uncaused by us. Now let us just as frankly bow to God’s plain statement that His purpose according to election is likewise not of human works. That is to say, the favor of God to the children of promise (to those whom He has given to Christ) is not procured by their response to God’s grace, but contrariwise, their response to God’s grace is because they have been given to Christ.

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be the thought! 15 For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. 16 So then. it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. 17 For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee My power, and that My name might be published abroad in all the earth. 18 So then He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth.

We have now come upon that passage of Scripture against which the human mind--or rather heart, rebels most of all. For it sets the creature as he really is before God; not, indeed, as an automaton, nor in fatalistic compulsion,--otherwise there were no morals, and no appeal in the gospel.

Nevertheless, it will be our only safe path to receive just as God writes it down, the truth we find here.

Romans 9:14-15 : What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be the thought! For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. We have only to remember the circumstances under which God thus spoke to Moses, to see the righteousness of God’s sovereignty in mercy. There had been the awful breach at Sinai: Israel had "changed their glory for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass." The eternal ineffably glorious Jehovah in His indignation had said to Moses: "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Exodus 32:10). Moses pleads for the people, and the next day offers, if God will forgive them, to be himself blotted out of God’s book! He said to the people: "I will go up unto Jehovah; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin" (Exodus 32:30). Forty days and forty nights this devoted man lay on his face interceding for Israel, and God brought about, as we know, Moses’ mediatorship for Israel. (Study carefully Exodus 33:1-23, Exodus 34:1-35 : especially Exodus 33:12-17; Exodus 34:1; Exodus 34:27; Exodus 34:28; Exodus 34:32.) God shows Moses himself favor; and finally extends it to all the people. And note, it is in this connection, and under

these circumstances, and in answer to the personal request of His beloved servant: "Show me, I pray thee, thy glory," that Jehovah says, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Exodus 33:18-19).

Now who can find fault with that? Unless Jehovah shows mercy, Israel must all righteously perish. There was no resource left in man! God, whose name is Love, must come out to man and come in mercy, or all is over! And here we earnestly ask you to read the remarkable words of Darby, in the foot-note below. [199] It will accomplish in the heart which weighs it carefully that reconciliation of the sovereignty of God with God's love and grace which is possible alone to faith; and it will also enlighten the mind concerning God's dealings with Israel as recorded in these three great chapters of Romans.

[199] Here the apostle shows Israel from their own history that they must leave God to His sovereignty or else they must lose their promises; and then that in the exercise of this sovereignty He will let in the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. If, says Paul, you Israelites will take your promises by descent, we will just see what comes of it. You say, we be Abraham's seed, and have a right to the promises by descent; for these Gentiles are but dogs, and have no right to share with us in God's promises. Well, if God has His sovereignty, He will in grace let in these Gentile dogs! But now I will prove to you that you cannot take the promises by descent. In the first place, They are not all Israel which are of Israel'; yet if it is by descent you must take in all Abraham's seed, And if you take in Abraham's children, then you must take in Ishmael--those Arabians! Oh no, say they, we cannot allow that; what! Ishmaelites in the congregation of Israel, and heirs of promise? Yes, if by descent! You must take it by grace; and if it is by grace, God will not confine this grace to you, but will exercise it toward the Gentiles. "But now, to go further down in your history, you have Jacob and Esau; and if you go by descent, you must let in the Edomites by the same title as yourselves. But in Romans 9:5 and Romans 9:9, it says, The children of the promise are counted for the seed': so that it must rest on Isaac and Jacob, and Ishmael and Esau remain outside: therefore your mouth must now be closed as to descent, for your mouth is bound up by God's saying, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' He has chosen, according to His sovereign title, to bless you, and on that alone your blessing depends; as your own history shows, and your own prophetic testimony proves. You cannot rest it on a mere title by descent. But further, see how their (the Jews') mouth is stopped: for when did God say, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy'? When every Israelite had lost all title to everything God had to give, then God retreated, if I may use the expression, into His own sovereignty, that He might not cut them off." [See Exodus 33:19, after the great breach made by Israel's worshipping the golden calf, while Moses was standing in the mount with Jehovah!] "By this act, Israel had forfeited everything: they had cast off the promises, which they had accepted on the condition of their own obedience (Exodus 19:8), and the God who made the promises, and who alone could fulfil them. Could God overlook this sin? Israel had undertaken to have the promises by their obedience; if God had dealt with Israel in righteousness, every one must have been cut off. What could God do, but retreat, as I said, into His own sovereignty? There He had a resource; for if any of them are to be spared, it must be in this way of mercy. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' Man is entirely lost, so now God says, I will act for Myself. Taking a truth in connection with all other truth gives it its right and proper place, and its own Divine force. "Say now, you Jews, (and you, my reader, ask yourself the

question), will you be willing to be dealt with in righteousness? No, you would not! Then do not talk about it, until you can go to God on that footing. But if you have such a conviction of sin as stops your mouth about righteousness, and so excludes all boasting, you will rejoice in the mercy' and compassion' of God, who retreats into His own sovereignty, that He may know how to spare; because in this sovereignty He can show mercy."

Romans 9:16 : So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy--Oh, that this great verse might sink into our ears, into our very hearts! Perhaps no statement of all Scripture so completely brings man to an utter end. Man thinks he can "will" and "decide," God-ward, and that after he has so "decided" and "willed," he has the ability to "run," or, as he says, to "hold out." But these two things, deciding and holding out, are in this verse utterly rejected as the source of salvation,--which is declared to be God that hath MERCY. Human responsibility is not at all denied here: man ought to will, and ought to run. But we are all nothing but sinners, and can do,--will do, neither: unless God come forth to us in sovereign mercy. [200]

[200] God has come forth at Calvary! He has set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in His blood. Here is infinite love, displayed when human sin was at its topmost height of frightful guilt and malignity. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) were the words spoken in tenderness to God the Father by God the Son at the moment wicked hands were nailing Him to a cross of agony--spoken by One whose face was "marred more than any man." Therefore in the gospel is power to turn men's hearts, for it is the goodness of God that leadeth us to repentance. "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in my Name," said our risen Lord, He of the pierced hands and feet and side!

Romans 9:17-18 : For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee My power, and that My name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth.

Now in Pharaoh's case, it is customary to emphasize the fact that he said: "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto His voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). But we must go back of that to Exodus 4:21 : "And Jehovah said unto Moses, When thou goest back into Egypt, see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in thy hand: but I will harden [lit., make strong] his heart, and he will not let the people go."

"And I will harden Pharoah's heart and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not hearken unto you, and I will lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth My hosts. My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments" (Exodus 7:3-4).

Now it is not necessary nor right to make God the author of Pharaoh's stubbornness. No more is it right to insist that if God be a God of love He must save everybody, as all sorts of Universalists claim. Exodus 7:13-14 records Pharaoh's attitude after the first "wonder"; and then God's report of Pharaoh's heart-condition,--for God sees the heart: "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened [lit., was strong], and he hearkened not unto them; as Jehovah had spoken."

"And Jehovah said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is heavy.'" Now the Hebrew word translated "heavy" or "hard" here, is frequently used of that which weighs down, as in Exodus 17:12 : "Moses' hands were heavy"; and in 1 Kings 12:10 : "Thy father made our yoke heavy." See especially

Isaiah 1:4 : "A people laden [lit., heavy] with iniquity." On the whole, therefore, we are compelled to see that Pharaoh's heart was left by God simply in its natural state,--heavy with iniquity. Unlike Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:6), his heart had never been "lifted up in the ways of Jehovah." Unlike David, he had not even felt the weight of his sins, for David complains, in Psalms 38:4 :

"Mine iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." The word heavy here is the same Hebrew word which God uses to describe Pharaoh's heart, in Exodus 7:14.

God had a perfect right to allow Pharaoh to remain (where we all would have remained, apart from Divine sovereign mercy!), in a disobedient. God-defying attitude: "Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him?" Pharaoh fulfilled the Divine counsels. The plagues his rebellion brought on, and his overthrow at the Red Sea, are celebrated in Exodus 15:14 : "The peoples have heard, they tremble." The pagan Philistines, even in Samuel's day said: "These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness" (1 Samuel 4:7-8). Jehovah's name was indeed through this unregenerate rebel, Pharaoh, "published abroad in all the earth," just as He said!

02.19. Chapter 9B

CHAPTER 9B

What God’s Word tells us as to His dealing with Pharaoh, explains "He hardeneth." But nothing else than a subject heart of faith will enter, with reverent footstep, into the twice repeated words, "whom He will," here. And we say boldly, that a believer’s heart is not fully yielded to God until it accepts without question, and without demanding softening, this eighteenth verse.

Paul in the Spirit forestalls the natural operations of man’s proud heart:

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He still find fault? For who withstandeth His will? 20 Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why didst Thou make me thus? 21 Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? In His infinite wisdom and knowledge God reads with unerring accuracy the operations of the human heart: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." Man says, If I am not one of God’s elect, an object of His mercy, then I cannot do right, and God should not blame me. I asked an intelligent man in western Michigan if he had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He burst out into loud laughing, saying, "If I am elect, I will go to heaven; and if I am not elect, there is no use in my worrying about the question!" I rebuked him sternly, with these words: "God commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He hath ordained.’ God’s commands are God’s enablings,’ and if you will hearken to Him, you will be saved. But you will not dare to say to God in that day, I could not come because I was not of the elect; for that will not be true! The reason you refused to come, will be found to be your love of sin, not your non-election!" God says, "Whosoever will," and the door is open to all, absolutely all. God means "Whosoever": and that is the word for you, sinner; and not election, which is God’s business, not yours!

Romans 9:20 : Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it. Why didst thou make me thus? Literally, this reads: "O man, yes! but rather,--you! who are you, replying against God?"

Alford well says: "The words yea, rather,’ take the ground from under the previous assertion and supersede it by another: implying that it has a certain show of truth, but that the proper view of the matter is yet to be stated. They thus convey, as in Luke 11:28, a rebuke,--here, with severity: That which thou hast said may be correct human reasoning,--but as against God’s sovereignty, thy reasoning is out of place and irrelevant; the verse implying. Thou hast neither right nor power to call God to account in this matter.’ These verses are a rebuke administered to the spirit of the objection, which forgets the immeasurable distance between us and God, and the relation of Creator and Disposer in which He stands to us." And Stifler warns: "He who replies against God must mean that it is God’s hardening that deprives a soul of salvation; that if God did not interpose with an election and take some and leave others to be hardened, all men would have at least an

equal opportunity of salvation. This is false. If God did not elect, none would be saved, for there is none that seeketh after God' (Romans 3:11). And, men are not lost because they are hardened; they are hardened because they are lost; they are lost because they are sinners.

"God is not responsible for sin. He is under no obligation to save any one. Obligation and sovereignty cannot both be predicated of God. If He saves any one it is a sovereign act of mercy." Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it. Why didst thou make me thus?

Thus speaks also Jehovah by Isaiah:

"Woe unto him that striveth with His Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! . . . Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it. He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?" (Isaiah 45:9; Isaiah 29:16.) In the Scriptures, those who meet God, fall into the dust. "I am but dust and ashes," said Abraham, and Job: "Mine eye seeth Thee, and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A "thing," yea, and a formed thing, owing its very being to a Creator! Have we thus considered ourselves? Our only proper creature-attitude is one of faith, not questioning. As "Frail creatures of dust, And feeble as frail, In Thee do we trust, Nor find Thee to fail."

These are days of man-vaunting, and God-despising. But they shall soon end, and the very earth on which man's legions marched in such pride, shall flee away "before the face of Him who sits upon the Throne"! (Revelation 20:11.)

Romans 9:21 : Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? As concerns the right of the Divine Potter over the human clay, we need to go with Jeremiah to "the potter's house": "I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Such as is the clay in the potter's hands, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:3-6). God called man "dust" in Eden (Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:19). And, "The nations are as a drop of a bucket and are accounted as the small dust of the balance" (Isaiah 40:15). When the apothecary would weigh an article accurately, he whisks out with a breath from the balances any former dust remaining therein: and there go the nations, all,--as regards greatness before God! Yet here is one atom of this "small dust" replying against God, saying, "What right has He to do thus with me?"

Now it will not do to answer, "God is love"; "God so loved the world." True, indeed. But God is God, and the nations are "less than nothing, and vanity," as you read in Isaiah 40:17, and in many other Scriptures. God has rights high above all our poor comprehension. We know that God will always act righteously. We are not God's judges! God has a right "from the same lump of human clay to make one part a vessel unto honor, another unto dishonor." No godly person challenges that right. Nay, godly people most reverently bow to it! "What would the ability to fashion be worth, if it were under the dictation of that which is to be fashioned?"

22 What if GOD, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endureth with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles?

Romans 9:22 : What if GOD--the greatness of the Creator and the nothingness of the creature! God’s will is supreme and right, even to His being willing to show publicly His wrath--both at the day of judgment, and on through eternity. His holiness and righteousness will be exhibited to all creatures in His visitation of wrath upon the wicked: And to make His power known--Job in astonishing words describes God’s power as seen in creation and providence, but adds:

"Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: And how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?"

(Job 26:14.) But the day is coming when His power will be publicly exhibited in overwhelming and eternal visitation upon the vessels of wrath. Let us ponder this great passage:

What if GOD, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction?

Here we find:

1. That certain were fitted unto destruction. It is not said that God so fitted them. [201] But in Romans 2:1-29 we find those who "despise the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God, not knowing that the goodness of God was meant to lead them to repentance." Of such it is said that they "treasure up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath."

[201] Nevertheless, we must let certain Scriptures lie Just as they are, whether or not they consort with our conceptions, or whether we find ourselves able to "reconcile" them with our "theological system" or not. We quote a few of these Scriptures: The wicked are estranged from the womb;

They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psalms 58:3).

Jehovah hath made everything for its own end;

Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4).

They stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:8).

"Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall . . . die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered (Ezekiel 3:20). "Because they had not executed Mine ordinances, but had rejected My statutes, . . . I gave them statutes that were not good, and ordinances wherein they should not live" (Ezekiel 20:24-25). However, even in these passages, solemnly terrible as they are, we must separate God’s actions from man’s responsibility. God is not the author of evil; He tempteth no man; "He would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

2. God had, we next read here, in their earth-life dealt with these with much longsuffering. They never learned however, as Peter urged, to "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3:15). This longsuffering is the enduring on earth of ungrateful rebels by a God surrounded in Heaven by the glad, obedient hosts of light!

3. They thus became vessels of wrath: those in and through whom God could publicly and justly display His holy indignation against sin and godlessness,--for a warning to all ages and creatures

to come.

4. Thus these came to that destruction unto which their sin had duly fitted them. Now this "destruction" is not at all that cessation of being, of which we hear so much from Satan’s false prophets in these days. But it is, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:9, an eternal visitation of Divine anger "in flaming fire" from the very presence of the Lord Himself! It not only involves the final withdrawal of all mercy and long-suffering, but the eternal infliction of Divine punishment upon the bodies of the damned.

5. The terribleness of this is seen in the fact that this "destruction," this visitation of punishment upon the persons of the lost, will be made the occasion of God’s exhibiting publicly both His holy wrath against sin, and also His power in the punishment of it. His hatred of sin is absolute,--and these will be made to experience it; His power is infinite, and these will be compelled to be an example of it.

6. In the words What if GOD--should proceed thus? all creature-questionings are stilled into awful silence, if not today, some day!

Romans 9:23 : Then at the next words: And that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, we are just as silent as before, though in boundless, endless gratitude: for apart from mercy, we too had become "vessels of wrath." As Paul says in Romans 9:29 : Except the Lord had dealt in mercy with us, we also "had become as Sodom!"

Note carefully that while it is God’s wrath and power that are to be made known in the "vessels of wrath"; and though the glory of God would be thus in His justice exhibited, He yet does not use the word glory in connection with the damnation of the wicked. In Exodus 15:11 Moses and the children of Israel do indeed celebrate the overthrow of Pharaoh, as setting forth God’s praise, saying, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Yet we must ever remember that God is love, from past eternity, and now, and forever. So that it is written: "He delighteth in mercy"--lovingkindness: (Micah 7:18); and, "As I live, saith Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). God will not exult over the lost! Witness Christ weeping over Jerusalem, and sorrowing over Judas (John 13:21); and the "lamentation" even over the fall of Lucifer (figured in the King of Tyre, in the remarkable passage of Ezekiel 28:11 ff.). But when God speaks in Romans 9:23 of the vessels of mercy it is at once said that He afore prepared them unto glory, that is, for entering into His own glory (Romans 5:2), and that they will be the means of making known through eternity to come the riches of His glory. So He speaks in Ephesians 2:4-7 of His being "rich in mercy." If it is true of us that where our treasure is our hearts will be; it is infinitely more true of God! God’s treasured riches are mercy and grace. Judgment, the execution of wrath, He calls His "strange work," His "strange act" (Isaiah 28:21). Mercy is the work dear to His heart!

Mark well here this word "afore." For the whole process of our salvation is viewed from that blessed future day when we shall enter, through Divine mercy, into that glory unto which God "afore" appointed us, and for which He "afore" prepared us, in the work of Christ for us, and the application to us of that work, by the blessed Holy Spirit. All was "afore" arranged by God!

Romans 9:24 : Even us, whom He also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles. How constant, in Paul's consciousness, the owing all to God's sovereign grace. "Prepared unto glory" [202] --in past eternity, in sovereign election, and having a calling befitting that "preparing." Surely no one can miss, in this apostle, the supreme consciousness that he is God's,--not by his choice, but God's own choice,--an eternally settled thing, uncaused by Paul! All believers will have the same consciousness, when they find, (as Paul found), along with their Divine election, that there is in them, in their flesh, "no good thing"!

[202] Hodge's remarks here are excellent: "The passive participle may be taken as a verbal adjective, fit for destruction. Of the vessels of wrath, it is simply said that they are fit for destruction; but of the vessels of mercy, that God prepares them for glory. Why this change if the apostle did not intend to intimate that the agency of God is very different in the one case from what it is in the other? God does not create men in order to destroy them. God did not make Pharaoh wicked and obdurate; but as a punishment for his sin, he so dealt with him that the evil of his nature revealed itself in a form, and under circumstances, which made him a fit object of the punitive justice of God."

Now the apostle, having declared that these "vessels of mercy" were "called," both from Jews and Gentiles, adduces several plain Scriptures (which the gainsaying Jews should have laid to heart).

25 As He saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people which was not my people; And her beloved, that was not beloved. 26 And it shall be, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, There shall they be called sons of the Living God. 27 And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The Remnant shall be saved: 28 For He is bringing the matter to an end, and cutting it short in righteousness; Because a matter cut short will the Lord make in the earth. 29 And, as Isaiah hath said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah.

Romans 9:25 : I will call that my people which was not my people; and her beloved that was not beloved. Paul here, in a most remarkable way, takes from the prophet (Hosea 2:23) a passage that distinctly refers to Israel: as Peter, quoting the same place says: "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God." For here we see the "Remnant according to the election of Grace," addressed by Peter, their Apostle. The nation after the flesh was apostate; but God views believing Israelites as perpetuating--not the national place, which has been forfeited for the present--but His lovingkindness to those which He had called His "people"; His "elect nation." "To you first," Peter said to Israel after Pentecost, "God, having raised up His Son, sent Him to bless you." So that Paul and Peter are in perfect agreement that Hosea 2:23 fits believing Israelites. And then we have Hosea quoted again! But now it is Chapter 1:10(Hosea 1:10), last part.

Romans 9:26 : And it shall be, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called sons of the living God. Here now come the Gentiles,--according to Romans 9:24. No Gentile nation was ever called a people of God! Nor are the Gentiles today called such. Although in the Millennium all the Gentiles "upon whom the Lord's Name is called," will seek Him (Acts 15:17); yet Israel are his elect people, always. But now "some better thing" has been provided for us (Hebrews 11:40) both Jewish and Gentile believers of this "day of salvation":

Sons of the Living God! See Galatians 4:1-7. The Spirit of God's Son cries Abba, Father, in our hearts, who "partake of the heavenly calling."

God's infinite grace takes up those who were once (and that by our Lord Himself) called "dogs"--as compared with the "children"--nation of Israel, and gives them a heavenly calling: far above that of earthly Israel,--even when restored! "Sons of the Living God"--oh, let us give praise unto Him!

Romans 9:27 : And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the Remnant shall be saved. Here the apostle takes another prophet, Isaiah, and quotes again from two passages; and again from the later one first. Romans 9:27 is from Isaiah 10:22. Some estimate the Jewish population as 20,000,000 (though that probably is too high). If we read Ezekiel 20:33-38, we see the Lord Jehovah, "with wrath poured out" bringing Israel out from the nations (He is beginning this now!); and cutting off "the rebels" amongst them,--the rebels against the national Divine calling as a separate nation to Jehovah. Only the Remnant will be left; for, as Isaiah says, "a destruction is determined!" How solemn these words! And let them sink into our foolish Gentile hearts; for only a "few men left" of all the nations, will enter the Millennium.

Romans 9:28 : For He is bringing the matter to an end, and cutting it short in righteousness: Because a matter cut short will the Lord make in the earth. The ways of God should be the study of the saints. He waits long,--He forbears--He is silent: then He suddenly puts into execution an eternally-formed purpose! Thus it was at the Flood, and in the destruction of Sodom, and afterwards of the Canaanites. Also now, for a long season, God has been letting the nations go on in comparative quiet, filling up the earth with much the largest population ever known; and despite their various persecutions the Jews have also been relatively secure from that Divine "indignation" which all students of Scripture know is yet to be brought to a terrible "end" upon them. The awful words of Ezekiel 20:35-36 are to be fulfilled--"cut short in righteousness." The expression there "the wilderness of the people,"--where the Jews will have no national friend or refuge whatever, except Palestine; and Jehovah "entering into judgment" with them, "like as He entered into judgment with their fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt" (when he turned them back from Kadesh-barnea to die in the wilderness)--all this remains to be done,--and in "a short work." The Remnant shall be saved [the majority having been slain in the Great Tribulation] for He is ending up the matter [of His dealing with Israel] and cutting it short [in the time of "Jacob's trouble"--the "forty-two months"; the "time, times, and a half";--three and a half years, of Daniel's Seventieth Week] in righteousness, because a matter cut short will the Lord make on the earth.

Every student of Scripture should be familiar by this time with the general "mould of prophecy." Therefore we have boldly inserted in brackets the evident meaning here. It is the great crisis of prophecy here in view, the closing up not only of the times of the Gentiles, but of God's dispensational dealings with national Israel, the Remnant of whom--a "very small Remnant"--will be saved; preserved through the Great Tribulation to bless the earth after the Lord returns. Any reader of Scripture will be astonished, and deeply edified if he will take a concordance and study God's Word about the Remnant. [203]

[203] See Genesis 45:7; Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 10:21-22; Isaiah 11:11; Isaiah 11:16; Isaiah 46:3; Jeremiah 23:3; Ezekiel 6:8; Amos 5:15; Micah 2:12; Micah 5:7-8; Zephaniah 2:7; Zephaniah 2:9; Zephaniah 3:13; Zechariah 8:6; Zechariah 8:11-12.

God is now letting matters run on in general, both among the Gentiles and Israel. This will shortly be utterly changed, even to what scientists call the "laws" of the powers of the heavens--and a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. (See Author’s book on The Revelation, p. 140, ff). This involves, of course, that the most of the natural children of Israel will be cut off; that it will be only the elect Remnant who will be saved and share in the Millennial Kingdom; which, as the prophecies concerning the "Remnant" abundantly testify, that Remnant will enjoy. (See Ezekiel 40:1-49, Ezekiel 41:1-26, Ezekiel 42:1-20, Ezekiel 43:1-27, Ezekiel 44:1-31, Ezekiel 45:1-25, Ezekiel 46:1-24, Ezekiel 47:1-23, Ezekiel 48:1-35; Isaiah 10:21-22 and Isaiah 35:1-10; Jeremiah 31:1-14.)

Romans 9:29 : Israel might object to the doctrine of "the Remnant," the "election of grace" by God; but the quotation in Romans 9:29, from Isaiah 1:9 shows that if God had not intervened in sovereign grace, they would have all become as Sodom [in iniquity], and been made like unto Gomorrah [in their damnation]. It was sovereign goodness that saved [204] any Israelites,--just as it is sovereign goodness that saves any Gentiles.

[204] In these passages brought by the Spirit from the Old Testament and fitting present times precisely, we are again face to face with the marvels of God’s inspiration. William Kelly well says: "What a witness of Divine truth, of indiscriminate grace, that the gospel, in itself unprecedented and wholly distinct both from what was seen under the Law and what will be when the Kingdom appears in power and glory, does nevertheless find its justification from words both of mercy and of judgment uttered hundreds of years before by the various servants God sent to declare His message to His people! But, as they blindly despised them and rejected His word then for idols, so now they fulfilled them yet more in the rejection of Christ and hatred of the grace which, refused by them, was sought and received by Gentiles, and thus yet more proved the word Divine, to the confusion of the unbelief which is as blind as it is proud and selfish" (Kelly, Notes on Romans, in loc).

Thus it becomes plain (for Israel is but a sample of the human race) that opposition to the truth of Divine elective mercy arises from ignorance of or blindness to the utter sinfulness and wholly lost state, of mankind. All would go to perdition unless God in mercy intervened!

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, those not at all pursuing after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: 31 but Israel, pursuing after a law [which should give] righteousness, did not arrive at [such a] law. 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the Stone of stumbling; 33 even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence: And he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame.

We here have a most remarkable passage, full of the deepest consolation on the one hand, and warning on the other.

Here were the Gentiles, deep in the sin described in Romans 1:1-32 and Romans 2:1-29, occupied with superstition and idolatry. Paul said in Athens, a city full of idols, "I perceive that in all things ye are very religious" (lit.,"demon-fearing"). There was no seeking after righteousness before a holy God! Paul quotes in Romans 3:1-31 those Psalms which declare there is "none that seeketh after God." For the Gentiles, of Antioch in Pisidia, for example, were not pursuing after

righteousness; but here come Paul and Barnabas, preaching; and "the whole city is gathered together to hear the Word of God." And when the Jews reviled the blessed gospel of grace,

"Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life [How terrible!--dying men refusing life!] lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth. And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spread about throughout all the region" (Acts 13:44; Acts 13:46-49).

Here is good news for bad men!--men who had never read the Old Testament Scriptures, nor "pursued after righteousness"; yet, though Gentiles, hearing the gospel and believing, they walk right into righteousness by faith, past the Jews, who had been pursuing after--what? a law that should give them righteousness. Note, we are not told that even the Jews were pursuing after righteousness, but after a law by which, through their self-efforts, they hoped to attain righteousness! They did not, like the Gentiles, as sinners, simply believe the good news of a God of grace. But although their own Law would have convicted them of sin if they had really heard [205] it, yet they kept pursuing after a Law whose requirements they could not meet but in possessing and pursuing after which, they gloried! It was all as-it-were-works,--a dream!

[205] So Paul to the Galatians: "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not HEAR the law?" (Galatians 4:21.) Paul himself, he tells us, was "alive apart from the Law once,"--although he knew the Law and gloried in it and observed its outward ordinances. But the day came, as he showed in Chapter 7, when he "heard" it; it became a distinct spiritual command to his soul to do the righteousness commanded.

They did not arrive at that law,--it was always just ahead, out of reach! Why? Because they never directly trusted God! Having the conceit of the self-righteous,--that some day they would attain God’s final acceptance of their works, they never thought of needing God’s mercy, or of "simply trusting" Him, as they were,--as David does in Psalm Fifty-one! So when Christ came, saying, "Transfer your trust from yourselves to Me! Moses gave you the Law, but none of you keepeth the Law":--they turned in fury and slew the Righteous One! So the Jews stumbled. Now, it takes a spiritual mind and a subject heart to read with profit what is here. Were there Divine commands in the Law? Certainly. Were there hopes connected with fully keeping them? Certainly. "The man that doeth the righteousness which is of the Law shall live thereby" (Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5). Were there those that professed righteousness by the Law? Yes, on every side: Pharisees, priests, scribes,--who also became the crucifiers of Christ! But what else do we read in the Old Testament? We read from Genesis 3:15 throughout Scripture that there was a Seed, the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of David, through whom alone salvation and blessing would come. "This is the name by which He shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." As David cried, "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psalms 71:16). But also it was also plainly written of Him, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek"; and that He would "hide not His face from shame and spitting"; that He would be "despised and rejected"; that His hands and feet would be "pierced," but that "through the knowledge of Himself, God’s Righteous Servant, [Messiah] should constitute many righteous" (Isaiah 53:11). So He,

Christ, the meek and lowly One, who went about doing them good, who healed them, loved them, and finally died for them,--became to them the Stone of Stumbling! And it was in Zion, where they had the Law, that this Stone of stumbling was to be laid. Now the only way to have Him is to believe on Him: otherwise, He was a Rock of offence. He offended all the claims of the Jews as "children of Abraham"; He offended all their false claims of righteousness, by the light which He was,--the Holy One. He offended the leaders of Israel, by exposing their sin. He offended the hopes of an immediate, carnal, earthly kingdom, by showing that only those poor in spirit and pure of heart would be in that kingdom. In short, He offended the nation by overthrowing its whole superstructure of works built on sand,--as-it-were-works!

However, there were those that believed on Him--the "poor of the flock," and they were not then, and shall not be put to shame. (See comment on Romans 10:11.)

Even so, today, the true gospel of Christ crucified, bringing out our guilt and the danger of Divine wrath, offends men who would like to come and "join the church" in their respectability! Respectability of what? Of filthy rags! [206]

[206] Sir Robert Anderson relates: "A lady of my acquaintance, well known in the higher ranks of London society, called upon me one day to ask for police help, to relieve her from certain annoyances. Her evident distress at my inability to give her the protection she sought, led me to remark that the peace of God in the heart was a great antidote to trouble. "Ah," said she, "if I were only like you!" "If it depended on my merit," I replied with real sincerity, "it is you who would have the peace, not I", Presently her manner changed, and with tears in her eyes she told me something of her spiritual struggles. If she could be more earnest, more devout, more prayerful, she was sure that God would accept her. "I was greatly interested," I remarked, "by what I heard about the supper you gave the tramps last week. Did they offer you anything for it? Of course, they had no money, but they might have brought you some of their coats and shirts!" "If you had only seen their coats and shirts!" she exclaimed with a smile. "Filthy rags they were. I’m sure," said I, "and what you don’t believe is that in God’s sight all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.'"

It is a humanly incurable delusion of the human heart that salvation is within the natural reach; and that at any time if a man will "make up his mind like a man," and "hold out to the end," God will certainly accept him. But this conception leaves out entirely the word "mercy." The very name of this plan is Vain Confidence. It has doomed and damned its millions. For, salvation being altogether of God, the soul who is bugging the delusion that it is "of him that willeth," "of him that runneth," is making God a liar and walking in blind pride.

You ask. Is there not a place for human responsibility? Does not God command all men to repent? Does He not say: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely?" He does. But the Ninth of Romans is no place to discuss that subject, and that because God does not here discuss it. You say, If Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all"; and God "would have all men to be saved"; if Christ "tasted death for every man," if "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses," and is now sending out His ambassadors to beseech men to be reconciled to God--how can these statements be reconciled with God’s words in verse 18: "So then He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth"?

Friend, who set you or me to "reconcile" (which means to reduce to the compass or our mental grasp) the sayings of the infinite God of truth? If I wait to believe the statements of God the Creator until I can "reconcile" them with my creature conceptions, that is not faith, but presumption.

Moreover, unless you receive both doctrines: on the one hand, that of the death of Christ for all, and the actual, bona fide offer of salvation through His cross, to all who will believe; and, on the other hand, that of the absolute sovereignty of the God who "hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will, hardeneth," you will neither believe Scripturally either doctrine, nor clearly preach either. You will be either preaching a "limited atonement"--that Christ died only for the elect; or, on the other hand, refusing to surrender to God's plain statement of His sovereign election, you will preach that Christ having died for all, God's election depends on man's will. A shallow preacher in California cried, "It is election day: God is voting for you and the devil is voting against you, and you cast the deciding vote!" Of such antiscriptural statements the folly is evident. God distinctly says in Romans 9:16 : "It is not of him that willeth"; and in Romans 9:11 : "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth."

You say, "What then shall we teach?" We answer: Teach the words of Scripture and let it go at that. God can "reconcile" His own Word!

Many years ago a widely-known and beloved teacher of God's Word said to me, "I do not like to assert a truth too positively; I like always to teach a truth modified by any seemingly contradictory truth." I had myself observed in his discussion of a Scripture doctrine his citation of "authorities": "So-and-so says this; on the other hand, So-and-so says that: now take your choice." But in his later years, because he was a constant and devoted reader of God's Word, his manner of teaching quite changed: he was willing to take such a passage as the Ninth of Romans and teach it as it is, and say, "Thus saith the Lord"; and leave it there. And when there came up another line of truth that could not be "reconciled" with the first, in the mind of men, he taught this second truth also just as God stated it, and left it there.

Now if there is any passage of God's Word in which He seems to say: I am Myself assuming all responsibility for what I here announce, it is this same Ninth of Romans. But remember it's closing words: "He that believeth on Him [Christ] shall not be put to shame!" God's simple-hearted, trusting saints are quite ready, having received God's great gift of Eternal Life in Christ, to await the day when they shall "know fully"--as they have been known. Meanwhile, they walk by faith, with humble hearts, subject to what God says.

GOD NECESSARILY SOVEREIGN IN SALVATION 1. Man was lost--he could not save himself.

2. He was guilty--none could pardon him but the God he had sinned against.

3. He was by nature "a child of wrath" not deserving good; nor being able to change his nature.

4. He was allied with God's Enemy; and had a mind at enmity against God: a mind not subject, nor able to be subject to God's law or will.

5. He knew he was doing things "worthy of death"; but not only persisted in them, but was in league-approval with those of like practice; he was "of the world," not of God.

6. Therefore, if any move be made toward man's salvation, it must come from God, not man.

7. God, being God, knew beforehand that the attitude of every man by nature toward his overtures would be to oppose them.

8. Since any real response to these overtures, therefore, must come from God’s grace, He must elect to overcome effectually man’s resistance, either

(a) In no case, (b) Or, in every case, (c) Or, in certain cases.

9. To hold God unable to overcome man’s resistance in any case is to limit His power.

10. But to hold that God is unwilling to have certain saved is to deny His repeated word--"Who would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

11. Therefore, it would seem that only in those cases in which it would no longer be consistent with God’s glory--that is, consistent with His holiness and righteousness, and His just government of His creatures, would God withhold, or refuse longer to employ His gracious operations in behalf of any creature.

12. But, when we consider Election, we must remove our thoughts wholly from this world, the first Adam, the sin of man, and his "attitude" toward God. The purpose of God according to Election is "not of works, but of Him that calleth." It is outside human history altogether. It is of God.

02.20. Chapter 10

CHAPTER 10

Paul’s Prayer for Israel, who had Zeal, without Knowledge of, or Subjection to, God’s Righteousness: Fundamental Contrast between the Righteousness of Doing and That of Believing. Romans 10:1-10. The Believing Method was According to Israel’s Own Scriptures,--unto which They did not Hearken: as God had Foretold. Romans 10:11-21.

1 Brethren, the dear wish of this heart of mine, and my prayer to God for them, [Israel] is for [their] salvation. 2 For I bear witness to them that they have a zeal for God, but not at all according to knowledge. 3 For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to God’s righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the Law unto righteousness, to every one that believeth.

BRETHREN,--HERE PAUL addresses all saints concerning his yearning for national Israel’s salvation. The words my heart’s desire are literally, "the dear pleasure of my heart." Israel’s salvation was to Paul a thing of delight to contemplate and hope for. Moreover, as always, Paul puts his wish for them into prayer to God: in which all spiritual longings should end!

Romans 10:2 : He bears them this witness, and gladly, that they had a zeal for God, but he most strongly denies that there was any real knowledge of God and His ways in that zeal. Mohammedans have zeal. When I passed through the Azhar Mosque, in Cairo, a Moslem merchant was kneeling, forehead on the carpet, in prayer. Four hours later I saw him still kneeling! And outside were over 10,000 students, diligently learning the Koran! Zeal must not be Mistaken for knowledge in Divine things. See Josephus quoted below. [207] It is perhaps unkind in this place, (so tender with Paul), to cite the religious zeal of pagan or Mohammedan. But Paul himself classes the "beggarly elements" of Jew and pagan together! (Galatians 4:8-10), since the cross.

[207] 1."The Jew knows the Law better than his own name . . . The great feasts were frequented by countless thousands, . . . Over and above the requirements of the Law, ascetic religious exercises advocated by the teachers of the Law came into vogue . . . Even the Hellenised and Alexandrian Jews under Caligula died on the cross and by fire, and the Palestinian prisoners in the last war died by the claws of African lions in the amphitheatre, rather than sin against the Law. What Greek would do the like? . . . The Jews also exhibited an ardent zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles to the Law of Moses. The proselytes filled Asia Minor and Syria, and--to the indignation of Tacitus--Italy and Rome." Surely the Jews of Josephus’ day had a "zeal for God."

Romans 10:3 : But it is certainly a terrible thing we see. Here is the Jew with God’s own Book, the Old Testament Scriptures, in his hand, and blind to that Scripture’s revelation of his guilty, lost state before God. The Jews were in a fearful condition in two ways:

First, they were wholly ignorant of the one great, vital fact sinners must know: that righteousness, life, and all things are a free gift of the grace of God; and that the Law was meant only to make

them discover their sin and their own helpless need of the outright gift of righteousness from God. The expression ignorant of God's righteousness, does not mean that the Jewish people were ignorant of holiness and righteousness as attributes of God,--in fact, they prided themselves on the knowledge of such a God as over against the hideous pagan gods. But the righteousness of which they were wholly ignorant was that while "God Himself was just," He was also "the Justifier of the ungodly" of all who "believed on Jesus." As we said in Romans 9:1-33, the Jews had seized upon their possession of the Law as in itself giving them a standing with God. Our Lord could have spoken to almost any Jew as He did to the woman at Sychar's well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee!" For of a gift of righteousness they had no conception. The Law dispensation was necessarily unfruitful, "making nothing perfect," because it neither imparted life, nor gave strength to fulfil its demands. As Paul writes to the Hebrews, there was a "disannulling" of it, and a "vanishing away" of the legal covenant (Hebrews 7:18; Hebrews 8:13). When Christ came, although born under the Law in order to redeem Israel (Galatians 4:4-5), yet He Himself, from the very beginning, took the place of the Law! In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34 and Matthew 7:1-29) He declared: "It was said . . . but I say." He came, indeed, not to destroy but to fulfil, and inasmuch as Israel was under the curse of the Law, He redeemed them that were under the Law by becoming Himself a curse for them (Galatians 3:13).

Although Christ in His ministry, ("lest we cause to stumble,"-- Matthew 17:27) paid due heed to Moses' directions (as in the case of the leper--"Go show thyself to the priest"), yet He never, for example, enforced the Sabbath: indeed He freely wrought healings on that day, in the face of the murderous hatred of the legalists. The Law was designed not to bring about self-righteousness or self-hope, but contrariwise, self-despair. The law witnessed to a man his need of a mediator--as at Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:23-27). Christ Himself is the righteousness of God. When He died, bearing the sin of the world, the Law's demand for human righteousness was over, ended, closed up, set aside. Christ has now been "made of God unto us righteousness": we want no other. But it is not easy to subject ourselves unto God's righteousness: for God justifies the ungodly. Justification is a gift for very beggars, the only hope for the guilty, lost and undone [208] The Jews, ignorant of God's gift of righteousness utterly refused thus to subject themselves. They said "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man [Jesus], we know not whence He is!"

[208] 1."This is what God calls subjecting ourselves to God's righteousness': finding a righteousness which is neither of nor in ourselves, but finding Christ before God and the proud will, through grace, submitting to be saved by that which is not of or in ourselves. It is Christ instead of self--instead of our place in the flesh." Roland Hill, at the close of a great meeting, saw a lady riding in an elegant carriage, who commanded her coachman to halt, and beckoned Mr. Hill to approach her. "Sir," she said, "my coachman came to your meetings and says you told him how to be saved; so that he is now very happy. Please tell me how a lady of the nobility is to be saved, for I also desire to be happy." "Madame," said the preacher, "Christ died for the whole world. God says there is no difference. All are to be saved through simple faith in Him." "Do you mean," she said haughtily, "that I must be saved in the same way as my coachman?" "Precisely. There is no other way." "Then," she said, "I will have none of it!" and she made her coachman drive away.

John the Baptist's ministry is full of meaning here. It is both a precious and an awful thing--the results of John's testimony. Luke tells us: "All the people, when they heard [John], and the

publicans, justified God [when John preached repentance and confession of their sins], being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29-30). It is touching to the spiritual heart to find, for Instance, that all five of those converted in the first chapter of John were John's disciples.

Second, to this day they seek to "establish their own righteousness." But in this path that "seemeth right unto a man" is the way of death, yea, of direct rebellion against God. [209]

[209] As Stifler so well says: "The Jews claimed that in following the Law they were submitting to God, for He gave the Law. No, says Paul; in so doing you are not submitting to the righteousness of God. For Christ [whom God gave and you reject] is the end of the Law for [with a view of] righteousness to every one that believeth.' The Jew's system was one of doing; but God's was one of believing, one of grace. Law and grace are mutually exclusive and antagonistic systems. Because the Jew held to Law he was not in subjection to God. The proof that he was not is the great principle of grace here recorded."

They (the Jews) were desperately set on establishing, building up that which God had cast down, that is, human righteousness. They heard with deaf ears their own prophets' voices: "There is none righteous, no not one." "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Therefore, the Jews were, and are today, worse off than the heathen. Their Law--"whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart" (2 Corinthians 3:15). According to Isaiah 25:7, there is "a covering that covereth all peoples, a veil that is spread over all nations" (to be removed in Millennial days, thank God!). But over the face of the Israelite there is now not only the common blindness of man to his own condition as a sinner, but, added to that, the false confidence the Jew has in his own righteousness because the Law was given by Jehovah to his nation. [210]

[210] It is with unutterable sadness that we contemplate the even worse condition of the Laodicean Church of today! "Wretched, poor, miserable, blind, naked"--and knowing it not! Christ on the outside of the door! Yet outwardly rich, and increased with goods!

Romans 10:4 : Christ is the end of the Law unto righteousness to every one that believeth. There has been much discussion of the meaning of the word "end" here. Let us see if Scripture does not clear up this matter for us. When Christ died, He bore for Israel the curse of the Law, for they, and they alone, were under the Law. Divine Law, being broken, does not ask for future good conduct on the part of the infractor; but for his death,--and that only. Now Christ having died, all the claims of the Law against that nation which had been placed under law were completely met and ended. So that even Jews could now believe, and say, "I am dead to the Law!" To him that believeth, therefore, Jew or Gentile, Christ, dead, buried, and risen, is the end of law for righteousness,--in the sense of law's disappearance from the scene! Law does not know, or take cognizance of believers! We read in Chapter Seven (verse 6(Romans 7:6)) that those who had been under the Law were discharged from the Law, brought to nought, put out of business (katargeo(G2673)), with respect to the Law! The Law has nothing to do with them, as regards righteousness. The Scripture must be obeyed with the obedience of belief: "Ye are not under law [not under that principle] but under grace" (the contrary principle). "Ye are brought to nothing from Christ [literally, "put out of business from Christ"], ye who would be justified by the Law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Paul writes in Hebrews 7:18-19 : "There is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the Law made nothing perfect),

and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God." Again, "Christ abolished in His flesh the enmity [between Jew and Gentile], even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15); again, speaking as a Hebrew believer, Paul says, "Christ blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us: and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

If these Scriptures do not set forth a complete closing up of any believer's account toward the Law, or to the whole legal principle, I know nothing of the meaning of words. The words Christ is the end of the Law, cannot mean Christ is the "fulfilment of what the law required." The Law required obedience to precepts--or death for disobedience. Now Christ died! If it be answered, that before He died He fulfilled the claims of the Law, kept it perfectly, and that this law-keeping of Christ was reckoned as over against the Israelite's breaking of the Law, then I ask, Why should Christ die? If the claims of the Law were met in Christ's earthly obedience, and if that earthly life of obedience is "reckoned to those who believe" the curse of the Law has been removed by "vicarious law-keeping." Why should Christ die?

Now this idea of Christ's keeping the Law for "us" (for they will include us among the Israelites! although the Law was not given us Gentiles), is a deadly heresy, no matter who teaches it. Paul tells us plainly how the curse of the Law was removed: "Christ redeemed us," (meaning Jewish believers), "from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). And how He became a curse, is seen in Deuteronomy 21:23 : "He that is hanged is accursed of God." It was on the cross, not by an "earthly life of obedience," that Christ bore the Law's curse!

There was no law given "which could make alive," Paul says; "otherwise righteousness would have been by it." Therefore those who speak of Christ as taking the place of fulfilling the Law for us,--as "the object at which the Law aimed" (Alford); or, "the fulfilment or accomplishment of the Law" (Calvin); give the Law an office that God did not give it. There is not in all Scripture a hint of the doctrine that Christ's earthly life--His obedience as a man under the Law, is "put to the account" of any sinner whatsoever! That obedience, which was perfect, was in order that He might "present Himself through the eternal Spirit without spot unto God," as a sin-offering. It also was in order to His sacrificial death, as "a curse," for Israel. The gospel does not begin for any sinner, Jew or Gentile, until the cross: "I delivered unto you first of all, that Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). And for those under the Law, that was the end (telos(G5056)) of the law. The Law had not been given to Israel at the beginning as a nation. They came out of Egypt, delivered from Divine wrath by the shed blood of the passover; and from Egypt itself by the passage of the Red Sea; Jehovah being with them. Go now to Elim with its "twelve wells of water and three score and ten palm trees": there the nation is encamped with their God. They have yet not been put under law at all. The Rock is smitten, giving them drink, and Manna, the bread of heaven, is given, all before Sinai!

Therefore we must believe God when He says in Romans 5:20 : "The Law came in [not as an essential, but] as a circumstantial thing." (The Greek word, pareis lthe, "came in along-side," can mean nothing else.) In Paul's explanation of God's dealing with Israel in Romans 9:31-33; Romans 10:5-10; Romans 11:5, Romans 11:6, the meaning of this word telos "end," appears: that, when an Israelite believed on Christ he was as completely through with the Law for righteousness as if it had never been given. He had righteousness by another way! The vast discussion among

commentators concerning the expression "the end of the Law," would never have been, had it been recognized: (1) that God gave the Law only to Israel--as He said; (2) that it was a temporary thing, a "ministration of death," to reveal sin, and therefore the necessity of Christ's death; (3) that Christ having come, the day of the Law was over--it was "annulled" see Hebrews 7:18.

It is because Reformed theology has kept us Gentiles under the Law,--if not as a means of righteousness, then as "a rule of life," that all the trouble has arisen. The Law is no more a rule of life than it is a means of righteousness. Walking in the Spirit has now taken the place of walking by ordinances. God has another principle under which He has put his saints: "Ye are not under law, but, under grace!"

5 For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the Law shall live thereby. 6 But the righteousness which' of faith saith thus. Say not in thy heart. Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, 7 Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) 8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach: 9 because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be [thy] Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: 10 for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The apostle now takes us into a great contrast between the way of the Law and the way of faith. He first quotes Leviticus 18:5, where God said to Israel: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and Mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in [or by] them: I am Jehovah." You ask, Why did God make such a statement if no one was to obtain life by the Law? The answer is two-fold. First, in the plain utterance of Galatians 3:21 : "If there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the Law": God never placed in the Law the power to give life! Second, the Law is called a ministration of death and condemnation: "But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory . . . if the ministration of condemnation hath glory" (2 Corinthians 3:7-9). It was never intended that people should' gain hope by it, but rather that they should despair and be driven to cast themselves upon God's mercy, as did David (Psalms 51:1-19). Thus the Law becomes a "youth-leader" leading unto Christ (Galatians 3:24). Now, we humbly beg you, permit these Scriptures to "shut you up,"--according to Galatians 3:22! God had a right to put Israel under the Law for 1500 years from Moses to Christ; and He did so, knowing they could obtain neither righteousness nor life by that Law, since both were through faith in Christ only: and, "the Law is not of faith" (Galatians 3:12).

Now follows a most remarkable use by Paul of a Scripture out of Moses' own mouth which he spake to Israel concerning the Law, and which Paul here applies to Christ. It will be best to quote the passage from Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in full:

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say. Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, .and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Moses, who had been with Israel forty years, and had been their mediator in bringing the Law down from Mount Sinai unto them, is about to die. He is leaving with them not only the ten

commandments, but also all the statutes, ordinances, precepts and judgments connected with them. Now what will be the natural reaction in the hearts of Israel, when Moses goes up to the top of Pisgah and dies, and Jehovah buries him? It will be this: "Moses, who brought us this Law, is gone! Moses received this Law from Jehovah, who came down from heaven to the top of Sinai in great majesty and display of glory. Now Moses is dead; and all we have left is, these written words! Our circumstances are altogether different from those of our fathers, who saw the awful presence of Jehovah on Sinai and heard His voice. Who will go up to heaven for us now, and come down, and make us hear this Law, in the same way our fathers heard, that we may do it? Or, if there be someone away beyond the sea, some wonderful teacher (like Moses) whom we can send for, to come across the sea and bring it to us, and make us hear it, that we may do it--."

Now Moses' answer to all this is, "The word is nigh unto thee-- in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." That is, the written words of the Law the people knew: they could repeat them; they were told to teach them diligently unto their children, and, as David did, "hide them in their hearts " that they might not sin. It was all simple, indeed. And, of course, there were those, like Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah"; or who, like Zecharias and Elisabeth in Luke 1:6, were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." But the great point Moses makes with Israel is that there was the Law, in simple, plain words. They needed no sign, no manifestation; that had all been done at Sinai. But the great difficulty in the human heart (with Israel just as with us), is simple subjection to God's words. See how the Jews in our Lord's day kept asking of Him, "Show us a sign from heaven." [211]

[211] It is so to this day, and sad to say, the tendency to demand "signs" is increasing rather than lessening. If a man come announcing "healing meetings" (although no such "meetings for healing" are known in Scripture), the place will be crowded. History is full of spiritual wreckage caused by "Lo, here," and "Lo, there!"

Romans 10:6 : Now Paul knows the human heart to be the same today as in the days of Moses, so he lifts out of Deuteronomy Moses's words about the Law and applies them to faith in Christ: The righteousness which is of faith [instead of asking a sign] saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:). This would be the natural working of the heart of a Jew. The Messiah, Christ, was to be sent to him from God; in fact, the nation had kept looking for Him. But the perpetual rising of unbelief, apart from "a sign from heaven," was there.

It is very striking, as has been observed by others, that the Spirit of God should select the verses quoted above from Deuteronomy. For this chapter plainly prophesies that the Jews will be scattered among the nations because of their despising of God's Law. So that all hope from the Law will have perished, and they will be cast wholly upon the mercy of God:

"among all the nations, whither Jehovah thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto Jehovah thy God, and shalt obey his voice . . . with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; that then Jehovah thy God will turn thy captivity, . . . and will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, . . . and He will do thee good."

Into this dead, hollow shell, then, of legal hope, Paul here in Romans 10:1-21, takes Deuteronomy 30:11-14, and puts faith in Christ in place of the Law! Israel will at last, at the end of the age, be

cast upon the mercy of God! And then they will understand these great chapters, Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21 and Romans 11:1-36, were written concerning them!

Romans 10:7 : So that the Jew said in his heart. Who can ascend to heaven to bring Him down unto me? Then further, Christ being proclaimed that He had been sent already, and had borne their iniquities according to prophecy,--that He had died,--there would come the question in the Jewish heart: Who shall go down into the abyss and bring Him up from the regions of the dead [212] that I may see Him and thus believe on Him?

[212] Our Lord plainly said he would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40). This was not Joseph's tomb (which was on the surface of the earth), but the Hebrew Sheol (Greek, Hades(G86)), which is always in Scripture located below the earth's surface--even "the lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9). To another compartment of these "lower parts" the wicked also went; as see Psalms 63:9. That this was in the general region called Hades, the rich man of Luke 16:22-23 proves. (Always read the Revised Version about the words Sheol--Hades: for it transliterates them. The King James simply obscures them by various renderings.) While Christ's body lay in Joseph's tomb "not seeing corruption," His soul (or quickened spirit, 1 Peter 3:18)--as Peter and Paul, quoting Psalms 16:10, plainly show (Acts 2:31; Acts 13:34; Acts 13:37) was duly brought up again "from the depths of the earth" (Psalms 71:20).

Romans 10:8 : Now, answering all these inquiries, these sign-askings, came the simple word of faith preached by Paul. This expression, "the word of faith," involves the whole story of the gospel: that Jesus was the Christ, that He had come, died for sin, been buried, been raised, and been seen by many witnesses after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Romans 10:9-10 : Paul speaks, then, in these verses--as if addressing a Jewish hearer: If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord [literally, Jesus, Lord; or, Jesus to be (thy) Lord], and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. It is assumed the whole gospel has been preached to this hearer. And now is he persuaded that this Risen Jesus, was really the Messiah? And, though rejected by Israel, that He is Lord over all,--the Deity? And is his Lord? And is he willing so to confess Him as his own Lord before men? With thy mouth--We remember that in our Lord's ministry among the Jews, "Even of the rulers many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God" (John 12:42-43).

Then does this Jewish hearer, in short, being persuaded of Jesus' Lordship and confessing it, believe in his very heart that God raised Him from the dead? For Christianity, as we have said, "begins with the resurrection." No matter how thoroughly persuaded a Jew might be that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in His birth, life, ministry, and death; there remained this stupendous task of faith, to believe in the heart that God had raised Him from the power and domain of death, of that which was the wages of sin,--the "King of Terrors" (Job 18:14) of the whole world!

Those thus confessing Christ's Lordship, and believing in the heart that God had raised Him, would be saved! The explanation of the apostle of what has happened in such a case is, that with the heart the man, believed unto righteousness; while with the mouth the faith of the heart is boldly followed in confession, resulting in salvation.

You may ask, would not a Jew (for these chapters particularly concern Jews) who had "believed unto righteousness" have, thus, salvation? [213] It is better to let the Scripture language stand. God here connects the word salvation with the word confession, not with the word faith. Peter, in his second epistle, speaks of those who "had known the way of righteousness," which is always faith,--and then afterward "turned back from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20-21); while our Lord in Luke 8 says of the rocky-ground hearer that he "believed for a while, and in time of temptation fell away." Therefore, while in both parts of Romans 10:10, Paul refers to the man of Romans 10:9 as one who is to be "saved," it is well to let the verse remain as it is. The Lord when on earth among the Jews asked that they confess Him publicly; the Spirit still asks this. Not only Jews but Gentiles must confess Him; although the form of presentation of the truth in Chapter Ten is as it would apply to a Jew, to whom had been offered a Messiah, concerning whose claims he had to decide, according to several Old Testament Scriptures. The Gentiles did not have the Scriptures, and the matter of the presentation of the gospel to them was much more simple. But "confession with the mouth" will follow "the faith of God’s elect," Jew or Gentile.

[213] 1.Faith is directly connected with the word "righteousness" or "justification," about twenty times in the New Testament, but faith is directly connected with the word "salvation" only four times; and these four instances (Romans 1:16, 1 Peter 1:5; 1 Peter 1:9-10) themselves show that whereas righteousness expresses the present standing of a believing one; salvation is a larger and more inclusive word--in the sense of Romans 13:11 : "Awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer to us than when we believed." (In this verse our bodily redemption at Christ’s coming, is included). And, 1 Peter 1:5 : "Guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." This shows that although we do "receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls" (1 Peter 1:9), the word salvation in general includes not only the salvation of our souls, but also the consummation of our final deliverance at Christ’s coming. I do not find "salvation," then, connected in Scripture with any but those who shall thus be found in Christ at His coming. The words of Paul in Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) outlining His gospel, are, "Ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you." In the preceding verse, he declares that they had "received" the gospel which he had preached unto them. But this gospel was not to be let go. As our Lord says concerning the good ground hearers in Luke 8:15 : "These are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience." In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 the same word is translated "hold fast that which is good." It is solemnly used also in Hebrews 3:6; Hebrews 3:14; Hebrews 10:23. This is no argument against Divine election, or the eternal security of the saints. But it is a truth that must be, and really is, faced by every godly soul. Over and over, of course, in the Gospels, the word for saved (sozo(G4982)) is used. The word of our Lord is, "Thy faith hath saved thee," (or, A.V. "made thee whole"--same Greek word). It is also used concerning salvation: Matthew 19:25, Acts 2:21; Acts 16:30-31. Paul also uses this word in Romans 5:9-10; Romans 10:13, etc. What we are urging is that we connect in our own thinking, and confession of our Lord,--the word "faith" with righteousness, as Scripture in the Epistles so constantly does. In times of darkness and weak faith such as this, the rescue from doom is uppermost in the believer’s mind; whereas God would have his standing in Christ uppermost! How constantly we hear in a testimony meeting, "I have been, or I was, saved ten years," etc.; and how very seldom, if ever, the testimony is: I have been declared righteous by faith, and have peace with God. I am righteous before God, through my Savior’s death. I thank God I have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. The old Methodists used to testify to

their justification,--"justified state," they called it. But then old-fashioned Methodist preachers, preached of coming judgment, of eternal punishment, of the sinner's terrible danger; and they boldly spoke of pardon as what the sinner needed. We believe God has given still more light upon Scripture since those days, but would God we had the moral earnestness and the wonderfully bright experiences of the old-fashioned Methodists! Again we say, God generally connects faith with righteousness. Let us do likewise.

Now, as ever when dealing with the Jews, Paul turns to their Scriptures, and quotes eight times from the Old Testament, before this Romans 10:1-21 is out--thirty times altogether in these three chapters (Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, and Romans 11:1-36)!

11 For the Scripture saith. Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be put to shame. 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him: 13 for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!

Romans 10:11-12 : The Scripture saith: the believer learns to love this word, "the Scripture" (our old word graphe!). The manner in which its Author, the Holy Spirit, makes the Scriptures of the Old Testament speak, in the New, is comfort without limit! And here is Isaiah 28:16 again, which was quoted (from the Septuagint) in Romans 9:33. The Jews should have seen from that word whosoever believeth that simple faith in their Messiah was God's way, and that the message meant "whosoever."

They should have been warned also that inasmuch as believing was God's way--the path in which those who walked would not be put to shame; those who chose the way of works, of self-righteousness, would surely be put to shame. This word "ashamed" or "put to shame" is in the Hebrew, to flee--from fear. Those who have exercised simple faith in Christ, and abide thus in Him, shall "have boldness: and not be ashamed before Him [Christ] at His coming"--";boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, even so are we in this world" (1 John 2:28; 1 John 4:17). This "whosoever" message is further developed in Romans 10:12, where we see the familiar words no distinction between Jew and Greek. We remember this as the exact expression used as to universal sinnerhood in Romans 3:22; which is now used as to salvation. For, first, He is Lord of all, and second, He is rich unto all that call upon Him.

These great words must be laid to heart. They bring great comfort, directly to any Jews who desire the Savior, and also to the hearts of all of us, Jew and Gentile, because the universal availability of salvation is so gloriously opened out here, based as it is upon the universal lordship of Christ. As Peter said at Cornelius' house to Gentiles, "The word which He sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)." It is a great day when a human heart turns to this Savior who is Lord of all, for he immediately finds Him "rich unto all."

Romans 10:13 : And then the great word by the prophet Joel is brought forward: Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:32). Now who could miss the meaning of this simplest of all messages? Now, (if we should preach on this verse!) First, salvation is promised.

Second, it is a be-saved, not save-yourself, salvation. Third, it is the Lord who is to do it. Fourth, He does it for those who call upon His Name. Fifth, He does it for the whosoevers, for anybody. What a preacher, Joel! But note that Paul is writing to Jews, and is giving Old Testament texts. For Paul's great gospel message is to hear and believe "the word of the cross, which is the power of God." This message goes away beyond that of the Old Testament. Paul preached the good news of a work finished. It was for the "whosoevers": and Joel's use of that word should have convinced any Jew of God's purpose of salvation to any one, to all. But Paul does not mean that his gospel was "Call on the Lord." His gospel was, Christ died for our sins: He was buried, and was raised, for you: hear and believe.

These "whosoevers" should have taught the Jews that the way of salvation was not by their Law or any special way for them, but for any and all. Alas, the word "whosoever" was too wide for the narrow Jewish mind in Joel's day and Paul's day and is so today. [214]

[214] And alas, also, there are those who insist that the Jew has a special place right through this dispensation; that he must always be "first," that there is a difference, although God says plainly in Chapter Three that there is no difference between Jew and Greek as to sinnership, guilt; and no difference as to the lordship of Christ and the availability of salvation to the "whosoevers," Jew or Gentile. If Paul were among us today, he would abhor and decry the special, esoteric methods of approach to the Jew in vogue in some pretentious quarters today. Become all things to the Jew, to win him, certainly. Paul did. But tell him the truth, that he is just a whosoever, and nobody else! The terrible prophecy of Ezekiel 20:33-38 (read R. V. only, here) is about to be fulfilled concerning the scattered millions of Israel: "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, will I be king over you. And I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face." What the poor, wretched Jewish exiles need this hour is a Paul to go right in amongst them with a "whosoever" message for sinners, not a "literary-approach" Paul, but the exact opposite, with perhaps "bodily presence weak and speech of no account," but "provoking them to jealousy" by boasting in a Messiah whom their nation has lost,--a nation to whom God is not now offering a Messiah, but instead salvation, as common whosoevers, no-distinction people, ordinary guilty sinners, I protest that in Acts 28:1-31 God through Paul officially closed the door to the national offer of the gospel to the Jews, and that thereafter to treat the Jew as having a special place with God, is to deny Scripture.

Romans 10:14-15 : But now Paul takes these two "whosoever" verses, and from them answers the Jew, who not only relied on his law-keeping instead of on simple faith to save him, but also denied that either Paul or any of the apostles had any right to proclaim salvation by a simple message,--a message that left out the Law and Judaism. If salvation were to come unto them that "call on the name of the Lord" argues Paul, calling is impossible to one who has not believed on the Lord; and believing is impossible to one who has not heard the message about the Lord; and hearing is impossible unless some one comes preaching the message; and preaching is impossible except the messenger be Divinely sent! And again Paul clinches it with the Scripture (Isaiah 52:7): How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! Moses' Law was not glad tidings, but a ministration of death and condemnation. "The Law worketh wrath." But the

gospel--"Glad tidings! Good things!" And God who knows, calls "beautiful" the feet that carry such news. Are our feet "beautiful"--in God’s eyes?

Paul now, with a saddened heart, goes back to the record of Israel’s refusing the glad tidings:

16 But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So faith is from a report, but the report through the word of Christ. 18 But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily, Their sound went out into all the earth, And their words unto the ends of the world. 19 But I say. Did Israel not know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, With a nation void of understanding will I anger you. 20 And Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought Me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of Me. 21 But as to Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Romans 10:16-17 : Astonishing thing,--refusing good news! Men will hearken to good news along all other lines,--business, pleasure, social preferment, ambition, physical health. Go to any stock exchange and see them watch the ticker tape; or behold the political candidates sitting up all night for election news favorable to them. But the apostle mourns along with Isaiah 53:1 : Lord, who hath believed our report? Probably men’s unbelief is the greatest final burden before God of every man who speaks for God, "Lord, they do not believe." They said to Moses, "You take too much upon yourself!" (Numbers 16:3); to Ezekiel, "Is he not a speaker of parables?" (Ezekiel 20:49) ; to Amos, "The land is not able to bear all your words: Flee away to Judah and eat bread"--you are just looking for money! (Amos 7:10-13); to Jeremiah, "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of Jehovah, we will not hearken unto thee" (Jeremiah 44:16-19). And hear that weeping prophet tell of his trouble:

"Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud; for Jehovah hath spoken. Give glory to Jehovah your God before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because Jehovah’s flock is taken captive" (Jeremiah 13:15-17). Our Lord said to those of the multitudes that gathered to hear Him, "This people’s heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed;

Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them" (Matthew 13:15). And He prophesied that His preachers would find "wayside hearers," "rocky ground hearers," "thorny ground hearers"; and then, in one out of four cases, a "good ground hearer."

Romans 10:17 : So faith is from a report; but the report through the word of Christ--The Greek term here for "word" is rhema(G4487), not logos(G3056). It literally is, "saying," "speech," as in John 3:34; John 14:10; Acts 11:14. Faith, indeed, however, does come from a report; and there must be a message and a messenger, sent of God; as we have seen. But Christ accompanies this preached word by His Almighty "voice," as we know from John 5:25 : "The hour cometh, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." It is a "quickened" word, that creates living faith.

It is here that the missionary urge comes! Christ must, indeed, utter His creating word from Heaven to the dead soul, saying, Live! But in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, we see that while "God was, indeed, in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," He has "committed to us [Greek, "placed in us"] the word of reconciliation." So that God is entreating by us: we beseech (people) on behalf of Christ, "Be ye reconciled to God!"

Faith, indeed, comes of hearing. Do not imagine men will be saved in any other way. Earnest, prayerful Cornelius is commanded (and that by an angel) to send for "Simon whose surname is Peter, who shall speak to thee words by which thou shalt be saved" (Acts 11:14). "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [lit., the preached thing--Christ crucified] to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21 marg.). Note also that "faith cometh." If you hear, with a willing heart, the good news, that Christ died for you; that He was buried; that He was raised from the dead:--by truly "hearing," faith will "come" to you. You do not have to do a thing but hear! So there is God's part--He gave, by the Spirit, the written Word. And Christ's part,--He speaks, quickening the Word. And your part: "He that hath ears, hear."

Romans 10:18 : But Paul goes on to mourn: But I say, Did they [Israel] not hear? Yea, verily. And then he makes a quotation from a wholly unexpected Scripture, even Psalms 19:4 : Their sound went out into all the earth, And their words unto the ends of the world. [215]

[215] The use of the plural "their"--"their sound," "their words," here, is immediately evident in the familiar Psalm itself:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, And night unto night showeth knowledge.

There is no speech nor language; Their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world," "Their" voice is the vast chorus of the created universe, and of course plural. But Paul has just been speaking here of hearing coming by Christ's word. But, Christ is Himself the Creator of all this universe! For "all things were created by Him and for Him." We must keep this fact in mind and allow the words of the Psalm to witness to the universality of the testimony concerning Christ. The emphasis on into all the earth; unto the ends of the earth must have included Israel, The "invisible things of God were clearly perceived from the creation of the world, even His everlasting power and divinity,"--as we saw concerning all men in Chapter One,--but the Jews had immeasurably more! God had come down and spoken to them on Mount Sinai; then their prophets, and then the Son, the Heir, had come; yea, and through the apostles and Stephen they had had the testimony of the Holy Spirit directly from Christ on high! So Israel had indeed "heard"! Therefore, in quoting Psalm Nineteen, Paul holds Israel to the "voice" of creation as if no other people existed. It was their Psalm!

Romans 10:19 : Paul proceeds: Did Israel not know?--concerning this whosoever-plan, this believing-plan, this calling upon the Lord's name and being saved? Yea, even about this constant warning by their own Scriptures that if they were unfaithful God would extend His mercy to the Gentiles? First, he calls Moses to witness (Deuteronomy 32:21):

I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, With a nation void of understanding will I anger you. That which is no nation--compared with the marvelous place and privileges of the race

of Israel, it could be said of every other people, "It is no nation, a nation void of understanding" (of the things of God). I will anger them--for Israel can be reached in no other way--either then or now! God seeks to provoke them to jealousy: beware how you palaver over them.

Romans 10:20 : Now finally Paul calls Isaiah again to the witness stand; and Isaiah gives a double testimony: he is indeed very bold in his prophecy of Gentile salvation:

I was found of them that sought me not;

I became manifest unto them that asked not of me.

Then Isaiah becomes exceedingly mournful as to wretched Israel's disobedient and gainsaying attitude (see Romans 10:21).

How Jews could read this passage and remain unmoved, in their traditions, formalities, and unbelief, only faithful preachers can imagine,--who have had to deal with the titanic possibilities of evil and unbelief in the human heart. As showing how far Christendom has lost the whole spirit of the gospel, we remind you that everywhere people have the idea they ought to "seek" salvation; they are everywhere told they ought to "go to church." [216]

[216] It is an excellent thing to go where God's saints gather; and to "meetings for unsaved people. But attending meetings saves no one. There is a Savior! And good news about Him to be believed for yourself!

How many now reading these words believe that Romans 10:20 is God's program for this Gentile day? You say, Should we not seek God? No! You should sit down and hear what is written in Romans: first, about your guilt, then about your helplessness, and then about the inability of the Law to do anything but condemn you; and then believe on Christ whom God hath sent; and then praise God for righteousness apart from works, apart from ordinances! hear how God laid sin, your sin, on a Substitute, His own Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and that now, sin being put away, God has raised Him from the dead. Seek God? No! God is the Seeker, and He has sought and is now seeking those that asked not of Him, and has been found of those who sought Him not!--but simply heard the good news and believed! Praise His Holy Name!

Romans 10:21 : But, alas, poor Israel! Jehovah, through Isaiah, speaks thus of them: All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people (Isaiah 65:2). What yearning, what love, what pleading, what patience! And it is The Creator, God Himself, here, spreading out His hands! Towards whom? Towards a disobedient people; a people that, being rebuked, did deny and gainsay their prophets, and even their own Messiah,--as they do unto this day! [217]

[217] "And he (Manasseh) set the graven image of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son. In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I Put My name forever': . . . And Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did evil more than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the children of Israel." "All the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jehovah which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because He had compassion on His people, and

on His dwelling-place." But alas, we read: "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chronicles 33:7; 2 Chronicles 33:9; 2 Chronicles 36:14-16).

It should astonish and warn us--every unbelieving Jew we see! Astonish us, that the human heart should treat God so! And warn us: for, as we shall see in the next chapter, we Gentiles are now being "visited" by God,--this same God of Love: and He is stretching out His hands to usward! May we early yield to Him! And here, lest we miss the lesson for us, in considering wretched Israel's rejection of their Messiah, let us read a message to our own hearts: THE GREAT UNKNOWN WHY dost Thou pass unheeded, Treading with pierced feet The halls of the kingly palace, The busy street?

Oh marvellous in Thy beauty, Crowned with the light of God, Why fall they not down to worship Where Thou hast trod?

Why are Thy hands extended Beseeching whilst men pass by With their empty words and their laughter, Yet passing on to die?

Unseen, unknown, unregarded, Calling and waiting yet-- They hear Thy knock and they tremble-- They hear, and they forget. And Thou in the midst art standing Of old and forever the same-- Thou hearest their songs and their jesting, But not Thy name. The thirty-three years forgotten Of the weary way Thou hast trod-- Thou art but a name unwelcome,

O Savior God!

Yet amongst the highways and hedges, Amongst the lame and the blind, The poor and the maimed and the outcast, Still dost Thou seek and find-- There by the wayside lying The eyes of Thy love can see The wounded, the naked, the dying, Too helpless to come to Thee. So Thou art watching and waiting Till the wedding is furnished with guests-- And the last of the sorrowful singeth, And the last of the weary rests.-- C. P. C. (in Hymns of Ter Steegen).

02.21. Chapter 11A

CHAPTER 11A Israel not Finally Cast Off: an Election Saved--Paul Being Proof. Romans 11:1-6.

Others Hardened,--as Scripture Foretold. Romans 11:7-10. "Fulness of Gentiles" Comes in Meanwhile. Romans 11:11, Romans 11:25, Romans 11:28.

Gentile Salvation to Provoke Israel to "Jealousy"--Since They are the "Natural Branches" of the Tree of Promise. Romans 11:11-18.

Gentiles Must Continue in Divine "Goodness"; Other' wise Gentiles to be "Cut Off" from Place of Present Blessing. Romans 11:19-25.

All Real Israel to be Saved at the Return to Them of Christ Their "Deliverer." Romans 11:26-32.

Rapturous Praise of the Ways of God's Wisdom and Knowledge; God the One Source, Channel and End of All Things! Romans 11:33-36.

ALL THE SAD RECORD of Romans 9:1-33 and Romans 10:1-21 concerning Israel having been shown, the apostle now turns to that question which naturally arises in our Gentile hearts (for in Romans 11:13 he says, "I am speaking to you that are Gentiles").

1 I say then. Did God cast off His people? Far be the thought! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God did not cast off His people which he foreknew. Or understand ye not what the Scripture saith in [the portion concerning] Elijah? How he pleadeth with God against Israel: 3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have digged down thine altars; and I am left alone and they seek my life. 4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have left for Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal. 5 Even so then at this present time there is a Remnant according to the election of grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.

Romans 11:1 : Here Paul rejects with horror--Far be the thought! that God had finally abandoned, "cast off" His people Israel. [218] Let every Christian reject the suggestion with equal horror,

[218] The Eleventh of Romans should at once and forever turn us away from the presumptuous assertions of those who teach that God is "through with national Israel,"--that it has "no future as an elect nation" in Palestine. Mr. Philip Mauro makes the astounding statements: "The last word of prophecy concerning this people Israel as a nation was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies," and "the all Israel' of Romans 11:26 is the whole body of God's redeemed people." . . . "Zion is where the Lord Jesus is." While in utter blindness to the prophetic message he claims, "Paul quotes the words, Behold, I lay in Zion' as being fulfilled in this present era (Romans 9:33)"! "Those who insist upon what they call literal fulfilment' of the promised blessings that were to come to Israel through Christ, have completely missed the mark!" Yet even Augustine, back in the fourth century, said, "Distinguish the dispensations, and all is easy." That there is a future for the nation of Israel in their land upon this earth, all faithful believers know very well. Let

the saints steadily go forward into the increasing light, of these last days, no matter who turns about and takes the back track into the darkness of ignorance of medievalism or even the relatively faint dispensational light of the Reformation. I would earnestly commend those who desire a full discussion of Mauro's attack on "Dispensationalism" (for it is a typical one!) to read Dr. I. M. Haldeman's review of Mauro's book, "The Kingdom of God." It is able and unanswerable.

First, Paul says, I myself am proof: an Israelite; not a Jewish proselyte either, but of the seed of Abraham, and a Benjamite,--not one of the ten tribes which separated from Judah!

Romans 11:2 : Then Paul defines the Israel that is not rejected: God's people whom He foreknew. In "You only have I known," He is not speaking of knowing about them or their affairs, but of the fact that to them only had He made Himself known; because they were foreknown of Him; that is, acquainted with beforehand,--before their earthly history began!

(See note on Romans 8:29.) In Amos 3:1-2 we read:

"Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against--the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known, of all the families of the earth: . . . "

Now in Amos 2:1-16, there is a remarkable series of messages of judgment concerning the various nations surrounding Israel. In each case the exact reasons for the judgment are detailed by God, beginning with Damascus (Amos 1:3), then Gaza (Amos 1:6), Tyre (Amos 1:9), Edom (Amos 1:11), Ammon (Amos 1:13), Moab (Amos 2:1), then Judah (Amos 2:4); and finally, the northern kingdom, (to which Amos spoke), Israel (Amos 2:6): showing that God knew the exact conduct of each nation. Therefore, when God says concerning Israel, "You only have I known," He is not speaking of knowing about them or their affairs, but of the fact that to them only had He made Himself known; [219] (as Paul says to the Galatians: "Now ye have come to know God,--or rather, to be known by God"). But here we have a fore-acquaintanceship with Israel. This foreknowledge is described in Romans 8:29 (which see), where the term is used in a wider sense, and therefore must include the foreknowledge of the Remnant "according to the election of grace"--of the nation of Israel, spoken of here.

[219] God calls the Church His "saints," not a "people"; see Romans 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1. He never refers to the Church, as a "people," or nation. 1 Peter 2:9 is not an exception, but rather a proof of this fact, for Peter is writing to the elect of the Diaspora, (the individual Jewish believers of the Jewish Dispersion), in Asia Minor, just as James also wrote, "To the twelve tribes which are of the Diaspora." In both James and Peter, there is still the sufference by God of Jewish things; as in Acts they are allowed to keep the feasts, and are in the temple: although these were all past, in God's sight, and the temple left "desolate." God was acting in great patience, with Jewish believers. But Paul brought a new message, that the Church was not earthly, nor national, nor Jewish, in any sense; but a "new body," and altogether heavenly. So the Jewish saints now are called "partakers of a heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1).

Romans 11:3-4 : Again Paul lets the Scripture "speak," and here we find Israel's greatest prophet pleading against Israel! Because they had killed Jehovah's prophets and destroyed Jehovah's altars, Elijah believed himself left alone, and believed they were seeking his life. [220] But how utterly outside and beyond Elijah's conception of things was God's reply that He had left for

Himself a "Remnant" (even 7000!) who had utterly refused Baal-worship. Here is Divine sovereignty marvelously illustrated! The nation is apostate, under Ahab and Jezebel; Baal's prophets number hundreds; and Elijah had fled the land,--back to Horeb, where the Law was given! Now comes the revelation that Divine sovereign intervention has been timely, ample, definite and perfect. God has preserved seven thousand. This reminds us immediately of the sealing of 144,000 of Israel in Revelation 7:1-17. Unbelief or shallow interpretation would say this merely indicates some indefinite number. Well, then, go on to say, the 7000 of Elijah's day were an "indefinite number,"--and see where your false wisdom (which is really unbelief) will bring you!

[220] There is always the tendency, in a faithful man of God in dark days, (a tendency diligently cultivated by the devil!) to imagine himself alone. So he hunts the solitude befitting his imagined solitariness. But the voice of God came to Elijah, "What doest thou here?" Embarrassing question, that! It should bring out every Christian monk from his monastery!

Romans 11:5 : Even so, says Paul, at this present time also there is a Remnant (of Israelites) being preserved by God, although the nation has crucified their Messiah, and rejected the testimony concerning Him by the Spirit through the apostles--an infinitely worse condition of things than Ahab's Baal worship! Only sovereign grace will do here; so it is a Remnant according to the election of grace. This "Remnant" are put now into the Body of Christ: they become "partakers of a heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1). Every saved Israelite has abandoned his Israelitish hopes, and believed on Christ as a common sinner! Of course only a few Israelites--a "remnant," do this.

Romans 11:6 : Paul insists, (as he does continuously throughout his Epistles): If it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace--Here is perhaps the most direct and absolute contrast in Scripture of two principles: for grace is God acting sovereignly according to Himself; works is man seeking to present to God a human ground for blessing. The two principles are utterly opposed. As Paul, in his conflict with Peter in Galatians 2:15-16; Galatians 2:21, says: "Even we, Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles' believed on Christ Jesus. I do not make void the grace of God, for if righteousness is through law, Christ died for nothing!" And as Peter said at the first Church council, "We [Jews] believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they" (Gentiles) (Acts 15:11).

7 What then? That which Israel is in search of [righteousness], that he [the nation] obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened: 8 according as it is written, God gave them a spirit of drowsiness, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day. 9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, And a stumblingbiock, and a recompense unto them, Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, And bow Thou down their back always.

Romans 11:7 : Here, then, in this chapter, is the very height of Divine sovereignty: not only electing people, but even deciding the very time when they should come on the scene of this world's history. "Israel after the flesh" nationally was in search of righteousness,--that was their very business, in the preservation and application of the Law. But that was not the way of righteousness. We have seen that their own Scriptures set forth that "calling on the name of the Lord," and believing on the "Stone" (Christ) at whom others in legality "stumbled," was the true way. So the nation obtained not righteousness. But the election obtained it. And, as to the rest? God's answer is, they were hardened. But remember Chapter Nine and do not "reply against"

God,--and hear a "Thou--who art thou?" from Him; but note carefully, how and why they were thus "hardened."

Romans 11:8 : Paul now says (quoting Isaiah 29:10): According as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day. The process of that awful thing, spiritual hardening, is thus depicted in Israel as nowhere else, for hearts harden most quickly when men are trusting in their place of special privilege, without fellowship with the God who gives it. (Thus, we fear, it is with thousands in Christendom, and even among those who have the Lord's table most frequently before them. What but a deadly snare to the soul is the table of the Lord, without real communion with the Lord of the table!)

Romans 11:9 : So it is written of Israel's "table": Let their table be made a snare. This is quoted from David, in Psalms 69:22, and evidently refers to the "table" at which the Israelites were privileged to eat with Jehovah. This was indeed a high and special privilege which Israel had: they ate with God. In Exodus 24:11, we read: "They saw God and did eat and drink"; and from the Passover of Exodus 12:1-51 onward, they ate in their sacred feasts. We know the priests "ate before God": Leviticus 6:16; Leviticus 7:18; Leviticus 7:20. But not only was this true of the priests, but of the people in their peace offerings (Leviticus 7:18-19; Leviticus 23:6); and in their feasts, as in Leviticus 23:6 and Numbers 15:17-21; Numbers 18:26; Numbers 18:30-31; Deuteronomy 12:7; Deuteronomy 12:18; Deuteronomy 14:23; Deuteronomy 27:7. For the "table" of the Israelite was connected by Jehovah with Himself. Certain things the Israelite might eat, others not; because he was one of a holy nation unto Jehovah. But the Israelite quickly began to trust not in Jehovah, but in his manner of eating, as did Peter: "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." Without true faith, therefore, their very table of privilege became a snare. [221]

[221] An ominous comment on this--this "table made a snare,"--is the story of the Last Supper: Judas was, it appears, sitting so near to Jesus, that "the sop," which should mark the betrayer, was handed to him without attracting the attention of the rest. (It has been my own belief that, while John was sitting on one side of our Lord, Judas was on the other side! It was the hideous presumption of callous sin.) "And after the sop, then entered Satan into him." And, "having received the sop, he went out . . . and it was night" (John 13:21-30). Judas typifies Israel. Indeed, he so became the spiritual representative of apostate Israel that rejected Christ, that we need only turn to Psalms 69:1-36, (Christ's great "reproach" Psalm) from which Paul is quoting here in Romans 11:9-10, to see this. The 21st verse of this Psalm says, "In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." Evidently it is Christ speaking. Then verse 22, and following: "Let their table become a snare,"--and through verse 28(Psalms 69:21-28), that wicked generation, symbolized in Judas, is shown. And just as Satan entered into Judas at the table,--when he presumed most on his place as a chosen apostle, so it was Israel's very relationship to, knowledge of, and communion with, Jehovah, at their feasts and temples, that they presumed upon! Read Jeremiah 7:1-11.

It is to be noted carefully that each time the solemn Isaiah 6:1-13 is quoted, the sovereignty of God in hardening whom He will is increasingly emphasized. We see in Matthew 13:15, that it is the people's heart that had "waxed gross": their ears were "dull of hearing" because of lack of interest; their eyes they had closed,--not desiring to turn and understand, lest they should perceive, and hear, understand, turn, and be healed of God! Then, in the fourth Gospel, at the end of our Lord's

public testimony, (John 12:39): "They could not believe, for that Isaiah said, "He hath blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart;

Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart; And should turn, And I should heal them." This is judicial action, following the people's attitude. In the third occurrence of the words of Isaiah 6:1-13 (in Acts 28:1-31), Paul officially shuts the door to national Israel: "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers," --quoting this Isaiah Six, and declaring: "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they also will hear." [222]

[222] Since this awful use of Isaiah 6:1-13, the gospel has no Jewish bounds or bonds whatever! And it is presumption and danger, now, to give the Jews any other place than that of common sinners! "No distinction between Jew and Greek," says God. Those that preach thus, have God's blessing. Those that would give any special place whatever to Jews, since that day, do so contrary to the gospel; and, we fear, for private advantage. Tell Jews the truth! Their Messiah was offered to their nation, and rejected. And God is not offering a Messiah to Israel now, but has Himself rejected them: all except a "remnant," who leave Jewish earthly hopes, break down into sinners only, and receive a sinner's Savior,--not a "Jewish" one! Then they become "partakers of a heavenly calling."

Romans 11:10 : As to Israel, nationally, it is written. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see. And bow Thou down their back always. It will be so until that future day, described in Zechariah 12:10, when God "pours upon them the Spirit of grace and of supplication, and they look unto Him whom they have pierced."

We dare not believe in any of the modern reports of national Jewish "turning to the Lord." They will go into yet greater darkness (after the Rapture of the Church). There will be the former evil spirit of idolatry "taking with itself seven other spirits more wicked than itself," entering in and dwelling in this present evil generation of Israel! (Matthew 12:45). Do not be deceived. At our Lord's coming, and not until that beleagured nation sees "the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven" (Matthew 24:30),--which will be that "looking upon Him whom they pierced" of Zechariah 12:1-14, will they have faith. Thomas, in John 20:1-31, who "would not believe except he see in Christ's hands the print of the nails," is an exact type of the coming conversion of Israel. Until then, let us "provoke to jealousy" all of them we can, by boasting in Christ and His Salvation; and so we may save a few of them,--as sinners, the "Remnant according to the election of Grace."

11 I say then. Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? 13 But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry: 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them. 15 For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? 16 And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump: and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree: 18 glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well: by their unbelief they

were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: 21 for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare thee. 22 Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God’s goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Romans 11:11 : Did they stumble that they might fall? Some individuals, alas, do,--both of Jews and Gentiles. Some are offended and turn away forever. But not finally the Israelitish nation! Banish the thought! We shall soon in this chapter see God’s future salvation for that nation. But here the apostle notes that their fall was made the occasion of salvation to the Gentiles; and this again is to provoke them to jealousy--that they may be saved. God’s manifest blessing to Gentiles causes the careless, self-satisfied Jew to awake,--first to ridicule Gentile testimony; then,--seeing the reality of Divine visitation to the despised Gentile, to arouse to a deep jealousy: [223] "They have what we ought to have; but we have lost God’s favor!"

[223] How amazingly different Paul’s method of "provoking the Jews to jealousy," from that pursued by many Jewish mission workers today! The Jew must have a "special" place as a Jew! In some quarters they are even organizing "Jewish assemblies" and in other quarters advocating "the literary method of approaching Israel"! All this, we cannot but feel, is abominable kow-towing to Jewish flesh, and hinders their salvation. Jews now are common sinners, who have for the present been set aside nationally, and must come to rely, as individual sinners, hopelessly guilty and helpless, upon the shed blood of Christ, and upon Him risen from the dead. It is an awful thing to make present day "Jewish" claims, when God says Jews are for the present, no different from Gentiles, before God: but are just--sinners!

Romans 11:12 : Their fall is the riches of the world; their loss the riches of the Gentiles. Before they fell, if a Gentile wanted to know the true God, he must become a "proselyte." He must journey up to Jerusalem three times a year; and even then he could not worship directly. He must have Levitical priests and forms. Contrast with this the day of Pentecost. Every man heard in his own tongue in which he was born, the wonderful works of God! And by and by Paul goes freely forth, apart from the Law, and "religion," to all the Gentiles:

"Christ the Son of God hath sent me Through the midnight lands:

Mine the mighty ordination Of the pierced hands!"

See Ephesus, and Corinth, and then Rome, and the whole world, "rich," by Israel’s fall! Wherever you are, you can call on the Lord, and walk by the blessed Holy Spirit, and witness of a free salvation to all and any who will listen! No "going up to Jerusalem" to keep feasts, and worship Jehovah afar off, but drawing nigh to God in Heaven through the blood of Christ, at any time, any place, under all circumstances! In everything, invited to "let your requests be made known unto God!" That is riches, indeed! If you do not now hold it so, you shortly will: for you will need the Lord, ere long! And He is so nigh!

Alas, how much Israel lost in refusing Christ’s "day of visitation" to them. How He wept over that! (Luke 19:41-44). We cannot blame God for Israel’s rejection of their Messiah, and their "fall." He

foretold it, indeed: but Christ said, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life!" But rather, let us see in the blessing that has resulted to us, "the heart of mercy" of God! (Luke 1:78, margin.) He will show "kindness" somewhere. And, if the invited guests have had themselves "excused," let us who belong in "the highways and hedges" run quickly to the feast when we are bidden!

If their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss has been "riches to the world" and to the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? In the days of David and Solomon, there were prodigal riches,--both of God's glorious presence (2 Chronicles 5:11-14) and of worldly wealth and honor (1 Kings 10:1-29, entire). But this presence, and this blessing, was for Israel. Now, as our Lord told the Samaritan woman, the hour has come, when "neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem" do men go to worship the Father: but salvation has come out as "riches" to the whole world and to Gentiles, who had the place of "dogs" before (as compared with Israel).

Now if this blessing be so great for the world, with Israel "fallen," how much more, when the time of restoration, and of fulness for Israel, be come!

Romans 11:13-14 : I speak to you that are Gentiles [224] --There were many Jewish saints at Rome. But these three chapters of Romans (Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21 and Romans 11:1-36), are peculiarly fitted to our Gentile instruction. And particularly so is this word: In as much as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry: if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them. I boast, before the Jews, of how God works among the Gentiles, of His saving them, filling them with His Spirit, and with peace; using them in saving others, establishing them in heavenly joy. And why do I thus magnify my Gentile ministry? To provoke my fellow-Jews to jealousy--of an inward peace they have not, that they may desire it: and, perhaps, choose it!

[224] The moment Paul says this, we know he is not addressing either Jewish believers or Gentile Christians as such--those "in Christ," for in Christ is neither Jew nor Greek. So he must be speaking to us Gentiles as having at present (not as the Church, but the Gentiles as over against the Jews) come into God's general favor--which the Jews had, but of which they are at present deprived. Gentiles, not Jews, at present are the field of God's operations on earth. They are favored, as Israel once was. And they have, therefore, like responsibilities. If Israel was "cut off" through unbelief, Gentiledom must beware lest not abiding in that "goodness" in which God has set the Gentiles (that is, in that direct Divine favor,--without law, or religion, in which Cod has put Gentiledom), it also shall be cut off! For God did not give Gentiledom a Law, with its "10,000 things," as He gave Israel. He gave Gentiledom the gospel only. He gave them Paul; and the message of GRACE. Now, if they go back to "religion," or if they forget or neglect God's great salvation, it is to desert God's "goodness"; and thus to be shortly "cut off." And they have done just that,--as we know too well! If Gentiledom has "continued" in God's uncaused grace and goodness, what meaneth then this bleating in our ears--of liturgies, masses, holy days, even prayers for the dead? What meaneth all this buzz of "administering sacraments," of "vestments," of "holy orders," of priestcraft? Why these vast cathedrals? This lavish outpouring for great "religious" establishments? The apostles had none of this! God commanded none of it. Nay, He forbade it! "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands"! The Jews stoned Stephen, who dared to say so! And see the Popes burning like witnesses! And "Modern" Denominations turning faithful preachers out of churches! No; Gentiledom has deserted the "goodness" of God, for a

Judao-pagan system With "Christian" names. And Gentiledom will be cut off.

Romans 11:15 : The casting away of them . . . the reconciling of the world--As long as God held fellowship with Israel on the ground of the old legal covenant, Gentiles were out of His direct favor, unless they became Jewish proselytes. Upon Israel's rejection of their Messiah and not until then (for Christ came first to Israel,--as see Matthew 10:5) could God "reconcile" the world to Himself. See 2 Corinthians 5:19 : "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." The casting away of them--reconciling the world; receiving of them--life from the dead!--Paul speaks God's words; and God never exaggerates! Therefore, in understanding (so far as we may) these great words, we have only to compare our wretched Gentile state before the blessed reconciliation news, with our present Gentile blessing under the gospel,--as the fruit of the "casting away" of the Israelites; and then judge what blessing will come when God "receives" them! It will indeed be "life from the dead"! For this world has never seen what shall then be seen: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Not even in Eden, before man's sin, was that seen! And all this waits the "receiving" of God's earthly people, elect Israel! God must have them back in their land, to become "a joy to the whole earth." When Jehovah finally speaks ever lasting comfort to His people Israel and to Jerusalem, it is written, "And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" [225] (Isaiah 40:1-5).

[225] It must ever be remembered that the calling of the Church, the Body of Christ, is a heavenly one; as Israel's is not. Though by God's grace partaken of an ineffably higher place--members of Christ Himself, yet we, more than any, should regard Israel's coming blessing; for we have, as they will have, mercy: the sweetest conferment of God on sinners!

Romans 11:16 : And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump: and if the root is holy, so are the branches--The firstfruit here seems to me to be the believing Israel of the old days, as in Jeremiah 2:2-3 "Thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, . . . Israel was holiness unto Jehovah, the firstfruits of his increase"; and the lump to be the whole "Israel of God," of Galatians 6:18; that is, Israel, in God's sight as an always beloved nation; though now the saved "Remnant according to the election of grace" comes out of that nation into a risen, heavenly Christ, into a higher calling, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile. And, as has been said, the Gentile "is placed upon the root," not upon the trunk nor upon the branches. He became neither a Jew, nor of Israel. Blessing, however, had been promised through Abraham to "all the families of the earth."

Now it is important to see that the root is Abraham, the depositary of the promises. The tree of Divine blessing grows up by these promises to Abraham, and His Seed, which is Christ. The natural branches, that is, those who first partook of the tree's root and fatness, were Jews. You cannot say that the tree is the Jewish nation, but rather that it is those partaking of the Divine blessing from Abraham through Christ. The most of the Jews were thus, because of unbelief, broken off. Those Jews who believed, as we know (the election of grace), came to partake of the heavenly calling in the Church "the assembly of God." Again, when that assembly is taken away to heaven, and God grafts back the remnant of the Jewish people, into their former ("their own") olive tree, Divine blessing on earth will have the earthly character it had before Church days: Israel will be the land, Jerusalem the city, and the temple- worship the form (see Ezekiel 40:1-49, Ezekiel 41:1-26, Ezekiel 42:1-20, Ezekiel 43:1-27, Ezekiel 44:1-31, Ezekiel 45:1-25, Ezekiel 46:1-24, Ezekiel 47:1-23, Ezekiel 48:1-35).

Romans 11:17 : Some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in. This simply means that we, as Gentiles, have been set in the place of blessing from Abraham. It does not mean that all Gentiles are in the Body of Christ,--for it is not of that Body as such that Paul is here speaking: but of Gentiles as having been put into that place of Divine blessing where Israel once stood. Nor do the words some of the branches mean that any whole tribe of Israel will be wholly lost; for all twelve tribes appear in Ezekiel, in the millennial kingdom. The word thou is generic, of Gentiles: but of course is addressed to individuals--those of the Gentiles who would hear. The warnings here are addressed not to brethren in Christ, but as being of the Gentiles."

Romans 11:18 : It is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee--How few of us Gentile believers understand and bear in mind that we are beneficiaries of those promises which God lodged in Abraham as a root of promise,--all the promises we inherit in Christ! This is illustrated by Galatians 3:7 : "They that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham"; and even the gift of the Holy Spirit is "the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus" coming upon the Gentiles (Galatians 3:14).

There is a very great danger, as Paul shows in Romans 11:18, that we Gentiles glory over the Jewish branches, and forget it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. Abraham was the root, the vessel of promise, and we (if we are in Christ) are his children.

Romans 11:19, alas to say, voices the general consciousness and the consequent conduct of Christendom through the so-called "Christian centuries": Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in! The despising of the Jews, and the horrid persecuting of them by Christendom, is one of the three great scandals of history. [226]

[226] "The first scandal was the persecution of their own prophets by the Jews, God’s own nation; the second was the hatred unto death against the witnesses and truth of the gospel by papal Rome (the professed church of God!) with its Inquisition tortures and stake; the third I have named above, the hatred of the Jews by professing Christians,--by those who professed faith in a Savior who is Himself "an Israelite after the flesh." I do not here mention pagan persecutions, either of Jews or of Christians, for such were to be expected. Dean Milman, in his History of the Jews, (and such a book could be read with great profit in these days of rising anti-Semitism), calls the persecution of the Jews during the middle ages "A most hideous chronicle of human cruelty (as far as my researches have gone,--fearfully true). Perhaps it is the most hideous," he goes on, "because the most continuous to be found among nations above the state of savages. Alas! that it should be among nations called Christian, though occasionally the Mohammedan persecutor vied with the Christian in barbarity . . . Kingdom after kingdom, and people after people, followed the dreadful example, [of hatred and persecution of the Israelites], and strove to peal the knell of the descendants of Israel; till at length, what we blush to call Christianity, with the Inquisition in its train, cleared the fair and smiling provinces of Spain of this industrious part of its population, and self-inflicted a curse of barrenness upon the benighted land." We may remark that the present fratricidal slaughter in Spain is simply a fulfillment of God’s words to Abraham and his seed: "Him that curseth thee will I curse." In its persecutions both of Jews and of Christians, Spain sowed the wind: it is now reaping the whirlwind!

Romans 11:20-21 : The only wise attitude for Gentiles is now prescribed by our apostle--Well, by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear; [227] --In other words, it was not the Gentiles’ importance over that of the Jews, but the Jews’

unbelief, that caused some--for the present all but a "remnant"--to be broken off: and the Gentile "stands" by his faith,--not by his superiority to the Jews! "High-mindedness" is the contrary of the "fear" here enjoined (the root of which is humility,--consciousness of unworthiness). And why fear? Romans 11:21 21 tells plainly: God spared not the natural branches [the Jews], neither will He spare thee [Gentiledom]; if Gentiledom walks in forgetfulness of its sinnerhood, and of God's "goodness,"--in self-importance, pride, and high-mindedness.

[227] Some, who deny the eternal safety of the saints, apply the warning of Romans 11:20-21, as if it were a personal, instead of a generic one,--a warning to individual believers, instead of to Gentiledom as such. But this is not only bad theology, but a missing of Paul's whole point here. It is bad theology, for our Lord says of His sheep, that they "shall never perish" and when Paul warns believers of being "high-minded" (compare 1 Timothy 6:17 with Romans 11:20) it is not to threaten doom to them, but to counsel them how to walk. Then, it is bad interpretation: for the whole passage in Romans 11:19-24, deals not with the Church, (where there is no) distinction between Jew and Greek!) but with Jew-position and Gentile-position in God's affairs on earth. Israel, unbelieving, was cut off for awhile from his place of Divine favor and blessing. Gentiledom comes into favor instead of Israel, for a while; and "the Church came into the administration of the promises in the character of Gentiles, in contrast with Jews." It is to a characteristic Gentile, that Paul speaks in Romans 11:19 : "Thou wilt say, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." He speaks generically, to this characteristic Gentile, when he warns, in Romans 11:22 : "Toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be [as was Israel before Gentiledom] cut off." Now we know, from God's prophetic Word, that Gentiledom will, indeed, be cut off, as was Israel, and Israel be restored to his former place, as the sphere and channel of God's blessing to earth. So that, when Paul says, "I speak to you that are Gentiles," he is talking, not to God's saints as such, much less to the Church which is the Body of Christ; but to Gentiledom, which has been given to be, in God's "goodness," the place of His blessing, while Israel is for the time set aside. Another proof of this is in the very admonition itself: "Be not highminded, but fear." If this (as some claim) is merely a warning to individual saints to avoid pride, why should it be addressed to Gentile saints only? Had Jewish believers no danger of pride? No; it is not of the Church at all, nor of His real saints, that God speaks here: but of Gentiledom.

Romans 11:22 : Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off--This is a most solemn word, indeed! It calls the Gentile world to behold the goodness and [its opposite] severity of God! Toward them that fell, severity: in spite of what had been the privileges of having Jehovah's temple among them; and the former faithfulness of the nation, and afterwards of individuals, Israel fell into self-righteousness, pride, and rejection of their Messiah. Toward such, "severity." Christ beheld Jerusalem and wept over it, for judgment is God's "strange work." But, we beg you, get Josephus, or any history, and read what befell the Jews when Titus took Jerusalem; and see Matthew Twenty-three, and our Lord's anguished words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

Now it is the common talk through Christendom that the Jews were God's "ancient" people; and that now the Gentiles are God's favored ones. People love to hear sermons on the "goodness" of God, but resent talk of Divine severity toward the Gentiles! But have the Gentiles proven

themselves different from the Jews in their conduct toward God? Christendom is today sinning against greater light than ever Israel had!

God says to the Gentile: Toward thee, God’s goodness, if thou continue in His goodness--Now what is "the goodness" referred to here?

We remember our Lord’s saying to the twelve apostles, when He first sent them out to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans" (Matthew 10:5). He had come as "a minister of the circumcision" to His own. But when they had rejected and crucified Him, the Risen Lord said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) ; "Ye shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Saniaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So, the Holy Spirit having been given at Pentecost, Peter is shortly sent to the house of the Gentile, Cornelius: who believes the simple gospel of Christ, and, on "all them that heard the Word the Holy Spirit fell." Then Barnabas and Saul, Silas and Timothy, and the rest, go on to the Gentiles, turning the world "upside down" with the gospel of grace. No need for a "religion" now; they had Christ. No need for a temple,--they, the assembly, were "the temple of God"; for, as Stephen witnessed--and was stoned for it--"The Most High is not [now] dwelling in temples made by hands." No need for a ritual: they had the Holy Spirit, and worshipped by Him instead of forms! No need of a special priesthood,--all believers were alike priests, and drew near unto God by the shed blood, Christ Himself, over the house of God, leading their worship, as the Great High Priest in heaven. No need of seeking "merit,"--they were in Christ, already accepted in Him,--yea, made the very righteousness of God in Him!

Now this was God’s goodness toward Gentile believers.

And, as for the Gentiles all: they were no longer called "dogs," as contrasted with the favored race of Israel (Matthew 15:26). There was a complete change in the relationship of Gentiles as such toward God. They were put into the place of privilege and opportunity of Divine blessing: an "acceptable time," a "day of salvation," in God’s "goodness" was extended to them. If one had sought to instruct a Gentile in the Old Testament days, he must have said, "God is the God of Israel: become a proselyte; go up to Jerusalem; keep the feasts according to the Law." If one should go to a Gentile in the coming Millennium, the like instruction would be necessary, for all the nations must then go up to Jerusalem by their representatives "to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts" (Zechariah 14:16-18). But now? No! An ambassador for God says anywhere, to the worst heathen, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is the Divine goodness.

Now, have the Gentiles continued in that goodness? For if the Gentiles have not so continued, God’s severity must be shown to them, as before to Israel: thou SHALT BE CUT OFF.

What then is the record? It is ghastly!

First, as to sending out the gospel: After nearly 2000 years, much of the human race knows nothing of Christ.

Then, as to salvation by grace preached to lost men, apart from law and from ordinances, we see, instead, "good character" preached up as the way of acceptance; the simple supper of the Lord called "these holy mysteries," and baptism, instead of a glad confession of a known Savior, relied

on as a "means of regeneration."

Instead of simple gatherings (as at the first), of believers unto the Name of Christ their Lord, relying on the presence of the Holy Spirit solely, (as at the first), we see great Judao-pagan temples, and an elaborate "service." And would this were in Rome only!

Instead of the free, general common priesthood of believers, in the fellowship of prayer and faith (as in apostolic days) we see thousands upon thousands of professing Christians that have never prayed nor praised openly in the assembly of His saints; myriads who do not have even the assurance of salvation (though Christ, who bore sin for them, has been received up on high). Contrast with this Acts 2:42 : "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers."

We see open, general, horrible idolatry, in both the Greek and Roman cathedrals; and a growing tendency to put up "crosses" instead of preaching "the word of the cross," in so-called "Protestant" places!

We see great State Churches, a thing unknown and impossible in Scripture; and we see professing Christians divided into "denominations," each with its own "program,"--ignoring wholly Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:2-4; and not at all walking in the consciousness of the One Body. Indeed, instead of the unity of the Spirit, they are ready to establish horrible outward earthly union, of all "professing Christians," "modernists," and Jews--in short, all "religionists." [228]

[228] "That God is withdrawing from "denominational" Christianity is very evident "Modernists" control some denominations completely and the hideous unbelief of "modernism" is infiltrating slowly every denomination. Honest souls familiar with the facts all know this and are perplexed what to do. But God will take care of His testimony,--indeed is doing so, by means of Bible conferences, Bible classes, and gatherings for prayer in private homes--more and more after the early Church pattern. As for Laodicean "property," the great churches, schools, libraries, and what not, the devil is falling heir to them fast,--which need not alarm the saints, for the early Church had none of these things, but Christ and the Holy Ghost and God's Word only! So that the Gentiles will be "cut off" from that place of Divine privilege which they now have (and which Israel nationally has lost), and Israel will be restored to the privileged place, as before. Of course this "cutting off" does not mean that individual Gentiles cannot be saved! But, as in the Old Testament, and in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Israel will be honored as the center and spring of Divine blessing on earth; the Gentiles becoming again subordinate to Israel,--as to spiritual things; and having again to "go up to Jerusalem" to worship Jehovah. The Church, the Body of Christ, will of course have been translated to heaven before this order of things comes in. The Church is "the fulness of the Gentiles," of Romans 11:25.

Thus, instead of continuing in God's goodness. Gentile "Christendom" has set up the "Christian religion"; and has settled down upon earth as if the Church belonged here; and as if Christ might not come at any moment! If you dream Christendom has continued in the humble gospel of grace, and the goodness of God in giving His Son to shed His blood for lost sinners, just examine the "religious" pronouncements in the press!

Romans 11:23 : They also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in again--We know from a multitude of prophecies that Israel will not continue in unbelief! Thank God for this! They must, of course, see to believe. But Zechariah 12:10 declares that in a future day they shall "look on Him whom they pierced"; while Zechariah 13:8-9 say, that, while "two parts of the nation shall be cut off and die," the third part shall be left,--"refined as silver" and "tried as gold is tried. They shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say. It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God."

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!"--and not the false dreams of men that tell you "God is through with Israel forever." They make God a liar when they say that! For read Jeremiah 31:23-40 : What does God mean otherwise than what He plainly says in that passage? [229] Thank God, that while the Gentiles are going into darker unbelief every day, there will be a spared Remnant of Israel!

[229] It is a blessed fact that God's real saints, the true Church, are coming more and more, daily into the light, and back to the simple faith of the beginning. This is most especially evident in the attitude of true believers in their expectancy of the coming of the Lord--a spirit that characterized the early Church for 300 years! Nevertheless, what we say is true, as reads Isaiah: "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples."

Romans 11:24 : Thou, a wild olive, grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree--In the process of grafting we select a shoot of a fruit-bearing limb of a desirable tree, and opening the bark of an inferior tree of the same species, we insert the shoot, tying it in well. Then, behold, this inferior tree supplies sap to this good shoot, but the engrafted shoot goes on to bear its own good variety and class of fruit, and not that of the inferior tree. This is nature.

Now, the exact contrary has been wrought by God in taking us Gentiles (who, God says, are "by nature a wild olive tree"), and grafting us into the good olive tree to "partake of the root and of the fatness" of the tree of Divine blessing,--of the promises given to Abraham and to his Seed. Thus, behold instead of the natural process of the shoot's producing its own quality of fruit, we produce that "fruit unto God," which belongs to the good olive tree, and not to the wild olive Gentile tree!

Now if this contrary to nature process has been wrought by God, how much rather, how much more, shall the natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree? Of course, as Paul emphasizes in Romans 11:13 : "I am speaking to you that are Gentiles,"--that is, to you as Gentiles. Now in Christ, as Paul has plainly taught us elsewhere (Colossians 3:11), "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all." Unless we clearly see that Paul in this chapter is not discussing Church truth, we shall become hopelessly mired. The apostle is not declaring here either the character, calling, destiny, or present privileges and walk of the Church, the assembly of God, the Body of Christ, the present house of God, the Bride for which the heavenly Bridegroom is coming,--none of these things. The whole question in Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21 and Romans 11:1-36 is one of reconciling God's special calling and promises of Israel, the earthly people, with a gospel which sets aside that distinction, sets aside Israel's distinctive place for the present dispensation; and places the Gentiles in the place of direct Divine blessing, once enjoyed by Israel.

02.22. Chapter 11B

CHAPTER 11B

It is for this reason that Paul addresses us here as "Gentiles." [230] Paul is claiming nothing for the Jewish believer as over against the Gentile believer,--in Romans Eleven. He even says to the Galatians: "I beseech you, brethren, become as I am, for I also am as ye are." But inasmuch as God had lodged His promises in Abraham and in his Seed ("which is Christ"), Paul in all faithfulness must not only tear up by the roots the Jewish hopes based on natural descent, and refer all to God’s sovereign grace; but he must also tell us Gentiles the facts. Those eight wonderful points of advantage spoken of by Paul at the beginning of Romans 9:1-33 as pertaining to Israel (and which still do pertain to them), he cannot allow us Gentiles to ignore, lest we come into a sense of personal importance (such as puffed up Israel), and say, Branches were broken off that we might be grafted in.

[230] In discussing the heavenly calling of the church in Ephesians 2:11-15 Paul refers to us thus: "Remember that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision’ by that which is called Circumcision,’ in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the Blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall . . . having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the Law of commandments . . . that He might create in Himself of the two ONE NEW MAN, so making peace." In the first part of Ephesians 2:1-22, we are seen "dead through our trespasses and sins," and are "made alive together with Christ, and raised up with Him and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus"; but in the second part of the same chapter, our Gentile place as "far off," "aliens," is contrasted with the place of Israel, who were "nigh." But mark: God does not Himself recognize in Ephesians the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision: He merely says that the Gentiles are called "Uncircumcision" by that which is called "Circumcision." For the circumcision had become in God’s sight uncircumcision. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly"; so that it is merely a distinction circumcised sinners made with regard to uncircumcised sinners. In the real fact, "There is no distinction (between Jew and Gentile), for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Now God did not, does not, make Israelites out of us Gentiles! He had a secret purpose kept from all the ages--of giving to His Son a Bride composed of Jewish and Gentile believers who should be received as mere guilty sinners, on purely grace grounds; and should have the highest calling of any creatures--to be members of Christ Himself,--a thing never promised to Israel.

While not speaking here of our heavenly calling in Christ, Paul yet must tell us plainly that Israel were the natural, earthly branches of the tree of promise, some of which, through their unbelief, were broken off. It is the matter of sharing Divine mercy, and not of the Christian calling, which is being discussed.

Let us ask ourselves, and frankly answer, these questions: Did God once have a house on earth? The answer must be. Yes.

Where? At Jerusalem, certainly. Our Lord at the beginning of His ministry called that temple "My Father's house"; and at the end of His ministry "My house"; and finally said to the blind leaders of Israel: "Your house is left unto you desolate." Will God restore to Israel His earthly House?

He will, as we know, at Christ's coming back to earth. And we are told it will be upon Mount Zion in Jerusalem. See James' prophecy in Acts 15, quoted from Amos 9:11-12. But meanwhile, between our Lord's absence in Heaven and His second coming, does God have a house?

We know that He does.

What is that house? Paul says that the Church (ekklesia(G1577)) is now God's House. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The house of God is the Church of the Living God. Here God the Holy Spirit dwells both in individual believers, Jew and Gentile; and also, in a corporate way, in the Assembly of God's saints. This House was formed first on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in those believers. And from thence: "From Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"--"where two or three are gathered" in the name of Christ. Will this Church or Assembly ever be connected with Israel? In no wise! Christ has built His Assembly, the Church, and is building it. But He first broke down the middle wall of partition, "the Law of commandments, in ordinances"--the thing which differentiated Israel from Gentiles: and in which Israel gloried. From both Jewish and Gentile believers Christ is now creating ONE NEW MAN! But whence do these blessings come? From the promises made to Abraham! Abraham was the root, and from the promises to him comes the fatness. But after the Church has been taken to Heaven, God will again bless Israel.

25 For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be Come in; 26 and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodlinesses from Jacob: 27 And this is the covenant from Me unto them, When I shall take away their sins. 28 As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of. 30 For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, 31 even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy. 32 For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all.

Romans 11:25 : For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery--Note that in saying "brethren," Paul is speaking now to the saints as such: for even real saints, while not to be "cut off," may become "puffed up." Now we have elsewhere remarked that God had certain secrets, which He tells His saints,--and of which they do not well to be ignorant,--as, alas, so many of them are! Here then, is stated to us one of these Divine mysteries, or secrets: and it will protect us from Gentile pride, in these days of the dazzling greatness of the Gentile times depicted in Daniel (e.g., Daniel 2:1-49 and Daniel 3:1-30)--lest ye be wise in your own conceits (as behold the vauntings of

a blind Hitler [231] and his Gentile "Aryans," and the boastings of a Mussolini of Roman-Gentile-greatness!) that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

[231] "We find in Scripture (Ezekiel 38:1-23 and Ezekiel 39:1-29) a horrid confederation of evil headed by the "prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal," which Bible students commonly accept as Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk; with which is allied Persia, Cush, Put, Corner, and the house of Togarmah--"even many peoples with thee." They go to cut off re-established Israel, just before the Millennial days described in Ezekiel 40:1-49, Ezekiel 41:1-26, Ezekiel 42:1-20, Ezekiel 43:1-27, Ezekiel 44:1-31, Ezekiel 45:1-25, Ezekiel 46:1-24, Ezekiel 47:1-23, Ezekiel 48:1-35, Now we know from the Second Psalm and many other Scriptures, that the nations of earth will all finally rebel, and that intelligently, against Jehovah, and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds asunder, and cast away Their cords from us." We do not wonder, then, that these North-European nations are first to come out into open God-defying: Russia with its atheism, and then Hitler, with his arrogant anti-Scripture conceit concerning Aryans, willing to go back to the pagan deities of Northern Europe. The word of prophecy connects these northern nations--including Germany--in a great confederacy: however far apart they may seem to be at present.

Note here:

1. There is a definite fulness of Gentiles--the very number of which God knoweth--to "come in," that is, to be saved: for this word "fulness" is not spoken as to privilege, but as to election.

2. In order for these Gentiles to come in, a "hardening," judicial and sovereign, hath befallen national Israel.

3. All talk, therefore, of Israel’s national turning to the Lord, until this Gentile fulness be come in, is vain. The fearful days of Armageddon will have to come, ere Israel, nationally turns to God. Read Zechariah 12:1-14, Zechariah 13:1-9, Zechariah 14:1-4. Israel’s hardening is in part,--for some, "the Remnant according to the election of grace," are now being saved. National hardening is in view here.

4. Israel’s hardening is in part,--for some, "the Remnant according to the election of grace," are now being saved. National hardening is in view here. And so--after this Divinely revealed order, we read,

Romans 11:26 : And so all Israel shall be saved--This is the real, elect, spared nation of the future,--"those written unto life" (Daniel 12:1; Isaiah 4:3, margin). The mystery comprehends this fact (as we have said above, and as the apostle amplifies in Romans 11:31) for the salvation of national Israel was impossible, except on purely grace lines. God had given them the Law: that was necessary to reveal sin. But they utterly failed. Now comes in the fulness of the Gentiles--by grace: and so, after that, and on the same grace line as were the Gentiles, all Israel shall be saved! Most of that earthly nation will perish under Divine judgments, and the Antichrist: but the Remnant will be "accounted as a generation." Our Lord told His disciples that this present unbelieving generation of Israel would not pass away till all the terrible judgments He foretold would be fulfilled. But that that generation--"Israel after the flesh" will pass away we know; and a believing generation take their place. See Psalms 22:30; Psalms 102:18. Jehovah at last "arises,

and has pity on her,--for the set time has come!" So we read the Psalmist's words:

"This shall be written for the generation to come; And a people which shall be created shall praise Jehovah." This is the real Israel of God, of whom it is written, "All Israel shall be saved."

Romans 11:26-27 : And now, as is usual with Paul, the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah throng into his mind, by the Spirit:

There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer;

He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: And this is the covenant from Me, When I shall take away their sins.

There are three aspects of Christ's second coming: (1) For the Rapture of the Church; (2) For the Judgment of the Nations; (3) For the Deliverance of Israel. The second of these aspects, Christ's coming to judge the nations, has been recognized through the centuries, almost to the exclusion of the first and third aspects of our Lord's coming. Christ has been regarded as the Judge; and this of course He will be, as Revelation Nineteen shows Him,--"King of kings, and Lord of lords--in righteousness judging and making war," "treading the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty." But the creeds of Christendom have taught one "general judgment," and thus they have overlooked two most essential things: first, The special relationship of Christ's coming to His real Church; and second, The relationship of His coming to the nation of Israel, and to the elect spared Remnant of that nation--to the real Israel.

Concerning the first, the Rapture of the Church, we have only to read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 :

"--The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." And also: "--We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinking 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 15:50 ff). To whom does this phase of His coming refer? We read in Ephesians 5:1-33 that Christ will "present the Church unto Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing"; and that "we wait for a Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Php 3:20-21); and that Paul called those whom he had won to Christ as his "hope and crown of glorying before our Lord Jesus, at His coming" (1 Thessalonians 2:19). Now the calling of the Church and that of Israel are never confused in Scripture. Israel as a nation does not belong to heaven, but to the land which God has given them forever, by a solemn covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And this "Rapture," or catching of the Church up to Christ, is a hope belonging to the Church: not to Israel. The third stage of our Lord's return is for the restoration of Israel to that Divine favor connected with the "New Covenant" and the national "taking away their sins." This presupposes the absence from earth of the Church: for God cannot have the two testimonies on earth at the same time! In the Church there is no distinction of Jew or Greek, neither has the Church outward religious ceremonial service (latreia(G2999)), which belongs to Israel (Romans 9:4). Furthermore, the Church has a commission to all nations, including Israel, to evangelize them. None of these things can belong to the Church when Israel shall have been restored. The Church will have been caught up to meet

the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and will have glorified bodies like Christ's; while Israel will be His nation upon the earth, in Palestine.

Then what about Israel's hope? All through the prophets, we find their hope is to be gathered back to their own land, and established there with their Messiah in their midst--Jehovah "dwelling with them in majesty"; their eyes "seeing the King in His beauty"; and complete and eternal deliverance there from all their enemies and from all their own iniquities. So Romans 11:26 reads: There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer. Hear what James tells us in Acts 15:1-41 in giving the dispensational program of God (which no denominational "standards" nor "a millennial" sophistry can change!): "Brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name." (The present dispensation). "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written:

"After these things I will return, And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof, And I will set it up: That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, And all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, Saith the Lord, Who maketh these things known from of old."

(From the First Church Council Records: Acts 15:13-18.)

Now even instructed Christians, who know about the Rapture of the Church, and the Judgment of the Lord upon the nations shortly after that Rapture, when He comes on down to earth, are apt to neglect or under-emphasize the fact that He comes to earth for the Deliverance of His people Israel. But the prophets are full of this subject. Perhaps no passage is more overwhelming than the last chapter of Habakkuk--the prophet's marvelous vision of our Lord's glorious return! [232]

[232] God came from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full ot His praise.

* * * * He stood, and measured the earth;

He beheld, and drove asunder the nations;

* * * * Was Jehovah displeased with the rivers? Was Thine anger against the rivers, Or Thy wrath against the sea, That Thou didst ride upon Thy horses, Upon Thy chariots of salvation?

Thy bow was made quite bare; The oaths to the tribes were a sure word.

Thou didst march through the land of Israel in indignation;

Thou didst thresh the nations in anger.

Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people [Israel], For victory with Thine Anointed [Christ]. And then (Verse 13) there is the smiting of "the wicked man" (Antichrist), and the piercing of "the head of his warriors." This is exactly what we find, of course, in Revelation 19:19-21! And see the faith even in those terrible days preceding Christ's return.

"I heard, and my body trembled, . . .

Because I must wait quietly for the day of trouble [the Great Tribulation]. For the coming up of the people that invadeth us [all nations: see Zechariah 14:1-2; Joel 3:9-17]. For though the fig-tree

shall not flourish, The vines . . . the olive, . . . the fields . . . the flock [be] cut off, Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation"*

It is a picture of the Remnant of Israel, who put their trust in Jehovah amid the overwhelming awfulness of the "Great Tribulation"; the stupendous signs in sun, moon, and stars at the end of that Great Tribulation; and the unutterable glory and majesty of the Day of Wrath. Read Psalms 46:1-11 (R. V. is better). It is again the godly Remnant of Israel, in those days.

We have just listened to the coronation ceremonies of the King of England (1937), and have been deeply moved, and filled with thanksgiving that God has preserved to this day an Empire that publicly acknowledges the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We pray for the continuance of that Empire as long as it be God's will, for the British flag wherever flown has protected the gospel of Christ.

Nevertheless, dark days are coming, when all nations, under the direct influence of demonic powers, will be "gathered together unto the war of the great day of God the Almighty," "into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon"-- gathered "to cut off Israel from being a nation" (Revelation 16:12-16; Psalms 83:4; Zechariah 14:1-21; Joel 3:9-15). But while we read:

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision! The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake" (Joel 3:14-16)-- We also read these words of comfort from God to Israel:

"But Jehovah will be a refuge unto His people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain." [233]

[233] The words "out of Zion shall come forth a Deliverer" have puzzled many, and indeed there are real difficulties here. The quotation is from Isaiah 59:20, "a Redeemer will come to Zion." But let us look at certain facts: There are two mountains in Jerusalem, one Mount Moriah, where the former temple was built; and the other, the higher, Mount Zion. Here, when David became king, the Jebusites had a stronghold. David's first desire when made king over all the people was to take this stronghold of the enemy (2 Samuel 5:7; 1 Chronicles 11:5). It was thereafter called "the city of David, which is Zion" (1 Kings 8:1). Now in the quotation from James in Acts 15:1-41, we find that the Lord upon His return "will build again the tabernacle of David," meaning on Mount Zion, not Moriah (for typical things shall have passed away). And concerning Zion we read in Isaiah 4:3-4 : "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the Spirit of justice, and by the Spirit of burning." The expression of Romans 11:26-27 : "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodlinesses from Jacob" becomes clearer, Romans 11:26 showing Christ delivering Israel from their ungodlinesses, and Romans 11:27 showing Christ establishing His earthly Temple and Throne on Mount Zion, and "uttering His Voice" from thence. See Amos 1:2.

We make no excuse for spending time here, for the Holy Spirit devotes very many pages to this exact subject of Jehovah's Deliverance of His people Israel by the coming back to earth to them of their Messiah in great power and glory.

Let us then study these three phases or aspects of our Lord’s return with balanced time and care: the Rapture of the Church; the Judgment of the Nations; and the Deliverance of Israel.

Romans 11:27 : This is the covenant from Me when I shall take away their sins-- give the literal rendering. It will be no longer a conditional covenant, as at Sinai; but one of grace--"from ME!" See Jeremiah 31:1-40; [234] Ezekiel 36:1-38 and Ezekiel 37:1-28; and Daniel 9:24,--in which we see six distinct blessings come to Israel at the end of the Divine "indignation" against His nation; Isaiah 32:1; Isaiah 32:8; Isaiah 32:16; Isaiah 32:20; all of Isaiah 35:1-10. This is the "New Covenant" of Jeremiah 31:1-40, quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12. It will not be "according to the covenant that God made with their fathers." Blessing will not depend then on man’s obedience; but it will; be sovereign mercy, at last extended to a whole spared nation (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Romans 11:28-29).

[234] There is a beautiful view of God’s mercy to His people in the time of the Tribulation, in Jeremiah 31:2 : "Thus saith Jehovah, The people that were left of the sword found favor in the wilderness; even Israel, when he went to find him. rest" (margin). In Revelation 12:14 we see the woman, Israel, fleeing into the wilderness and nourished for three years and a half in a marvelous way, as during the 40 years in the wilderness in Sinai after Egypt. Note that Jeremiah says, "The people that were left of the sword." This cannot refer to Israel as coming up from Egypt, but must look toward that "Remnant" left after the terrible cutting off of the most of fleshly Israel, as seen in Ezekiel 20:32-38, R.V.; Isaiah 10:22-23. This Remnant flees when Antichrist is revealed, and escapes death at his hands. Isaiah 16:3-4, the Moabites are commanded by God to protect these fleeing ones of Israel; "Make thy shade as the night in the midst, of the noonday; hide the outcasts; betray not the fugitive. Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee; as for Moab, be thou a convert to him from the face of the destroyer." The words immediately following, "For the extortioner is brought to nought, destruction ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. And a throne shall be established in lovingkindness; and One shall sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David, judging, and seeking justice, and swift to do righteousness"-- these words (Isaiah 16:4-5) reveal the Deliverance that is about to come at that time.

Romans 11:28 : We should remember two things,, always, when we see an Israelite: first, As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake; and second: As touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sake (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Gentile believers are so prone to forget both these things, especially if they behold a poor wretched son of Israel, or a proud and self-vaunting one, or even a wealthy one! Anti-Semitism, or Jew-hatred, arises, first, from Gentile rebellion against the Divine national election of Israel; and second, from envy toward them because of their wealth and power. Let no Christian give way to anti-Semitism. Of course, we must "judge righteous judgment," form unbiased opinions, of their beliefs; for many of them, like Spinoza in rationalism, and Marx and Engels in Communism, have been peculiarly used of the devil. Nevertheless, we dare not yield to Gentile hatred of Israelites. For our Lord is, after the flesh, of Israel; and God has vast gracious blessing for them shortly!

Romans 11:29 : For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of (by Him). These words are a source of endless joy. We may trust a God who refuses to allow the utter failure of Israel--nay, the idolatrous wickedness and apostasy of Israel--to alter His determination of blessing. The "gifts" are such as were recited in Romans 9:4-5; and the "calling" is, that Israel is a holy nation unto God

Himself. And He will see that it is so, not only in the coming kingdom, the Millennium; but in the new creation: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make,.shall remain before Me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name Israel remain" (Isaiah 66:22).

Romans 11:30-32 : For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their [Israel's] disobedience, even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you [Gentiles] they also may now obtain mercy. For God hath shut up all unto disobedience that He might have mercy upon all--God brings in the principle upon which He will bless Israel when He makes His New Covenant with them at Christ's second coming. It seems that we Gentiles are to be to Israel an example of Divine mercy, by which at last they will understandingly see the "heart of mercy" of their God! (Luke 1:78, margin). Our Gentile history is summed up in the words "disobedient to God"; our present position in the words: "have obtained mercy by their [Israel's] disobedience"; and now Israel nationally have been more disobedient even than the Gentiles: disobedient to God's Law, to His warning prophets, to His own dear Son, their Messiah, whom they crucified; to the witness of the Spirit through Stephen and the apostles of the resurrection of the Messiah. But at last they will "obtain mercy," [235] a new principle for them!

[235] To render Romans 11:31 (as the Latin Vulgate, Luther, Darby, and others, insist on doing), "been disobedient to our [Gentile] mercy," not only is a straining of the text, but also wholly defeats understanding of the passage. The Gentile world in Romans 11:30 is seen as disobedient to God, that is, living in sin and idolatry. But the disobedience of the Jews, (Romans 11:31), was the rejection of their Messiah and particularly of the apostolic testimony of His resurrection. When the Jews believed, it was called "being obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7); and, "God hath given the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him" in believing (Acts 5:32). Notice that the question of Gentile salvation had not at that time come up at all! In the synagogue at Ephesus some of the Jews were "hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way" (Acts 19:9). It was rejecting the way of salvation by faith apart from works, and faith in God's message concerning the Christ whom their nation had rejected and crucified--this constituted Jewish disobedience. Romans 11:32 must be connected with Galatians 3:22 : "The Scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise of faith in Christ Jesus might be given to them that believe," with "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all." This does not make God the author of disobedience;--man, whether Gentile or Jew, is responsible for that. As for the Gentiles, God, since Babel, "suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). Then He met them in the way of sovereign mercy, which they were not seeking. As for the Jews, God brought them unto Himself, gave them His Law, sent His prophets and His Son, and they despised all, even the offer of national pardon. Thus, the Jews were "disobedient" to God's way with them. But, by the example of Gentile mercy, they also will obtain mercy.

Having proved utterly disobedient, having lost all claim on God, they will at last be met by God on the same great principle of mercy, and mercy alone. So that in the future age, the Millennium, and on forever, [236] this nation will carry in its heart the two great principles that give God all the glory: first, that they were beloved of Jehovah, who had set His love upon them, the only reason being in Himself. "Because Jehovah loveth you, and because He would keep the oath which He sware unto your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Second, the consciousness of their own complete failure: of a history of ingratitude, rebellion, wickedness, idolatry, refusal of instruction and correction, and

finally, of despising and rejecting their own Messiah (2 Chronicles 36:14-16; Psalms 106:1-48). They will be brokenly conscious forever of being the objects of the absolute uncaused mercy of Jehovah their God! Thus they will be able to trust and rejoice in Jehovah, as the true Church-saint now trusts and rejoices and glories in God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who associated us with His own Son in the same sovereign mercy!

[236] But there is another deep truth also; Christ was made to become sin, and died unto sin, and unto all connection with man in sin. When our Lord was raised as the First-born from among the dead, it was in the "power of an endless life." He showed Himself alive, indeed, to His disciples, saying, "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having" (Luke 24:39), and He even ate with them. Nevertheless, His body was on resurrection ground, as heavenly as His spirit. And we shall have bodies like unto His glorious body, but it will be only when we shall be "changed," at our Lord’s coming; when "this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality." Even as regards God’s counsels toward the spared Remnant of Israel during the Millennium, as well as toward all the earth,--while the eyes of the Remnant shall "see the King in His beauty," and His glory shall be seen over the millennial temple by all nations; yet, as it seems to me, not until after the Millennium, will even Israel share that new creation place that the Church now, and the saints of Revelation 20:4, enter on before and during the Millennium. See Isaiah 65:17-18; Isaiah 66:22. Of course, both the Remnant and those of the nations who bow in real worship during the Millennium, will share spiritual life in Christ, for then will be completely fulfilled Pentecost, which Isaiah describes as the time when "the Spirit is poured out on us from on high" (Isaiah 32:15); but it is not until "the new heaven and the new earth" wherein the seed and name of Israel shall remain (Isaiah 66:22), that even that nation will be fully on new creation ground, such as the Church, members of Christ, are now as to their spirits, and will be shortly, as to their bodies, at the Rapture. When today poor blinded Jewish rabbis and elders claim "Jesus of Nazareth" as belonging to them, as "one of their prophets," "perhaps the greatest one," it causes in the heart of the instructed Christian, only a lament. Christ was indeed, as to His flesh, born of them; but they rejected and crucified Him; and He is passed into a new creation, and is the last Adam, a Second Man, with whom the Jewish nation as such has as yet no connection, any more than have unbelieving Gentiles. "Except a man be born from above he CANNOT SEE the kingdom of God!"

It must be carefully marked and deeply pondered, this great account of sovereign mercy,--mercy first to us, and by and by to Israel,--"the MERCIES of God," by means of which God will win our hearts, "beseeching us" by His apostle, to present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1). It is not only that God has dealt with us in grace,--unearned favor; but that He has shown mercy when all was hopeless! We may venture to say that it is only in those who learn to regard themselves as the objects of the Divine mercy, of uncaused Divine compassion, that the deepest foundations for godliness of life will be, or can be, laid.

Now the apostle bursts forth into most rapturous utterance concerning the ways of God--in view of His mercies;--as shown to us as traced in Chapters One to Eight; and yet to be shown to Israel, as told in Chapters Nine to Eleven:

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or

who hath been His counsellor? 35 or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? 36 For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be theglory unto the ages! Amen. When one turns from the contemplation of what we have been reading in Romans to man’s poor books,--there is immediate revulsion and constant weariness! The poverty! the shallowness! of this world!--whether its philosophy, its science, its poetry, yea, or its religion, all is vanity! As Paul says, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"; "The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise that they are vain" (1 Corinthians 3:19-20).

Romans 11:33 : Paul is overwhelmed at the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God;--and here is where we all join Paul: in adoring contemplation of God’s counsels,--the wisdom with which He brings them forth, and the knowledge of man and of his heart and his history, past, present, and future, that He displays in it all.

Romans 11:34 : For who hath known the mind of the Lord? None, till He choose to unfold it! We are, as we see in Romans 11:25, ignorant of God’s secrets; and we have no means, except He please to tell us, of discovering His mind. Bless God that He has "made known unto us the secret ["the mystery"] of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Christ" (Ephesians 1:9). Men today come from Italy and boast loudly if they have had a talk with the "dictator" there; or from Germany, and say, The great "leader" of Germany let me in to his plans; or from Washington, and boast that they have had "inside information" concerning those that are prominent there. But what are these rulers all? Bits of dust! God declares that in His sight the nations are "accounted as the small dust of the balance," and that "the rulers of this age are coming to nothing" (Isaiah 40:15; 1 Corinthians 2:6).

Now may God give us grace to realize at least a little of our mighty privilege in having revealed to us the mind of the Lord, the God of hosts.

"Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Neither let the mighty man glory in his might, Let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he hath understanding, and knoweth Me, That I am Jehovah who exerciseth loving kindness, Justice, and righteousness, in the earth: For in these things I delight, Saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Or who hath been His counsellor? As God said to Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" We know, if we are Christ’s, that we are in Him, of whom Isaiah wrote, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Of Christ God speaks: He is "The Man that is my Fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Zechariah 13:7). Christ has been made the Wisdom of God unto us: there is no other real wisdom! When the present creation has passed away,--with the very "laws" that are said to "govern" it; and God creates a new heaven and a new earth, all but God’s saints will be eternally ignorant! For all the natural man knows is the present creation: whereas of the new creation God says, "Behold, I make all things new!" This will include the very mode and manner of existence: and what does "science" know about that? Of our Lord’s resurrection body, for example! And with none of God’s saints, or of His angels, or of the seraphim or the cherubim, took He counsel, when He created all things! Nor does He take counsel of any, in the New Creation!

Romans 11:35 : Or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? How beautifully this puts us in our place! "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Men love to

think of themselves as "creators" of this and of that. But man has created nothing. He is the user, for a few days, of this present creation of God. He may even "discover" some substance or force that God long since created. Man must needs boast of his "inventions," his "creations," his greatness, and especially his "progress." But alack, the undertaker comes along and hauls him away!

Yes, says Paul, if somebody has actually supplied something to God, God will quickly recompense him! He will be in no creature's debt!

Romans 11:36 : For of Him (God)--as the one great Cause and Source; and through Him as the mighty Worker who without creature-assistance brings into effect, into realization, one by one. His counsels; and unto Him as the right and proper, and necessary object and end--(for how could a creature be a final object?--it would ruin the creature--make a Satan of him; and it would be unrighteous for the creature to be made the end or object of the glory of the Creator!)--are all things--note, all things! In this the saints exult! Against this, the serpent and his seed constantly fight and war. If Satan cannot get himself worshipped, he will beget in man's wicked mind a philosophy of "evolution"--a theory that all things came about by blind uncaused "development." But men, professing themselves to be wise, always become "fools." [237]

[237] Hear Voltaire, the brilliant French infidel in the eighteenth century, speak of Sir Isaac Newton (one of the greatest minds and godliest men of history): "Look at the mighty mind of Newton. When he got into his dotage he began to study the book called the Bible; and it seems, in order to credit its fabulous nonsense, we must believe (says Newton) that the knowledge of mankind will be so increased that we shall be able to travel at fifty miles per hour. The poor dotard!" (Newton had been studying and writing upon Daniel 12:4 : "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," when he made this prediction.) At Daytona Beach, in Florida, a few miles from my home, a man recently traveled nearly six times fifty miles per hour! So it seems Voltaire was the fool, the "dotard," and not Newton! And the very room in which Voltaire asserted, "A hundred years after I am dead the Bible will be an unknown book"--is now a wareroom of the British and Foreign Bible Society!

All things--The sun, the moon, the stars of light, the earth, the atmosphere, the trees, the animals, our bodies,--for those who study the human frame agree with David, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" Our minds,--with powers, as Locke says "capable of almost anything."

"Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who hath given understanding to the mind?"

(Job 38:36). Our spirits also,--which can be spoken to directly by the Spirit of God Himself, putting us thus into intelligent conversation with the infinite Creator of all things: Yea, "of Him, through Him, unto Him are all things!" And now the ascription of His proper honor forevermore: To Him be the glory unto the ages! What a prospect for a redeemed sinner! In the ages to come--ages of worship without end, in which glory will be ascribed to God,--and that with ever-increasing delight! And the word of eager, glad heart-consent ends it all: Amen.

We find, then, in Romans 11:1-36 :

1. That God has not cast off Israel, a Remnant being always preserved--this Remnant now, "the election of grace."

2. That all but the election were hardened,--to let the fulness of the Gentiles come in: for the purpose of provoking Israel to "jealousy,"--that they might discover Jehovah's mercy.

3. That although broken off from the stalk of blessing, they will be grafted back into "their own olive tree."

4. That this will be at the coming to Zion in Jerusalem of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that then a New Covenant will be made with Israel.

5. That the Gentile will be cut off from the present privilege-place, for not continuing in God's "goodness" (His grace to sinners); and the place of direct Divine blessing again be taken by Israel, who will return from their unbelief.

6. That this most solemn fact should warn Gentiles against individual self-confidence, and especially against the fearful delusion that Israel has been "cast away" forever, and that the Gentiles have taken their place! God has made no covenants with any nation but Israel; and that nation He will restore, the Gentiles becoming then dependent on blessing, through Israel, throughout the future.

7. That instead of being unfaithful to His promises to Israel, God has simply exercised His sovereignty (1) in cutting off Israel for the present; (2) in calling in the fulness of the Gentiles on the principle of mercy only; (3) in taking away from Israel, whom He exalted and to whom He gave His law, all claims upon Him either by national descent, personal righteousness, or any covenant commitments (for they rejected their promises and crucified their Messiah) : thus shutting them up to the one great principle of mercy.

It cannot be too much emphasized that Chapters Nine, Ten, and Eleven do not teach that the Church as such has succeeded the Jews in the place of blessing; but do show that Gentiledom has received the place of privilege and opportunity, and consequently of responsibility, that Israel once had. Through not continuing in the Divine "goodness," Gentiledom will be cut off as directly blessed of God, and will be blessed through restored Israel only, in the future, after Christ's return, the Rapture of the Church, and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. This blessing of Gentiles will be much wider and greater when Israel is restored. But the blessing will be of another order,--and not so high an order as that enjoyed by believers today, who are members of Christ's Body! Now, "there is no difference between Jew and Greek." But, when the Lord returns to Zion: "In those days ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!" (Zechariah 8:23). To gather, as we now may do, in the name of the Lord Jesus and with the conscious presence of the Holy Spirit, and with direct communion with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Assembly of God, the Church, is indescribably a greater privilege than going as part of a national delegation up to Jerusalem to "worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts"; although at that time the glory will be openly manifest at Jerusalem. Then it will be walking by sight, which is ever a lower path than walking by faith. No Gentile--nor Israelite either, for that matter,--will say in the Millennium, "For me to live is Christ!" God has today "made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." We are in Christ, and Christ is in us, "the hope of glory!"

Alas, alas, how little do we appreciate our place as Church saints!

02.23. Chapter 12A

CHAPTER 12A

Paul’s Great Plea for Personal Consecration to God, in View of His Mercies; God’s Perfect Will for Each Believer thus Discovered. Romans 12:1-2. For We are One Body in Christ, with Varying Gifts. Romans 12:3-8. Our Walk toward Others, whether Believers, or Enemies. Romans 12:9-21.

1 I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. 2 And be not fashioned according to this age: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove [in experience] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1 : I BESEECH YOU--What an astonishing word to come from God! From a God against whom we had sinned, and under whose judgment we were! What a word to us, believers,--a race of sinners so lately at enmity with God,--"I beseech you!" Paul had authority from Christ to command us,--as he said to Philemon: "Though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting, yet for love’s sake I rather beseech." Let us give heart-heed to this our apostle, who often covered with his tears the pages whereon he wrote. As he said of his ministry, "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech--!" And what does he cite to move us to hearken to the great appeal for our devotion to God which opens this section of Romans--this part that calls for our response to the great unfoldings of God’s salvation in the previous chapters? I BESEECH YOU BY THE MERCIES OF GOD!

Let us call to mind these MERCIES of which Paul speaks:

1. JUSTIFICATION,--including pardon, removal of sins from us, trespasses never to be reckoned, a standing in Christ,--being made the righteousness of God in Him!

2. IDENTIFICATION--taken out of Adam by death with Christ,--dead to sin and to law, and now IN CHRIST!

3. UNDER GRACE, NOT LAW--Fruit unto God,--unto sanctification, made possible.

4. THE SPIRIT INDWELLING--"No condemnation," freedom from law of sin; witness of Sonship and Heirship.

5. HELP IN INFIRMITY, and in any present sufferings, on our way to share Christ’s glory.

6. DIVINE ELECTION: Our final Conformity to Christ’s Image as His brethren; God’s settled Purpose,--in which, believers already glorified in God’s sight!

7. COMING GLORY--beyond any comparison with present sufferings!

8. NO SEPARATION POSSIBLE--God loved us in Christ.

9. CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S FAITHFULNESS confirmed by His revealed plans for national Israel.

Present your bodies--This has been used to divide believers harshly into two classes,--those who have "presented their bodies" to God, and those who have not. But this is not the spirit of the passage. For God "beseeches" us to be persuaded by His mercies. He does not condemn us for past neglect, nor drive us in the matter of yielding to Him. We must believe that these Divine mercies have persuasive powers over our wills. It is not that we can move our own wills; but that faith in God’s mercies, personally shown us, has power. It is "the goodness of God" that moves us,--when we really believe ourselves the free recipients of it! So Paul beseeches us to present our bodies to God. We might have expected, yield your spirits, to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. But Paul says, bodies. Now if a man should present his body for the service of another, willingly, it would carry all the man with it. [238] In the case of a slave, his master owns his body; so he does what his master says: often with inner reluctance. We are besought to present our bodies,--that is, willingly to do so. God, who made and owns us, and Christ, whose we are (see Romans 1:6),--"called as Jesus Christ’s")--God, I say, might have said, Come, serve Me: it is your duty. That would have been law. But instead, grace is reigning, over us, and in us; and Paul says to us, I beseech you, present your bodies. And there and then, in a believing view of God’s mercies, we find our hearts going forth. For there is great drawing power in the knowledge that someone has loved us, and given us such Divine bounties as these mercies!

[238] A man desiring to enlist in the British army comes, after the physical examination, to present himself to the enlisting officer. He is still his own man. Then the enlisting officer gives him "the king’s shilling"--as enlistment money. He signs an attestation as to his age, place of birth, trade, etc., and takes the oath of allegiance: "To be true and faithful to the king and his heirs, and truth and faith to bear of life and limb and terrene honour, and not to know or hear of any ill or damage intended him without defending him therefrom." Having accepted the king’s money, and taken this oath, he is now legally the king’s own soldier. A living sacrifice--This is in contrast with those slain offerings Israel brought to God. God’s service is freedom, not slavery; life, not death. Holy, acceptable unto God--We remember that God said of Israel’s offerings: "Whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy" (Exodus 29:37). It is very blessed to know that any believer’s yielding his body to God is called a "holy, acceptable sacrifice,"--well-pleasing unto God Himself! That any creature should be able to offer what could "please" the infinite Creator, is wonderful; but that such wretched, fallen ones as the sons of men should do so, is a marvel of which only the gracious God Himself knows the depth! Which is your spiritual service--Here "spiritual" or "intelligent" religious service (logike(G3050) latreia(G2999)) is contrasted with that outward religious service Israel had in former days. They had the temple, with its prescribed rites, its "days, and months, and seasons and years," its ordinances and ceremonial observances. Indeed, it was right that they should carry out these ordinances as God directed. But, while it was "religious service" (which is what latreia means), it was not intelligent service. It was not logike latreia; but consisted of "shadows of the good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1-14). There was a ceaseless round of "services"; but God dwelt in the darkness of the Holy of Holies; and sin was not yet put away. But now Christ has come, propitiation has been made; Christ has been raised; the Holy Spirit has come; and "intelligent service" is now possible. And giving over our bodies to God is the path into it. [239]

[239] It is sad and terrible to see how professing Christianity has departed from all this blessed "intelligent service" in the Holy Spirit, back into the darkness of man-prescribed religion! Imagine

Peter setting up holy days, in the Book of Acts; as, "Ash Wednesday"; "Good Friday"; "Lent"; "Easter"! It would all have been denial of their new connection with a Risen Christ, and of the Presence of the Comforter! It would have been turning back to Judaism, yea, to Paganism, for the name "Easter" is simply "Ishtar," the great goddess of Babylon. (See on all these things, Hislop's Two Babylons.) We will either yield ourselves to God, and be led by the Holy Spirit into the "intelligent service" that belongs to this dispensation and to the true Christian; or we will be hiding away from God in the false "Christian" forms and ceremonies "Christendom," with its religion, has taken on. God abhors "ceremonies,"--since the blessed Holy Ghost has come, and has brought liberty!

Romans 12:2 : And be not fashioned according to this world (literally, age, aion(G165)). This present age, Paul calls "evil," declaring in Galatians 1:4 that our Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age (aion) according to the will of our God and Father." Believers, before they were saved, "walked according to the course of this world [literally, "according to the age (aion) of this world-order"--cosmos(G2889)) according to the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Here you have the cosmos, or world-order, since Adam sinned; and since then each particular phase of the Satanically arranged and controlled world-order now on, called the aion. In 1 Corinthians 7:31, this is called the "fashion,"--literally, scheme(G4976), of this world-order. "We know," writes John, "that we are of God, and the whole world [lit., world-order], lieth in the evil one." It is necessary to grasp intelligently this fearful state of things, in order to obey the apostle's exhortation not to be conformed to it: a world-order without God!

We read that Cain "went out from the presence of Jehovah and builded a city" (Genesis 4:1-26), which became filled with inventions--"progress": music, arts; its whole end being to forget God,--to get along without Him. And ever since, Satan has developed this fatal world-order, with its philosophy, (man's account of all things,--but changing from time to time); it's science (ever seeking to eliminate the supernatural); its government (with man exalting himself); its amusements (adapted to blot out realities from the mind); and its religion (to soothe man's conscience and allay fears of judgment). The Spirit by Paul asks the saints not to be fashioned [240] after this [Satanic] order of things, but on the contrary to be transformed by the renewing of their mind. The word for "transformed" is remarkable: our word "metamorphosis" is the same word, letter for letter! In Matthew 17:2 it is used of Christ: "He was transfigured," which Luke 9:29 explains: "The fashion of His countenance was altered." That is, from the lowly, despised One in whom was "no beauty" to attract the eye of man, He was transformed to appear as He will appear at His return to this earth (for of His coming and kingdom the transfiguration was a figure, 2 Peter 1:16-18). Thus Psalms 45:1-17 depicts Him at His second advent:

"Thou art fairer than the children of men:

Grace is poured into Thy lips!"

Infinite, endless grace, beauty, and glory, will then be publicly displayed in Christ.

[240] "Fashioned" is literally, schemed-together-with. It is the very word of 1 Corinthians 7:31 : scheme (Greek, schema)G4976)), made into a verb, with the conjunction along-with (sun), for prefix. The devil will rope you into his "scheme," unless you surrender your body to God to be by

Him delivered.

Now, to be "transformed" or "transfigured" into the image of Christ is the blessed path and portion of the surrendered believer in the midst of this present evil world. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Note that neither in world-conformity, nor in Christian transformation, are we the actors: the verbs are passive, in both cases. It is, "Be not fashioned," and "Be transformed." In the first case, Satan and the world have abundant power, they know to fashion anyone found willing; But how are we to be transformed? The answer is, By the renewing of your mind; and here we come again upon that wonderful part of our salvation which is carried on by the Holy Spirit; and we must look at it attentively.

Paul sweepingly describes this salvation as follows (Titus 3:5): "God according to His mercy saved us, through the washing of regeneration (1) and (2) renewing of the Holy Spirit." Here the first action signifies the whole application to us of the redemptive work of Christ,--the "loosing from our sins in His blood" (Revelation 1:5), and the imparting to us of Christ's risen life so that we were made partakers of what is called here "regeneration." [241] Then the second action is called a "renewing," and is carried on by the Holy Spirit. Now what does this signify? It cannot refer to our spirits, for our spirits were born, created anew, under the first action here described; so that we were put into Christ, as says 2 Corinthians 5:17 : "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." And, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit" (John 3:6). Nor can this "renewing" refer to our bodies; for, although they are indeed quickened and sustained by the indwelling Spirit, according to Romans 8:11; yet there is never a hint (but quite the contrary), that the believer's body will be "renewed" during this present life.

[241] The Greek word for "regeneration" (palingenesia(G3824)), occurs only twice in the New Testament, here in Titus 3:5, and in Matthew 19:28. Mr. Darby's contention that this word is "not used in Scripture for a communication of life, but for a change of state or condition," seems refuted by the fact that the Greek word for renewing (anakainosis(G342)) in this same verse, is also used but twice-- Titus 3:5 and Romans 12:2. Its cognate verb is also used twice: 2 Corinthians 4:16, and Colossians 3:10. In all four instances, it has to do with the operation of the Holy Spirit upon one already born again. So that, if the word translated regeneration in Titus 3:5 does not have in it any reference to the "communication of life," there is no real definition of salvation at all in this verse: but the verse claims to be such a definition! As to the use of "regeneration" in Matthew 19:28, and the assertion that the word here is "evidently a change of state and condition, and not communication of life," the very opposite is what Scripture asserts concerning Israel at that time, for this passage concerns the saved Remnant at the opening of the Kingdom. Of this Remnant, God says, "They shall be all righteous," "they shall be those written unto life" in Jerusalem. It will certainly be the communication of life, yea, the receiving of them will be "life from the dead," when they shall have "looked on Him whom they have pierced."

There remains then to be the object of this "renewing," the soul, which includes the mind, with its thoughts; the imagination,--so untamed naturally, the sensibilities or "feelings"; the "tastes," or natural preferences,--all which, since the fall of Adam, are naturally under the influence and power of the sinful flesh, and must be operated upon by the Holy Spirit, after one's regeneration. The memory, also, must be cleansed of all unclean, sinful recollections. And that it is the soul that is

renewed, [242] is abundantly confirmed both from Scripture and from human experience.

[242] The word for "renew" (anakainoo(G341)) is used only by Paul. It means to "grow up new, afresh" (Thayer),--like foliage in the spring. Man's spirit having already been created anew, and being joined to the Lord; and witnessed to and cared for by the Holy Spirit; man's soul-faculties are now to be taken over by that same blessed Spirit; so that the whole mind and disposition and tastes of the man will become conformed to the fact that he is a new creature.

Man, we remember, "became a living soul," after his body had been formed, and there had been communicated to him a spirit, by God's direct in-breathing (Genesis 2:7). Man's spirit dwelt in his body; but the body itself could not contact understandingly the world into which Adam had been introduced. Nor could his spirit do so directly. The soul-life, however, put him in touch with creation. It had five "senses": sight, hearing, feeling, smell, and taste. Man's spirit was thus put into intelligent relationship with the creation about him. He had also another faculty,--reason. The spirit of man perceives things directly,--apart from a "process of thought." But God placed man in circumstances in which he could use this faculty of observation and discrimination,--of reasoning,--which faculty he was to employ as to the creation about him. There were also the "sensibilities," and the esthetic faculty,--to see the beautiful and enjoy it. Imagination, too,--what a fertile field for unspiritual, earthly life! Memory, also, we must not overlook, for although memory belongs to the spirit (even to lost spirits,-- Luke 16:25), yet since man sinned, the memory of saved people must be "renewed," so that freedom -from horrid recollections shall be given, and the blessed inclination to retain that which is good, remain. The whole "mind," therefore must become the object of the Spirit's renewing power. The entire soul-life, in human existence, must come under the Spirit's control.

Paul's word, "the renewing of the mind," takes in the whole sphere of conscious life for the child of God. This also appears from the use of the word "renew" by Paul in other places. The "new man" being a new creation in Christ, all the graces and beauties of Christ belong to him; just as, before, the evil he inherited from the first Adam was his, because he was federally connected with him. Now, however, he is to "put on" the new man by simple appropriating faith. But, in order that he may do this, his soul-life must be laid hold of, "renewed," by the Holy Spirit: "That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit: and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, [243] that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

[243] This new man is not Christ personally, any more than our old man was Adam personally. However, we sustained such a relation to Adam that the "old man" was ours, as much as "by nature" we were Adam's children. So since we are in Christ, the "new man" belongs to us,--being that sum total of the marvelous Divine graces and dispositions "created" for, and to be realized in, the believer in union with Christ. Note that believers have "put off" the old man; but are here told to "put him away,"--be not influenced by him.

Paul further develops this in Colossians 3:9-10 :

"Ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge, after the image of Him that created him." The Colossians are viewed as having put off the old man (when they were created in Christ), and put on the new man (which hath been

created in righteousness and holiness of truth), and is now ever being renewed unto perfect knowledge (epignosis(G1922)), that experimental, spiritual revelation of the Risen Christ which Paul so coveted for the Ephesians, as we see in his great prayer ending thus:

"That ye may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

These three distinct aspects of sanctification therefore appear:

1. That effected and perfected once for all by our Lord in His death: "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14). This is the effect of the shed blood of Christ: it has satisfied all Divine claims against us, and has redeemed us from sin unto God, separating us unto God forever with an absolute, infinite tie.

2. That which results necessarily from our being in Christ Risen,--"new creatures" in Him. Thus the Corinthians, though in their spiritual condition and experience yet "babes in Christ," are addressed by the apostle as those "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

3. That wrought in the mind, the soul-life, and its faculties, by the Holy Spirit, who seeks to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The first two aspects are fundamental, and equally true of all believers. The third, Paul longed to have brought about fully in all believers: "Admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

"Come ye out from among them [unbelievers] and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing, And I will receive you [in the way of fellowship] And will be to you a Father [in fellowship, as I am in relationship], And ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

"Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

"And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). [244]

[244] A "clean heart" is taught in the Scripture most plainly. Even in the Old Testament David prays, "Create in me a clean heart." In Acts 15:9, Peter speaks of the occasion of the Holy Spirit's falling upon those of Cornelius' household, as, "cleansing their hearts by faith." And Paul says in his charge to Timothy, "The end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5). And further, to Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Now it will not do, in interpreting the Bible, an infinitely accurate Book, to deal loosely or confuse terms. When David said, in Psalms 108:1, "O God, my heart is fixed," repeating it in Psalms 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing, yea, I will sing, yea, I will sing praises"--I say in such an utterance the Psalmist is not claiming that there was not iniquity present with him, but that his heart was by Divine grace fixedly choosing God and His will: as he says in Psalms 18:23, "I was also perfect with Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." Here he

recognizes evil present with him, but his heart is fixed for God. To confuse the flesh with the heart is a vital mistake. Paul says we have no confidence in the flesh. But on the other hand we may have complete confidence toward God, at least when our faith has been "perfected" (1 Thessalonians 3:10). The heart is the throne-room of the being. When it is really handed over to God, "the peace of Christ rules" therein. If no provision is made for the flesh, but instead the Lord Jesus Christ is put on (Romans 13:14); if we obey 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 to 2 Corinthians 7:1, refusing "unequal yokes" with unbelievers, refusing to have "portions" with unbelievers, "keeping ourselves from idols," "cleansing ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit," "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," and consenting to be "separated" to God and "touch no unclean thing,"--then God "walks in us." Our hearts are wholly given to Him and "do not condemn us." Such a surrendered believing heart is called in Scripture, a "pure heart." To be among those thus "cleansed" by simple faith, and to have such a pure heart, should be the longing desire and purpose of every believer. Do not confuse, therefore, a clean, perfect heart toward God as taught in Scripture with the supposed "eradication of the sin-principle" from the flesh. The flesh is unchanged until Christ comes. But God will cleanse our hearts, by faith, and the Holy Spirit will form Christ fully within us. That ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God--This word "prove" means to put to the proof, as in Ephesians 5:8-10 : "Walk as children of. light, proving [or finding out by experience] what is well-pleasing unto the Lord." The man in Luke 14:19 used the same word: "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." The "will of God" here may be rendered "what is willed by God" (Meyer); or, as Sanday says, "The will of God is here not the Divine attribute of will, but the thing willed by God, the right course of action." This passage involves two facts: first, that God had a plan for our lives, which He is very willing and desirous we should discover; and, second, that only those who surrender themselves to Him, rejecting conformity to this age, can discover that will. All of us in times of desperate need, or crisis, are anxious to find God’s path for us. And, in answer to the cry of even His unsurrendered saints. He may and often does graciously reveal the path of safety and even of temporary blessing to them. But only those who have surrendered their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him, enter upon the discovery of His blessed will as their very sphere and mode of life. That ye may prove--Note that it is not that you are seeking after "victory," or "blessing," or even instruction in truth; but you are to enter into the will of Another,--even God.

Note, further, that in order to "prove," or experimentally enter into, God’s will, there must be "the renewing of the mind" by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is all-important to understand that only a yielded will can desire, discover, or choose God’s will.

Further, we should, along with this, be impressed continually with the blessed fact that God’s will for us is infinitely loving, infinitely wise, and gloriously possible of fulfilment; while our own wills are selfish and foolish and weak: for often we are impotent of accomplishing even our own poor objects!

Good, acceptable, perfect--Good for us, acceptable to God; and that which, being itself perfect, leads to our perfecting, as Epaphras prayed for the Colossians: "That ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).

Some would render it, "The will of God, even the thing that is good, acceptable and perfect": as if we entered upon it all, once we yielded our bodies to God. Also, it has been suggested that we

enter first into God’s "good" will: for, although we are ignorant and clumsy at first, God in His goodness gladly calls our work "good." Then, when we learn further, our work becomes in a higher sense "acceptable." Finally, we stand "perfect and fully assured in all the will of God."

Both these views are true. God’s will is always good, acceptable and perfect; and, when we begin to surrender to it, it is all that, at once, for us. On the other hand, we do progress in it! It takes faith to surrender our wills. We must be brought to believe in our very heart that God’s will is better for us than our own will. And, as we once heard a man earnestly testify, "If you can’t trust One who died for you, whom can you trust?"

We beg you to seek out some saints (for there are some!) who have yielded themselves to God, and study their faces: you’ll discover a light of joy found on no other countenances. Cling to such. Converse with them. Learn their secret. Be much with them. And follow such as follow Christ. Blessing lies that way!

3 For, I say, through the [apostolic] grace that was given to me, to every one that is among you, not to be estimating himself beyond what he ought to estimate; but to be so estimating himself as to have a sober estimate, according as God to each one of us divided a measure of faith.

We have used here Rotherham’s rendering, "estimate," instead of the common rendering, "think." It is remarkable that God crowds (in the original) this one word, "have an opinion," or "estimate," four times into this one sentence! It is also striking that this command, not to have a higher opinion of ourselves than we ought to have, is the first, the opening one of all the exhortations which follow. Let us lay this to heart!

Note what this proves: (1) That over-estimation of one’s importance among the saints is a fundamental temptation. (2) That God has granted to each one of His saints a certain allotment, or "measure," of faith,--that is, of the ability to lay hold on the mighty operations of the Spirit of grace. And note carefully that God does not say, according to the measure of knowledge, but "of faith." (3) That only the one who comes into a personal discernment of God’s special will through surrender to Him, will come to have a "sober estimate" of his own place. (4) That it is a distinct command of the apostle (emphasized by allusion to the mighty apostolic charge and grace given by God to him direct to us), that being surrendered to God, we come into a sober estimate of our place,--of our "measure of faith." This great verse is now to be followed by its explanation:

4 For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: 5 so we, who are many, are one Body in Christ; and as to each one, members of all the rest! 6 And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; 7 or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry: or he that teacheth, to his teaching; 8 or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:4-5 : For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one Body in Christ; and as to each one, members of all the rest!

Here is Paul’s first mention of this great doctrine of the Body of Christ, a doctrine which he alone, among the apostles, sets forth, he being the one chosen "minister of the Church" (Colossians

1:24-25),--as to its real, heavenly, corporate character. Note now the comparison: (1) Our human bodies have many members. (2) These members, however, constitute a unity: they are one body. (3) Each member is a member of all the others. (4) All our members have not the same work to do.

Even so with us in Christ: (1) We are many, but (2) we are one Body in Christ. "Body" is not here an illustration, but an actuality. "He that loveth his own wife, loveth himself, . . . even as Christ also the Church; because we are members of His Body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church" (Ephesians 5:28-32): "The Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). This union is so absolute that Paul writes: "As the body [245] is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; SO ALSO IS CHRIST" (1 Corinthians 12:12). We deceive ourselves and delude others when we use the word "body" as connected with the Church of God, of any but the true, elect members of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit. And that consciousness (that is, the consciousness of the One Body of Christ of which Christ Risen in glory is the Head and they, the living, Spirit-indwelt members, are the fulness), should be held by us continually to the exclusion of anything earthly or merely local or sectarian. Thus we should find ourselves at once in fellowship with true believers everywhere, for they with us are members of Christ, and they and we are members one of another.

[245] Of course there is all manner of looseness of talk by those who do not discern, hold, and continually speak in terms of the one Body of which Christ Risen is the Head. We do not have any right to use the word "body" of any but the true, mystical Body of Christ: those who have been "by the one Spirit baptized into One Body." The confusion of the Scripture doctrine of the true Church, the Body of Christ, with the Church’s outward relationships, responsibilities, and testing, as the House of God on earth, has given rise to innumerable evils. The Church which is Christ’s Body is the blessed company of all true believers from Pentecost to its Rapture at Christ’s coming. The House of God is "the pillar and stay of the truth" upon earth, just as Israel was before the cross. But Just as there was an elect Remnant, Simeons and Annas, Zachariahs and Elizabeths,--the true Israel--in our Lord’s day; while the temple, the House of God, had been invaded by all manner of corruption and merchandising, having been built up by Herod the Great, a son of Esau;--so, today, the true Church is not what you see gathering into meetings all about you, but that company of true believers known to God, all of whom have been baptized by the Spirit into One Body, and who also are indwelt by the Spirit. All others, however prominent "church members" they may be, are simply part of the "great house’ of 2 Timothy 2:20, where vessels "unto dishonor" as well as those "unto honor exist; which the "house of God" set forth in 1 Timothy 3:15 has, through man’s failure, become.

(3) We are individually "members one of another." Compare 1 Corinthians 12:27 : "Now ye are the Body of Christ, and individually members thereof." Being members of the Body of Christ, we necessarily are members of one another; as my right hand, being a member of my body, is a member of my left hand. Mark that Paul makes this "membership one of another," an additional (though necessary) truth to the fact of the one Body in Christ. Note carefully that Scripture never speaks of "church members," as men today do; nor of "membership" in or of a local assembly; but only of membership in the Body of Christ, and of membership one of another. We are members of the heavenly Head, Christ, and therefore members one of another by an operation of the Spirit of

God, not by action of man. In local assemblies, according to Scripture, we have fellowship, as already members of Christ and of one another. The importance of seeing this is immeasurable. For the great fact that we are one, actually members of other believers, is made by the Spirit of God the basis of our love toward one another! As Paul says in Ephesians 4:25 : "Putting away falsehood, talk truth each one with his neighbor; for we are members one of another." Your right hand has never yet had a fight with the left: on the contrary, each constantly helps the other! And, as to suffering, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

Romans 12:6 : And having gifts, different according to the grace that was given unto us--For each believer there is some particular "gift," to be bestowed by the already indwelling Spirit, (as those yielding themselves to God find) to make each believer a direct benefit to the Body of Christ: "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit (the whole Body) withal, . . . the Spirit dividing to each one severally even as He will." The various gifts are bestowed by the Spirit for "ministration" to the Lord Jesus, and the "working" in each case is by God Himself. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

Now, these differing gifts are "according to the grace that was given unto us." In Romans 12:3 Paul speaks by the apostolic grace given unto him, and to each believer there is also an individual differing "grace," given to each for the particular service to which God calls him. In accordance with this "grace," there is, therefore, a "gift," by the indwelling Spirit. (This is not the gift of the person of the Spirit, but is a gift communicated by the already given Spirit.) [246] For the receiving and using of these gifts, there is necessary the element of faith, which is bestowed by God in exact accordance with the gift given each one. The bestowal is called, "the grace that was given to us." [247] It will not do to say, if we find ourselves not in possession of certain gifts, "They are not for us: they belonged only to the "Early Church." This is a three-fold presumption! (1) It is excusing our own low state; and worse: (2) It is blaming the result of the failure of the Church upon God,--an awful thing! (3) It is setting up the present man-dependent, man-sufficient state of things as superior to the days when the Holy Spirit of God was known in power.

[246] Of course, it will be to many, as it was to the author, a startling revelation, that the Spirit is ready to engift each believer for Divinely appointed service! Those mentioned as "unlearned" in 1 Corinthians 14:23 were evidently believers, but ungifted; or, as Alford says, "plain believers," persons unacquainted with the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:1-31.

[247] Alford well says, "The measure of faith, the gift of God, is the receptive faculty for all spiritual gifts; which are, therefore, not to be boasted of, nor Pushed beyond their province, but humbly exercised within their own limits."

It is true that God, in His infinite grace, accepted, at the hands of the Jews, at the end of the 70 years' captivity, the temple of Zerubbabel, saying: "Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified." It is true that our Lord called that temple (though built in its grandeur by Herod, the Edomite--descendant of Esau, not Jacob!) "My Father's house," and "My house," for He had not yet finally deserted it, (as He did at last in Matthew 23:38). But the Jews of our Lord's day gloried in that temple: though there was in it neither the Ark of the Covenant nor the Shechinah Presence of Jehovah. The glory had departed; but the Jews forgot all this, just as many Christians today, though often quite "Bible students,"--practically forget or ignore the immediate Presence of the Holy Ghost, with His all-necessary gifts: saying, "These belonged to the early

days’; but we have the written Word now, and do not need the gifts, as did the Early Church." And this self-sufficiency is leading, has led, to the same form of truth-without-power, that the Jews had in Christ’s day.

02.24. Chapter 12B

CHAPTER 12B

We are not hereby saying, Let us bring back these gifts. But we are pleading for the self-judgment and abasement before God that recognizes our real state. The outward church today is Laodicean, "wretched, poor, miserable, blind, naked"--and knows it not! And the Philadelphian remnant have only "a little strength." Let us be honest! We have substituted for the mighty operations amongst us of the Holy Ghost, the pitiful "soulical" training of men. We look to men to train, to "prepare" preachers, and teachers, and "leaders," for a heavenly company, the Church, among whom the Holy Ghost Himself dwells as Administrator. Let us not dare to claim that the Holy Ghost is no longer willing to work in power amongst us. Because, for Him to do so is God's plan! Indeed, He is so working where not hindered. Let us confess the truth. Our powerlessness is because of unbelief,--the inheritance of the sins of our fathers, the inheritance of a grieved Spirit. It may be true that He does not work as He once did; but let us admit two things: we dare not say, He is not willing so to work; and, we dare not say it is God's plan that He does not! We can only say, We have sinned! So did Daniel (Daniel 9:1-27). So did Ezra (Ezra 9:1-15). So did they of Nehemiah's day (Nehemiah 9:1-38). Our days are days of failure, just like those. Nor will it do, (as with so many enlightened saints), merely to "see and judge the failure of the professed Church" and gather in the name of the Lord, and remember His death in the breaking of bread every Lord's day. All this is good. But we must judge ourselves if we do not have real power amongst us. And the power of the Spirit, in a day of apostasy like this, will bring us into a deep burden over the state of things, and into prayer, such as the great men of God made in the three great chapters to which we have just referred!

--Whether prophecy [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of our faith--Paul's exhortation, as we shall see, is here devoted to the believer's exercising any gifts "according to the proportion" of his God-given confidence, or "faith," in the exercise of it: not over-estimating himself, but soberly estimating, and thus proceeding. (It is taken for granted, of course, that all are fully willing to exercise any gift; and will not, through unbelief or false humility, hold back therefrom. [248]

[248] "An apostle was sent direct, as an architect, authorized by Christ to build His Church. Apostles were authorized, on the part of Christ, to found and to build, and to establish rules in His Church. In this sense there are no longer apostles. "But it appears to me, that in a lower sense, there may be apostles and prophets in all ages. Barnabas is termed an apostle. Junius and Andronicus are called apostles, and it is said of them that they were of note amongst the apostles' (Romans 16:7); so that there are others who were not named. "As regards the revelation of God, it is complete; as regards any authority to found the Church it no longer exists; neither the twelve nor Paul have had any successors. The foundation cannot be twice laid. But one may act under an extraordinary responsibility as sent by God. We may cite as examples, without pretending to justify all that they did, a Luther, a Calvin, a Zwingli, and perhaps others. So for prophets; although there be no new revelations of truth, there may be, as proceeding from God Himself, a power of applying

to the circumstances of the church, or of the world, truths hidden in the Word; such as, in practice, might render the ministry prophetic. Moreover all those who expressed the mind of God to edification' were called prophets, or at least, prophesied.' "Prophets, who were associated with apostles as the foundation, because they revealed the mind of God, may, it appears to me, in a subordinate sense, be believed to exist,--those who not merely teach and explain ordinary and profitable doctrine,--but who by a special energy of the Spirit can unfold and communicate the mind of Christ to the Church where it is ignorant of it (though that mind he treasured up in the Scripture)--can bring truths, hidden previously from the knowledge of the Church, in the power of the testimony of the Spirit of God, to bear on the present circumstances of the Church and future prospects of the world, and thus be practically prophets (though there be no new facts revealed, but all are really in the Word already), and thus be a direct? blessing and gift of Christ to the Church for its emergency and need, though the Word be strictly adhered to, but without which the Church would not have had the power of that Word" (Darby).

We can easily see in a Luther or a Calvin, in the sixteenth century, in a Bunyan in the seventeenth century; in a Wesley in the eighteenth, in a Moody in the nineteenth, such apostolic operation. Wesley spoke from God to all England, as did Luther to Germany. Moody, we know, was first an evangelist, loving and reaching the lost. But God, who is sovereign, gave him spiritual authority in the consciences of Christians throughout the whole world. We know what debt under God all those who have the truth today owe to Darby, through whom God recovered more truth belonging to the Church of God, than through any other man since Paul, and whose writings are today the greatest treasure of truth and safeguard against error known to instructed believers. Such men had more than an evangelist's or teacher's gift. There was spiritual authority they themselves did not seek, attending their ministry. This fact discerning believers,--those free from tradition's bias, readily see and gladly admit. Paul defines the prophetic gift in 1 Corinthians 14:3 : "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation." New Testament prophets and apostles laid the foundation of the Church,--the prophets speaking directly by inspiration from God. But while the early apostles and prophets had their peculiar ministry in a foundational way, yet both gifts remain in the Church (see Ephesians 4:11-13) along with evangelists, pastors and teachers. Now since the prophet speaks under the moving of the Spirit, he is to do so "according to His faith." Dean Alford makes the evident distinction, "The prophet spoke under immediate inspiration; the teacher (didaskalos(G1320)), under inspiration working by the secondary instruments of his will and reason and rhetorical power." We have ourselves sometimes heard those speaking in "testimony" or "praise-meetings" whose words were not, properly speaking, teaching; but yet entered in the power of the Spirit directly into the heart of the hearers, edifying, exhorting, and consoling,--a high ministry indeed, though in the "secondary character" of it, as compared to the words of the early apostles and prophets. Such an one could, of course, speak profitably only when speaking in the Spirit, and thus, "in proportion to his faith." The remarkable foot-note above, from J. N. Darby, is a frank and explicitly plain statement of truth. Mr. D repeats over and over (seven times, at least, in the pages from which our excerpts are taken--Coll. Writ. 1, 350; III. 217-9) that the written Word is complete. No honest heart, however, knowing history, can fail to admit that God has, in mercy, raised up, from time to time, men who have administered His Word in such apostolical and prophetic power. That He will again do so, we do not doubt. For there is an ever-recurring need of these gifts. Probably, a constant need!

Romans 12:7 : Or [personal] ministry, let us occupy ourselves in our ministering [to the needs of the saints]--God graciously places this word "ministering" [diakonia(G1248)] between prophesying and teaching. In Acts 6 we have the word twice, applied first to physical things: "the daily ministration" (of food to the widows); and second to spiritual things: "We will continue . . . in the ministry of the Word." But here in Romans Twelve, its being placed as it is, indicates that those who, like the house of Stephanas, in 1 Corinthians 16:15, minister to the saints' material needs, should set themselves to such ministering. It is the whole-hearted exercise of this gift, when it is given, that is urged by the apostle. Perhaps there is no gift so liable to lapse into haphazard exercise, as this Christ-like gift! Or he that teacheth, to his teaching--Proper Christian teaching is not mere "Bible study"; but, first of all, clear explanation direct to believers' hearts, of Christ's work for us, and of the Pauline Epistles that directly concern the Church of God as the Body of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, one with Him. Proper teaching would see that the saints become familiar with the wonders of the Old Testament, and love it. The prophecies, both of the Old Testament and of the book of The Revelation should also be taught, remembering that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"; and that every true Christian teacher should be able to say: "It was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him" (Galatians 1:16); "that in all things Christ might have the preeminence"; "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." This is the kind of work that was done by Priscilla and Aquila, when they had heard Apollos in the Ephesian synagogue: "They took him unto them, and expounded unto him the Way of God more accurately." It is being done whenever one who knows the truth really brings another into it. Oh, for more such teaching! We leave so much unapplied,--so much that the dear saints never really enter into! [249]

[249] Many years ago, at the Keswick Convention, in England, I was returning, about seven o'clock, from an early morning walk. I passed the "Drill Hall," and down came MacGregor (G.H.C.) and greeted me. I said, "Your face looks pale; are you not well?" "Oh yes,--only a bit weary," said he. Then, by questioning further, I found he had just then finished with the last case left from the previous night's meeting! That was teaching indeed. He had patiently labored all night long to expound to one after another "the Way of God more perfectly!" It is our privilege just now to have beneath our roof a beloved sister in her eighty-fourth year whose energies for over forty years have been constantly used in teaching others. Although having to support herself by public school teaching, yet with a steadfastness that is deeply touching, one thing she does with every one with whom she comes in contact: she teaches each the gospel. Many people, and even preachers, have come to her for instruction, even when she was confined to her bed in sickness or infirmity. There they sat patiently listening to her words concerning Christ. Her great passion is to "make all men see" Paul's wonderful explanation of our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. [Later: Alas for us,--not for her! our beloved Mrs. S---- has gone triumphantly Home!]

Romans 12:8 : Or he that exhorteth, to his exhortation--The gift of exhortation is distinct from that of. teaching (though both may be found in the same person). Exhortation is an appeal to the will; teaching, to the mind. Exhortation is a precious gift--invaluable! whereby the Holy Spirit directly persuades the hearing heart into obedience to the truth which it has heard. A true exhorter, also, must be walking the path he calls others to follow!

He that giveth, with singleness [of heart toward God]--The literal meaning of giving here is that of imparting, of sharing our substance with others; and the manner of such giving is to be without

secret reluctance, for "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7); also without false pretense, such as Ananias and Sapphira had; finally, with an eye single to God. In fact, in Ephesians 6:5 this same word "singleness" is used in the phrase "in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ."

He that ruleth, with diligence--Ruling is first a gift, then an office, like those of elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:4; 1 Timothy 3:12), who must, of course, first "rule well their own house." Just as prophesying, teaching, and exhorting were gifts by the Spirit; and as giving is a grace given of God (2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 2 Corinthians 8:7); so the work of elders and deacons were offices: "If a man seek the office of a bishop"--or overseer: called also "elder," as see Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28;--as being more matured in Christian faith and experience; while the term "bishop" or "overseer" designates the duties of the office--to oversee). Dean Alford objects to interpreting "ruleth" here (Romans 12:8) of rulership in the Church, saying, (as a true churchman would), "It is hardly likely that the rulers of the Church, as such, would be introduced so low down in the list, or by so general a term, as this!" But in the enumeration of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28, we have this order: "Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps"; and then, "governments," next to the last term in the list! Of course man, who glories in office, would want this order changed.

Gifts were a direct bestowment (charisma(G5486)) of the Spirit; moreover, they were general, while the "rulers" were confined to their own assemblies. Prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11) were that wherever they were; but an elder or deacon held his own office in his own assembly only. The ruler was to attend, with constant diligence, to his work; not, indeed, "lording it over" the Lord’s heritage, but according to Peter’s direction: "The elders among you I exhort . . . tend the flock of God which is among you" (that was their business--to take care of the Lord’s sheep in the assembly where they were), "exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly." They were to watch; to be ready at any sacrifice of personal comfort to look after needy sheep: "nor yet for filthy lucre." (They were not to have money in mind, although elders that "ruled well" were to be "counted worthy of double honor," especially if they were able to instruct in the Word; God would look after their financial needs): "neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock."

Truth to tell, Christ’s sheep are ill-tended these days! they are "scattered upon the mountains." Elders that "rule well," with humble diligence, day and night, are desperately needed. Every believer has a right to the consciousness of being personally shepherded by Divinely raised-up elders; and cared for even in material things by faithful deacons. "And when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested," the rulers who have ruled with godly diligence shall receive a crown of glory! (1 Peter 5:1-4.) Concerning false shepherds, see the awful words of Jeremiah 23:1-4, Ezekiel 34:1-31 --the whole chapter! and Isaiah 56:10-12. (These chapters make us tremble!)

He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness--Showing mercy is of course the bounden duty of those to whom God has shown mercy. But mercy toward others may be shown with the long, sombre face of one driven by a duty in which he is not happy. Yet the joyfulness of spirit in which one helps another is often of more real blessing than the help itself. Godet well remarks, with many others, that the words "he that showeth mercy" denote the believer who feels called to devote himself to the visiting of the sick and afflicted. There is a gift of sympathy which particularly fits for this sort of work, and which is, as it were, the key to open the heart of the sufferer. The phrase "with cheerfulness" literally reads in hilarity!

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another; 11 in diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 communicating to the necessities of the saints; pursuing hospitality. 14 Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not. 15 Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them. that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Set not your mind on high things, but be carried away with things that are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17 Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible,--as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. 19 Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath [of God]: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. 20 But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:9 : Let love be without hypocrisy--The world is full of effusive expressions of affection,--and so, we fear, are many professing Christians--without real love in the heart: "Talking cream and living skim milk," as Mr. Moody phrased it. "Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). Abhor that which is evil--This is impossible to the unregenerate, and only intermittently possible for the carnal Christian; but to one who has obeyed the first two verses of this chapter and surrendered to God, it is a holy instinct! "Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil" (Psalms 97:10). To be a good Christian, a man must be a good hater! Cleave to that which is good--Here is not only the negative, the abhorrence of evil; but the positive, the discerning and holding fast that which is good. As Paul says in Php 4:8 : "Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, [in a person] take account of these things." Trust the anointing which you have received (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27) for discernment; and trust the study of the Word of God, to teach you what is really good.

Romans 12:10 : In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another--Of course all Christians "love the brethren" --that is a sign of spiritual life (1 John 3:14). But to be tenderly affectioned--how few are! "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Beloved, are we willing to be made tender? It is God’s will for all believers. In honor preferring one another--How beautiful a grace! Really to prefer from your heart other believers before yourself, to be glad when others are honored above you. [250] Farrar well renders, "Love the brethren in the faith, as though they were brothers in blood." Vincent prefers the A.V. rendering, "kindly affectioned," perhaps properly, since our word kind was originally kinned, and "kindly affectioned" is, having the affection of kindred!

[250] For "love of the brethren," and "tenderly affectioned" there are two beautiful records in the Greek: philadelphia(G5360), and philostorgos(G5387), the latter used of the closest family ties.

Romans 12:11 : In zeal not sluggish--The words have no reference whatever to worldly "business" or affairs, but wholly to spiritual matters. Luther renders, "In regard to zeal, be not lazy," which is the meaning. Alford renders, "In zeal not remiss,"--saying, "Not business", as in the Old Version, which seems to refer it to the affairs of this life; whereas, it relates as in all these verses (Romans

12:11-13), to Christian duties as such." Satan would use the doctrine of grace, or the assurance of faith, to settle down believers into spiritual slothfulness. Watch against that. Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord--The word translated "fervent" (used of Apollos in Acts 18:25), means ardent, or burning. Be ardent in spirit in our Lord's service. It is the opposite of dignified, cold, unemotional. Christ has loved us with infinite fervency. Let us serve Him in the same spirit.

Romans 12:12 : In hope rejoicing--Our hopes are bound up with our Lord's coming, in prospect of which we should constantly be filled with exultation. In tribulation remaining patient--Patience in trial is the only path to our perfecting; wherefore James says we should count "manifold trials to be all joy"; and, "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." In prayer steadfastly continuing--So did the early Christians (Acts 2:42; Acts 2:46-47; Acts 6:4; Acts 12:5; Acts 12:12). But do not forget to watch expectantly, and to give thanks in your prayers. (Colossians 4:2.) Ten will attend Bible teaching, and one hundred Sunday preaching, to two or three who "in prayer steadfastly continue": but be thou of that two or three; for they prevail, and to them Christ reveals Himself; and they become channels of blessing to countless others.

Romans 12:13 : To the needs of the saints contributing--"So to make another's necessities one's own as to relieve them." When you obey this injunction and begin wisely to inquire about the saints' needs, you will be astonished at two things: first, at the actual pressing necessities of many saints all about you; and second, at the way God will supply your own necessities as you minister to them. When the Holy Spirit took complete possession of the early Church, "Not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common"; with the result that "neither was there among them any that lacked." Now this shows the basal spirit of Christian giving. It is not "saying in our hearts" that what we have is "our own," but holding all in stewardship to the Lord, ready to be ministered, as He shall direct. It is true that Paul, in his epistles, which give the constitution of the Church of God, does not direct those that are rich in this world's goods to "sell all that they have"; but to "do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." This passage (1 Timothy 6:17-19) should be most carefully regarded as at once the Divine protection against the awful "community of goods" of socialism and communism, because the Bible teaches constantly the rights of personal, private property; and also as the foundation principle of our giving.

Pursuing hospitality--Here the word for hospitality is literally love to strangers, "stranger-loving," and the translation "given to" is not strong enough. In its forty or fifty occurrences in the New Testament, this word is very frequently translated "pursuing," which is the literal meaning. You have it three times in Php 3:1-21 : in Php 3:6, "persecuting the church"; in Php 3:12, "I follow after"; and in Php 3:14, "I press on" The meaning here, then, is, pursuing hospitality,--persecuting folks, even strangers, with kindness! What a wonderful testimony of love, hearty obedience to this simple exhortation to pursue hospitality would be! We have in Hebrews 13:1-25 three uses of this Greek root phil (meaning love): (1) "Let love of the brethren (philadelphia(G5360)) continue"; (2) "Forget not to show love unto strangers" (philoxenia(G5382)); and, (3) in Hebrews 13:5, "Be free from silver-loving" (philarguros(G5366)). If you are tempted to philarguros, philadelphia and philoxenia will cure you! "Given to hospitality," then, means far more than being "willing to entertain" those who may call on you. It indicates going after this business, pursuing it, following it up! The Lord will reward some day even a cup of cold water given in His Name. Let us make "Strangers' Inns" of our homes. We are not staying here long. And the Lord may send "angels"

around when we least expect! "Forget not to show love unto strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." [251]

[251] I doubt if the reference in "unawares" is to Abraham in Genesis 18:1-33 for he at once recognized the Lord, and knew His attendants. The statement seems rather an absolute one of inspiration, involving such a possibility for any of us! Of course it is taken for granted in all these exhortations that we have presented our bodies to God according to the opening verses of the Chapter; and thus by the indwelling Holy Ghost are enabled to walk in His revealed will, as those could not who were under law.

Romans 12:14 : Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not--Here is a verse that needs no comment, in view of our Lord's words of Luke 6:27-28 : "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you"; and of His blessed example. But note, in our present verse it is not mere outward blessing that is commanded, but refraining from inward reservations, or private expressions, for sometimes we speak sweetly to opposers, but our after words prove that we did not allow our hearts to go out in love to those enemies. And by the way, do not stumble if you find other Christians speaking ill of you, even persecuting you. Bless them, too!

Romans 12:15 : Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep--Now here is a verse that takes us out of ourselves. The literal rendering is, Rejoice with rejoicing ones, and weep with weeping ones. Believers, of course, are especially meant in both cases. There will always be some that are weeping. Blessed is he who, like the Lord at Lazarus' grave, can enter into others' sorrow even unto tears!

"Alas, there is such a phenomenon, not altogether rare, as a life whose self-surrender, in some main aspects, cannot be doubted, but which utterly fails in sympathy. A certain spiritual exaltation is allowed actually to harden, or at least to seem to harden, the consecrated heart; and the man who perhaps witnesses for God with a prophet's ardor is yet not one to whom the mourner would go for tears and prayers in his bereavement, or the child for a perfectly human smile in his play. As to the Lord Himself, the little child, the wistful parent, the widow with her mite, the poor fallen woman of the street, could lead away his blessed sympathies with a touch"--Moule.

Romans 12:16 : Minding the same thing one toward another--Let us quote several comments by beloved writers: "Be of one mind amongst yourselves"--Conybeare. "The harmony which proceeds from a common object, common hopes and common desires"--Sanday. "The loving harmony when each in respect to his neighbor has one thought and endeavor"--Meyer. "Aspiring after the same aims, aiming at the same object for one another as for ourselves. Having the same solicitude for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the brother as for one's own"--Godet. "Actuated by a common and well-understood feeling of mutual allowance and kindness"--Alford. Evidently the reference is not to uniformity of thought, but to charity of attitude. Not minding high things, but being carried away along with the lowly-- Romans 12:16 is in close connection with the spirit of Romans 12:15. It is the spirit of Php 2:2-5 : "Be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind [not of one opinion, but one heart-intent]; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "High things" are a continual temptation. Carefully read here the

excellent remarks of Godet: "There frequently forms in the congregations of believers an aristocratic tendency, every one striving by means of the Christian brotherhood to associate with those who, by their gifts or fortune, occupy a higher position. Hence small coteries, animated by a proud spirit, and having for their result chilling exclusiveness. The apostle knows these littlenesses and wishes to prevent them; he recommends the members of the church to attach themselves to all alike, and if they will yield to a preference, to show it rather for the humble." Lay these words well to heart. They are continually needed. The word rendered "carried away with" really means the opposite of its King James rendering "condescend to." The idea of one pardoned sinner's thinking of "condescending" to another! The word really means "to be carried away along with," as has been every Bernard, Assisi, Luther, Zinzendorf, Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Moody. All the saints filled with the Spirit have found themselves among the lowly of this earth. For that matter, there is not, and never has been, a real assembly of God of wealthy upper class people only! "Not many mighty, not many noble are called." The rich have to come where the poor are to hear the gospel. Once received, the gospel of Christ is the blessed and only real leveler of us all. Beware always of any "religious" movement cultivating the rich! Be not wise in your own conceits--Paul in Romans 11:25 used exactly the same expression, warning us as Gentile believers of the danger of being "wise in our own conceits." This searching expression, "wise in one's own eyes," or "conceit," occurs five times in the Old Testament, and two here in Romans,--seven in all. Of such a one, Solomon says, "There is more hope of a fool than of him." He is first cousin to the sluggard, and to a blind rich man; and all of these are related to "them that know not God." See Proverbs 26:5; Proverbs 26:12; Proverbs 26:16; Proverbs 28:11; Proverbs 3:7. The self-conceited are not among those who are "weeping with them that weep."

Romans 12:17 : Render to no man evil for evil--This takes for granted that some will do you evil. Satan and the world hate God's saints who walk with Him; and will do them all permitted evil. Now do not lay it up against the doer, if evil has been done you. Alas, some real believers are thoughtless; some jealous, some envious, some possibly even spiteful. Put far away the expectation of "getting even" with anybody. "If any man have"--really have--"a complaint against any, even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13). The Lord forgets, as well as forgives! (Hebrews 8:12).

Taking care by forethought for comely [or seemly] things before every one (literally, all men,--whether Christians or not)--"Before the eyes of all men taking care for what is good" (Meyer). This exhortation has no special reference to "making provision for ourselves or our families in an honest manner," as some have thought (from the Old Version). It means to take careful forethought for such a course of Christian behavior ("honorable things") as will commend itself to all--whether Christians or not. We forget, most of us, thus to view our lives as a whole, day by day, detecting and rejecting whatever in ourselves others might criticize as not honorable.

Romans 12:18 : If it be possible--as much as in you lieth--be at peace with all men--Paul himself did cause trouble everywhere, as did our Lord, who said, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." But neither Paul nor his Lord was ever the selfish cause of trouble. It is not always possible for a Christian to be at peace with all men, but he can be a peace-lover; a peace-liver; and often a peace-maker, among men. As James says, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace." Perhaps the most fruitful cause of trouble for a Christian is his claiming "his rights," forgetting Paul's description of us Christians

throughout this dispensation:

"For Thy sake we are killed all the day long;

We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter." [252]

[252] One who had visited the Chicago stock yards on a slaughter-day said to me, "Our guide took us to where the swine were being slaughtered. Here there was squealing and grunting everywhere, and the moment the men laid hold of one for slaughter, it gave a wild shriek, and the uproar was terrible. By and by we approached another building and heard no sounds; and we found that here the sheep were being slaughtered, without complaining--in silence!"

Romans 12:19 : Avenge not yourselves, beloved; but give place unto the [coming] wrath [of God]--Believers are here seen sorely tempted to seek to bring about by their own hand that righting of matters which belongs to God only. The motto of Scotland, "Nemo me impune lacessit"--"No one treads on me unpunished!"--applies to man in the flesh throughout the world. Note Paul's word, "Give place unto the wrath,"--to the coming wrath of God in the day of wrath, of Romans 2:5. As for "the wrath of man," we know it "worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). Oh, how hard, yea, how impossible, for those who have not yielded their bodies a living sacrifice to God, to leave the visitation of wrath wholly in God's hand! For it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord--Let us not dare seek to steal from God what He so distinctly asserts to be His province alone,--vengeance, [253] --the dealing out just desert to evil action.

[253] Quaint old John Trapp says: "In reason, revenge is but justice; Aristotle commends it. The world calls it manhood; it is doghood, rather!"

God's "vengeance" must require that infinite knowledge of conditions, of motives, of results upon others, which God, the just Judge, alone possesses. And He has faithfully promised to "recompense." The Greek of this word is startling: it means to pay back, personally and accurately. Both Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30 quote the passage in Deuteronomy 32:35 which prophesies the coming vengeance of God. The word is also used in 2 Thessalonians 1:6. In these shallow, sinful days, men have forgotten that there is a day of reckoning; but the saints must not forget. "Forestall not God's wrath," says Meyer, "by personal revenge, but let it have its course and its sway. The morality of this precept is based on the holiness of God. Hence, so far as wrath and love are the two poles of holiness, it does not exclude the blessing of our adversaries and intercession for them."

Romans 12:20 : But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head--Here are specific directions for active love toward an enemy,--praying for him meanwhile, as Christ commanded: "Bless them that persecute you, pray for them that despitefully use you." There is no more terrible danger than that of cherished revenge; and nothing marks out so blazingly a Christian path as love toward a foe. The Indians who inhabited America when the white man came, hated one another, tribe against tribe. The war paint, the warpath, the tomahawk, the scalp lock,--and pride in it all! was the hell-mark wherewith Satan branded these poor heathen,--and where are they today? No less devilish are the ghastly family "feuds" in certain parts of America. No less significant is the kind of man admired in some regions: "He won't take a word from anybody"; "He'll fight at the drop of the hat," and the like.

Now the promise is most striking indeed, that in a deed of kindness to an enemy we shall "heap coals of fire upon his head." Of course, as always, when the literal statements of God's judgment are made, we are apt to shrink in timidity and unbelief, and seek to evade the actualities. But remember exactly what we are dealing with: we are asked to step aside from self-avenging, and "give place" to God's coming vengeance and recompense. Of course, we continue loving our enemies and praying for them, hoping they may repent. Thus we are sharing the feeling of God Himself, who "takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and would have all men to be saved." Nevertheless, we know in our hearts that many will refuse Divine mercy, and go on to that day of vengeance. And what do we read in the Scriptures about "coals of fire" at that time?

Let burning coals fall upon them;

Let them be cast into the fire, Into deep pits, whence they shall not rise (Psalms 140:10).

Upon the wicked He will rain snares;

Fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup (Psalms 11:6).

It is a trifling exposition that would make the "coals of fire" of Romans 12:20, quoted from Proverbs 25:21-22, a mere figure--and meaning, really, nothing! The knowledge and constant remembrance by the saints of the coming literal doom of the wicked, is both a deep incentive to a holy walk, and a strong motive for loving and praying for them. But let us not forget that the more we are "a sweet savor of Christ unto God" as we preach the gospel, the more we become "a savor from death unto death in them that are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Paul significantly, just here, adds the words: "And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as the many, corrupting the Word of God" (2 Corinthians 2:17). Our Lord Himself said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin." It is a fearful thought that in our kindness to enemies--enemies of our Lord and of ourselves for the gospel's sake, we may be increasing their doom: but the responsibility is theirs; the obedient kindness, ours!

Romans 12:21 : Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good--"Evil" here directly connects itself with that hatefulness in others of Romans 12:20; but it also includes all the evil in the world, through which the Christian walks as a stranger and a pilgrim. This plan of setting forth a positive path of "good" before His saints, instead of a mere negative "Thou shalt not," is the constant way of God in grace. Compare, "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need" (Ephesians 4:28). It is not merely, Stop stealing; but, Begin giving! Just as in the following verse of Ephesians we read: "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear." Merely to stop doing wrong things will finally make a monk out of you; doing good, will put you in Paul's company. No one is "overcoming" in the sense of Romans 12:12, save those whose time is filled with good: praise, prayer, and thanksgiving towards God; and loving ministry towards men!

"There is a faith unmixed with doubt, A love all free from fear; A walk with Jesus, where is felt His presence always near.

There is a rest that God bestows, Transcending pardon's peace, A lowly, sweet simplicity, Where inward conflicts cease.

"There is a service God-inspired, A zeal that tireless grows, Where self is crucified with Christ, And joy unceasing flows.

There is a being right with God,’ That yields to His commands Unswerving, true fidelity, A loyalty that stands."

02.25. Chapter 13

CHAPTER 13 Subjection to Rulers, as Ordained of God. Romans 13:1-7. No Debt but Love: What that Achieves! Romans 13:8-10.

Awake! Christ's Coming Nears! Put on Christ Now! Romans 13:11-14.

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the authorities in power. For there is no authority save from God; and those that exist are put in place by God. 2 Therefore he that sets himself against the authority, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and those [thus] withstanding shall receive for themselves judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the authority? Practice that which is good and thou shalt have praise from the same. 4 For it is God's servant to thee for good. But if thou dost practice that which is evil, be afraid! For not in vain doth it bear the sword! For God's minister it is, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.5 Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6 For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very matter. 7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute [is due]; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

WE HAVE HERE a passage of great importance in these lawless days!

Romans 13:1 : Let every soul be in subjection to the authorities in power [or, the constituted authorities]. For there is no authority but from God; and those that exist are put in, place by God.

Every soul here, of course, means every believer: this Epistle is addressed only to believers (see Romans 1:1-8). The authorities in power are the civil authorities ordained of God into whose hands God has committed external human government. (We say external, as opposed to inward, spiritual, which lies outside Caesar's province.) To be in subjection to the higher powers, means to render them their due respect and obedience according to Romans 13:7 : tribute to whom tribute, etc.

There is great necessity at this hour to emphasize to all Christians this solemn exhortation of the apostle. Lawlessness,-- contempt for authority--is upon us like a flood. This lawlessness (anomia(G458)) is the essence of sin. We have already called attention to the fact that the Old Version translation of 1 John 3:4 : "Sin is the transgression of the Law," is wholly astray. Not parabasis(G3847), transgression; nor paraptoma(G3900), offense; but a much deeper word, anomia,--literally, lawlessness: the spirit of refusing control,--this does God define as sin! Sin was in the world 2500 years before the Law. Already existing sin caused the Law's "Thou shalt not." Lawlessness is behind and below all law-breaking! That the lawlessness of the last days is coming upon us, we see everywhere! In the contempt of treaty obligations on the part of nations; in the disregard for old-time honesty in private contracts; in the "breaking loose" of "flaming youth" from parental restraint, and the rush to "expressionism," whether in school "dramatics" or in disdain of "old fogy" morals; in the calling the sin of lasciviousness and adultery by "modern" names,--such as "petting," "sex-experience"; in the flood of murder magazines and "mystery" novels; in the

unwillingness of the public to have crime really punished,--showing public sympathy with sin!

It is because of this latter that law-enforcement breaks down. For, on the whole, judges, prosecuting attorneys, sheriffs, and police, would have criminals dealt with firmly: but the "technicalities" of legal procedure are seized upon by evil, unscrupulous men to defeat law. And who would be so foolish as to claim that things could be so if the entire community were, in their hearts, righteously abhorrent toward all law-breaking?

Perhaps the most glaring of all instances of last-days lawlessness, is the tolerance of Red Communism. We do not now speak of Russia; but of the fact that Communistic doctrines (which openly declare war upon all Divinely appointed order) are held,--even by professing Christians! in England, the United States, Canada, and all over the world. You have no more right to "sit down" upon another's property, against his will, than any common thief has to enter your home to plunder! God's Word defends the rights of property, just as the right to life. "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not kill," are in the same code of law. Christians need to read and heed Matthew 20:1-15. The "householder" there "agrees" with the "laborers": these had the right to sell their labor at an "agreed" price; while he had the right to decide what he could profitably pay them, and "agree" to pay it. And he recognizes what they had earned as theirs: "Take up that which is thine, and go thy way" (Matthew 20:14). But as concerning that which was his, and which they had not earned, he says, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" He paid them what they had earned, and sent them off his property! Now Christ gave this lesson! And He calls the eye "evil" (Matthew 20:15) that would covet what it had not earned! No wonder Marx and Lenin and the Communists hate the Bible! It convicts them of covetousness and thievery! Read Matthew 20:1-15 again; and see what you think our Lord would have said of those laborers, if they had "sat down" in that vineyard, claiming, "It really belongs to us, the workers'; and we will not move until this householder raises our wages to what we ask!" You see, the only way for Communism to exist, is to destroy all hold of the Bible on men! Communism is the devil's opium for a people willing to let go the Word of God!

Let Christians beware of the specious lies of all movements of force ("direct action," the Reds call it!) to right the wrongs of this present world. There are wrongs, as James tells us (James 5:1-6), but the Christian is told to be "patient until the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7-8). Pray and wait. Things will get worse and worse, until "violence fills the earth," as in "the days of Noah." But God will deliver you--if you trust Him, and do not put forth your hand with "violent men." I pray you, read Proverbs 1:10-15, where you have a vivid picture of all the "share the wealth" movements! Let the Lord's people avoid them as the very plague! If, instead of "godliness with contentment," earthliness and covetousness seize your heart, you are really setting in on Lenin's and Stalin's path--which ends in hell! and makes a land a bloody horror meanwhile. The "restlessness" of today is really that deep "lawlessness" which God calls sin: "SIN IS LAWLESSNESS!" The Man of Sin is called "the lawless one" in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8, where we are told that "the mystery of lawlessness" is already working, but that there is One (the Holy Spirit, we believe), that "restraineth now" until He be "taken out of the way." "And then shall be revealed the lawless one." This is the coming Antichrist.

Now since God's saints know that lawlessness and violence, lust and covetousness, are characteristic of the last days, and know from Daniel's prophetic interpretation of the Great Image

Nebuchadnezzar saw, that we must be nearing the time of the end of the age, how peculiarly needful that we all lay to heart these instructions concerning magistrates!

Magistrates are put in place, set up, or ordained, of God. Never mind if they are bad ones, the word still stands, "There is no power but of God." Remember your Savior suffered under Pontius Pilate, one of the worst Roman governors Judea ever had; and Paul under Nero, the worst Roman Emperor. And neither our Lord nor His Apostle denied or reviled the "authority!" The authority is called a servant (diakonos(G1249)) of God to us for good (Romans 13:4): and those exercising this authority, are called ministers (leitourgoi(G3011)) of God for good: He [the power or authority set up by God] is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil (Romans 13:4 and again in Romans 13:6). Against the evil-worker, the ruler is an avenger for wrath, not bearing a vain sword like some lodge officer on parade, but bearing a sword given to him by the covenant of Genesis Nine,--a sword with, necessarily, the death penalty wrapped up in it, to be exercised when necessary: "Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed," God said to Noah, when He lodged governmental authority in human hands. For the support of this governmental work, we pay "tribute"; for They are God’s ministering officers, attending continually upon this very thing (Romans 13:6).

Thus there is in this passage to be considered, the governmental authority as an abstract thing established by God; and then the personal ruler’s exercising his rights and duties under the authority. God established human government, and then appointed certain men to administer it.

Romans 13:2 : Therefore he that sets himself against the authority, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and those [thus] withstanding, shall receive to themselves judgment.

It is only in spiritual matters--"things that are God’s"-- that "to obey God rather than men" is our path. The things pertaining to God are those that concern our obedience to our confession of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,--that is, all matters of our Christian conscience. Caesar has no right to touch my conscience. If I yield to him there, I am a traitor to the truth. We should emulate the old martyrs here, and even those who are suffering for the truth under Caesar’s wickedness in our own day: for instance, under pagan Hitlerism in Germany, or atheist communism in Russia, where, often, the most noble witnesses of Christ are found. But, as to our persons and our property and our lives, that is, as regards earthly things, we are subject to the powers that God has put in place or ordained; and should not "withstand" them. Those who do so withstand, will bring on themselves guilt and Divine chastening. The Christian, above all men, should be in quiet subjection to constituted authority.

Romans 13:3 : For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the authority? Keep practicing that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same. This is the rule in general. Of course, Satan will stir up special trouble against those who are proclaiming the gospel, which he desperately hates; as he stirred up unjust accusation and persecution against the apostles and the Lord Himself. Also, "the will of God may so will," that some may suffer for well-doing (1 Peter 3:17). This whole passage, however, regards the general path of the believer with reference to Divinely constituted authorities; rather than the peculiar enmity of Satan and the world toward the message of the gospel. Every Christian, in his life, should be praiseworthy in the eyes of rulers, and, if consistent, he generally is so.

William Kelly well says: " Authorities in power' is an expression that embraces every form of governing power, monarchical, aristocratic, or republican. All cavil on this score is therefore foreclosed. The Spirit insists not merely on the Divine right of kings, but that there is no authority except from God.' Nor is there an excuse on this plea for change; yet if a revolution should overthrow one form and set up another, the Christian's duty is plain: those that exist are ordained by God.' His interests are elsewhere, are heavenly, are in Christ; his responsibility is to acknowledge what is in power as a fact, trusting God as to the consequences, and in no case behaving as a partisan. Never is he warranted in setting himself up against the authority as such." [254]

[254] In those cases where Christians have been able to withdraw from intolerable situations, this rule is in no wise broken. The Huguenots fled from France to England, and the Puritans from England to America, for freedom of conscience,--much as the Lord said, "If they persecute you in one city, flee to another." Escape is sometimes possible, and is not rebellion.

Romans 13:4 : For it [the authority] is a servant of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for not in vain does it bear the sword. To "bear" is, literally, to bear constantly, illustrated in the provincial Roman magistrates' habitual wearing of the sword. It was also borne before them, in public processions, as a symbol of their right to punish by death. This is in accordance with God's covenant with Noah, after the Flood, which covenant remains in force: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Those who decry "capital punishment," are themselves withstanding the Word of God as to the very foundation of human government. For a minister of God it is! an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

There are people in every community who live in constant terror of government, because of their evil-doing. Let no Christian be in such a position! You say, would the magistrate have a right to deal with a real Christian, if he became an evil-doer? Most certainly; and would be bound to do so. Peter says: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other man's matters," showing that Christians as such, have no protection from human law. But Peter's exhortation has not kept some true Christians out of these things; insomuch, indeed, that God's established government on earth would not or should not permit them to go unpunished here, (if murder or crime had been done); although the blood of Christ was their entrance into Heaven!

Romans 13:5 : Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection,--not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Believers are to be in subjection, not only to avoid earthly governmental dealing, but because of a loving conscience toward God,--knowing that in being subject, they are doing right, as well as avoiding trouble. The constituted authorities include all the civil officers, state, county, and municipal; together with the police, militia, and military forces. There are many indeed in these foolish days who call themselves "pacifists," and decry the work and office of the soldier. Yet we believe they would with alacrity telephone for the police if they found marauders breaking into their houses! Police protect towns and cities. State constabulary and militia, under the hand of the governor, protect life, liberty, and order in the state; and a national army does likewise for the nation.

It is God who has allowed the formation and growth of nations, and given them "the bounds of their habitations"; and the "authorities" who govern them do so by Divine command. They "bear the sword,"--whether for order within the nation, or for defense toward an outward enemy. Therefore it is folly to call the work of a soldier evil, and to confuse personal murder with the public execution of justice. When "soldiers on service" (Luke 3:14, margin), asked John the Baptist: "And we, what must we do"? his answer was not, Resign your commissions, or Leave the army. On the contrary he recognized their work as honorable, saying to them only: "Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse anyone wrongfully; and be content with your wages" (generally, with soldiers, small enough!)

Cornelius, the centurion of Acts 10, "a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always," heard the gospel at Peter's mouth and believed it, and was filled with the Holy Spirit; and he kept right on being a soldier, a minister of God's service along the line of government. Such men as General Havelock, General "Chinese" Gordon of the British Army; General O. O. Howard and General "Stonewall" Jackson, of American Civil War fame; and General Allenby, in the World War, have performed nobly and ably their soldier's duty,--the while maintaining a Christian's walk with God. [255]

[255] Pacifists and "Internationalists" are (sometimes doubtless ignorantly) deadly enemies of God's order. It is a cowardly and a decadent generation that is willing to enjoy a heritage purchased at the cost of blood and tears, and then with an ignorant or basely perverted conscience say, "I do not believe in war or in fighting,"--a generation ignorant, first, of the very Scripture we are now studying, which tells us that magistrates, bearing no vain swords, are ministers of God; ignorant, second, of the lessons of history.

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates, and men decay." Effeminacy, dilettantism, and loss of patriotism, have always gone together. The hordes of barbarians from the North came down on a Rome enfeebled by luxury and hideous sin, and we know the result! Today America is filling up with the same sort of moral weaklings! We abhor war; but war there will be. We say to pacifists": Study the Scriptures and history, and be awakened from a fool's dream of unrealities. To those "conscientiously objecting" to bearing arms, we say: Study God's Word here in Romans 13. The magistrates, the rulers, are ministers of God, bearing not the sword in vain." Pacifist principles are doomed to defeat, for they are anti-Scriptural. You ask me, Would you fight? If called to military service by my government, I should answer that my ministry is preaching God's gospel of grace; but that I should gladly go to the battle front, and be placed in any position of danger, and should minister the gospel even to an active enemy, or to a prisoner from the enemy's ranks, with the same earnestness which I should hope to show toward men of my own country. On the other hand, I should abhor even the thought of divulging my country's secrets to my country's enemy. This would be rebuked by God Himself, who established nations, and gave them the duty of protecting their citizens and their borders. Strange dupes are American "pacifists" and "internationalists!" Christians who desire to know the conditions of the age, and how rapidly "The iniquity of the end" is rushing toward us should read pages 68 to 140 of A. C. Gaebelein's Conflict of the Ages. While we are not to be perplexed by the terrible things happening in the world: for the Lord said, "When ye hear of wars and rumors of wars see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must needs come to pass." Nevertheless, we should not be as the leaders of Israel--blind to the days in which they lived. All these new forms of power--Communism,

Facism, Naziism; and also the subtle powers of evil working in America are preparing the way for the Antichrist. Several easily procurable books, such as Tainted Contacts by Col. E. N. Sanctuary; The Red Network, by Elizabeth Dilling; and Pastors, Politicians, and Pacifists, by L. F. Smith and E. B. Johns, expose the poison of this "deadly white snake," pacifism; and should be in the possession of every believer. In parallel columns on pages 100 to 107, in Tainted Contacts, Communists, Socialists, Internationalists, and Pacifists, are shown to be bed-fellows of common aims. The "Federal Council of Churches," (perhaps the most insidiously serpentine in its operations of any organization in America) is seen to be hand-in-glove with all these evil influences. Again we say, Read the Scriptures, and re-read them! They alone enlighten, reprove, correct, instruct.

Romans 13:6 : For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God, attending continually upon this very matter.

Here the apostle uses the word from which we get "liturgy" (leitourgoi(G3009)) in describing these "authorities." God uses the same word in Hebrews 1:14 regarding the angels, calling them "ministering spirits"; and also concerning the "ministering" of the Old Testament priests (Hebrews 10:11). In these days of restlessness toward restraint, and flouting of authority, we need to meditate much on the fact that the constituted authorities are liturgists of God: not indeed at all in spiritual things, but none the less God’s own ministers in governmental things. It is on this account that those governed pay tribute; for these ministers of government must be supported.

Romans 13:7 : Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute [is due]; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Here "tribute" (taxes) comes first. How great the temptation to avoid rendering this that is due! Next, "custom"; "tribute" (pharos(G5411)) is generally a tax paid by subjects to a ruling nation (Luke 20:22); while custom (telos(G5056)) is a tax on us, or duty on our goods, by our own nation. Alas, how we loathe having the customs officers "go through" our effects! But let us remember that even customs are "dues," by God’s appointment. Fear to whom fear--"Fear" does not here designate terror, but (which removes terror) a conscientious regard for and awe of men in whose hands God has placed governmental authority,--whether police, magistrates, judges, governors, presidents, or kings. [256]

[256]"This ideal of the apostle neither confounds church and state, nor places them in antagonism, but properly co-ordinates them in Christian ethics. Romanism subordinates state to church; Erastianism [as today Fascism and Communism--W. R. N.], subordinates the church to the state, usually confounding them; Puritanism also confounded them, but with more of an acknowledged theocratic principle--Schaff and Riddle. We may add that the Reformation did not fully escape, in this respect, from Romanism and Judaism. Calvin established a theocratic state at Geneva, holding fast to civil powers in religious things, which led to the burning of Servetus! While Zwingli, in Switzerland, took the sword, and perished by it. We may further add that in our own day the perpetual meddling with governmental affairs carried on at various government centres by the church lobbies (I write in America) reveals that ignorance of the Church’s heavenly calling, and that vain hope to "mend" this present world, which so darkens the counsels of government itself, and increases daily that deep-seated resentment by the powers that be against those who claim spiritual directive authority over government. The upshot has always been and will always be

disastrous; for the State finally rises up and wades to independence of "religious" interference through rivers of blood!

Honor to whom honor--Honor is our attitude of reverence for the persons of those who have authority over us; as also toward those who stand in any place of earthly dignity. As Peter says so beautifully, "Honor all men [for they are made in the image of God]. Love the brotherhood [of saints]. Fear God [with whom you have constantly to do]. Honor the king" [whom you may never see, but whom you hold in due regard in your heart] (1 Peter 2:17). Not only law-officers, but those men to whom God has committed wealth, or outstanding ability; or who have risen honorably among their fellows, should receive the honor due them. Let Christians be first to give "honor to whom honor is due." Leave to the base the despising of others!

8 To none owe anything, except to love one another: for he that loveth the other hath fulfilled law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to one’s neighbor: love therefore is law’s fulness.

Romans 13:8-10 : To none owe anything, except to love one another--The word "owe" here is the verb of the noun "dues" in verse seven. The connection is direct: when you pay up all your dues, whether private debts or public, and have only this constant obligation before you,--to love one another, "Love must still remain the root and spring of all your actions; no other law is needed besides. Pay all other debts; be indebted in the matter of love alone." So Paul continues: For he that loveth the other hath fulfilled law. Notice carefully that it is love, and not law-doing which is the fulness (Greek, pleroma(G4138)) of law! The one who loves has (without being under it) exhibited what the Law sought! For the law said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; and lo, love has, from another principle, even love and grace, zealously wrought no ill to others. Love, therefore, is shown to be the fulness (not, "the fulfilling") of the law. It is only those not under law that are free to love others. Love, and not righteousness, is the active principle of Christianity. And lo, one loving, has wrought righteousness! Thus, only those not under law show its fulness. Of course, the believer is in a "new creation," and is to walk by that infinitely higher "rule of life" (Galatians 6:15-16), and not by the Law. Nevertheless, in loving he has fulfilled the lower law!

11 And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer to us than when we [first] believed. 12 The night is far spent, and the day is at hand! Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chamberings and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh,--do not make provision to fulfil its lusts!

Romans 13:11 : And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer to us than when we [first] believed. The hope of the imminency of our Lord’s coming, with the consummation of salvation in bodily redemption and glorification, is constantly used by the apostles in exhorting believers to a holy walk in love. This present verse sets before us the awful tendency to sink down (as did the ten virgins!) into slumber and sleep,--into a state of spiritual torpor in which no Christian duties are effectively done. Believers are to "know the season." Our Lord sternly arraigned the Jews of His day for their ignorance

concerning "the time"; "When ye see a cloud rising in the West, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass. And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"

There their Messiah was, in their midst, and they knew Him not! Why? Because they did not apply themselves to know the time they were in, although they could have known it, both from the prophetic Word which was being fulfilled before their eyes in Christ; and also "of their own selves," if they had set themselves to judge truly of the moral conditions about them and the necessities of action involved therein. If the Jews even then were called by our Lord "hypocrites," for applying their God-given discernment to the signs of the weather, and neglecting to apply it to spiritual things, and so going on blindly to judgment; how much more this should arouse us who have so much greater light and knowledge, in view of Christ's death and resurrection, and the presence of the Holy Spirit; and the certainty of our Lord's coming, and our uncertainty as to the day and hour!

Romans 13:12 : The night is far spent, and the day is at hand! Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us Put on the armor of light. As long as our Lord was on earth, He was the light of the world (John 9:5). Since He is gone, it is spiritual night. But He now says, "Ye [believers] are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Php 2:15-16). Of course, it was night for the human race from the moment Adam sinned; and deeper night, as sin increased. Our Lord's coming brought a brief day--a "day of visitation," and of actual blessing, if they received Him. His return to earth is spoken of as "the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings," when it will again be day! It is good to know, in our wrestling with "the principalities and powers, the world-rulers of this darkness," that the night is far spent, the day is at hand. The word translated at hand is from the verb to "draw nigh," as in Matthew 21:1. Paul uses it in Hebrews 10:25 : "So much the more as ye see the day approaching": and it is the same word in 1 Peter 4:7 : "The end of all things is at hand" (drawing nigh). No matter what others say about the second coming of Christ, the apostles and the early Church lived in the expectation of it! Read Dean Alford's excellent comment below: remembering that as an expositor of Scripture he is rightly held in the very highest regard with respect to scholarship, sanity, and honesty, as well as devotedness to God. [257]

[257] "A fair exegesis of this passage can hardly fail to recognize the fact that the Apostle here as well as elsewhere (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:51), speaks of the coming of the Lord as rapidly approaching. Prof. Stuart, (Comm. p. 521), is shocked at the idea, as being inconsistent with the inspiration of his writings. How this can be, I am at a loss to imagine. "OF THAT DAY AND HOUR KNOWETH NO MAN, NO NOT THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN, NOR THE SON: BUT THE FATHER ONLY" (Mark 13:32). And to reason, as Stuart does, that because Paul corrects in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, the mistake of imagining it to be actually come, he did not himself expect it soon, is surely quite beside the purpose. The fact that the nearness or distance of that day was unknown to the Apostles, in no way affects the prophetic announcements of God's Spirit by them, concerning its preceding and accompanying circumstances. The day and hour' formed no part of their inspiration:--the details of the event, did. And this distinction has singularly and providentially turned out to the edification of all subsequent ages. While the prophetic declarations of the events of that time remain to instruct us, the eager expectation of the time, which they expressed in their

day, has also remained, a token of the true frame of mind in which each succeeding age (a fortiori) should contemplate the ever-approaching coming of the Lord. On the certainty of the event, our faith is grounded: by the uncertainty of the time our hope is stimulated, and our watchfulness aroused."

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness--In Ephesians Five, after speaking of the "sons of disobedience," Paul says: Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye once were darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light. Now Paul had said the saints had put off the old man (when they were put into Christ). Now they are to put away, or cast off as not of their new life, all evil things. See Colossians 3:8-9;Hebrews 12:1,--for it is the same Greek word as the one there rendered "lay aside." The "works of darkness" are to be "put away," "cast off." And since "our old man was crucified with Christ," we see we can put them away! Let us put on the armor of light. This is a marvelous exhortation! Modern warfare has contemplated throwing upon the enemy mighty electric lights of such overwhelming brilliancy as to completely dazzle them. We all know how approaching automobile lights often blind us. In the remarkable passage of Luke 11:33-36, our Lord says: "If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining shall give thee light." This is the redeemed one whom Satan hates and fears,--one filled with light, armored with light. A blaze of light is harder to approach than swords or bullets. Our Christian armor, piece by piece, is described in Ephesians 6:11-18. But here it is more our "walking in the light, as God is in the light," that is in view. Since we are "light in the Lord," let us so walk and war!

Romans 13:13 : As those in the day, let us be walking becomingly --Men choose the night for their revels; but our night is past, for we are all "children of the light and of the day" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). Let us therefore do only what is fit for the light and for the day. We belong to that "day" which our Lord’s coming will usher in,--and that shortly! Therefore, let us walk as those already in the daylight of that day! Not in riotings and drunkennesses--Nocturnal revels such as characterized the Roman Empire of Paul’s day, and the myriad drunkennesses of modern "night parties," are in view here. How needful the warning to keep clear of these things in this hour when the time of "the iniquity of the end" (Ezekiel 21:25; Ezekiel 21:29) is drawing nigh! Young people, rushing on to damnation, with "dates" beginning at 10 or 11 or even midnight, and ending perhaps at dawn, know well what "revellings and drunkennesses" are. Let the saints in horror shun them! And the next things of the text follow these, as they have always followed them: Not in chamberings and wantonness--The word translated "chamberings" occurs three other times: Luke 11:7, Romans 9:10, Hebrews 13:4. Its being in the plural number here, and associated with the word generally rendered "lasciviousness," suggests its horrid meaning. Schaff and Riddle well say: "Various forms of secret vice are here indicated by the plural. These sins are closely connected with the preceding (revellings and drunkennesses), often caused by them. The word translated wantonness’ points to an abandoned sensuality." David said: "The floods of ungodliness (Heb. Belial(H1100)) made me afraid" (Psalms 18:4). So earth’s steadily increasing tide of Noah’s-day wickedness would terrify us, did we not know that the Lord is coming, to deliver His saints and to judge this very wickedness! Not in strife and jealousy--Brawls, troubles, "wounds without cause"; hatreds and jealousies, follow this train of self-indulgent sins. "Strife and jealousy," here, may also particularly indicate those strifes, envyings, and jealousies which so frequently remain not put away among believers: "Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven [that is, revellings and vices of the

world of the wicked], neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness," (1 Corinthians 5:8)--which, alas, Paul has to warn against over and over among Christians: "Whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3). "Put away anger, wrath, malice, railing" (Colossians 3:8).

Romans 13:14 : But on the contrary, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the flesh,--do not make provisions, to fulfil its lusts. The full title of our Lord Jesus Christ awakes, almost startles us, here: Jesus is His personal name (Matthew 1:21); as Christ, the anointed One, He does His saving work; as Lord, He is over all things. The full title was announced by Peter at Pentecost: "God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." All true believers have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27) for He is their life; and the Corinthians were told that--Jesus Christ was in them (2 Corinthians 13:5). It is striking that the first use of our Lord's full title is by Peter in Acts 11:17, in connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit in the upper room: "The gift God gave unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ." They had before believed on Jesus, as the Jewish Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God: but evidently when He had ascended into glory, God led them to a surrendering of earthly hopes, and an appropriating of their Lord, in His now exalted and glorified character, as the Lord Jesus Christ, in a phase of faith never known before. It is this Christ Paul commands us to put on--the Lord Jesus Christ! Not as our righteousness are we to "put Him on": for He is Himself the righteousness of all believers. But it is as to our walk and warfare that we put Him on. We are to be panoplied with Christ!

There is an instructive passage in Colossians 3:1-25, giving light on this command to "put on." In Colossians 3:3 there, the Holy Spirit says through Paul, "Ye died." (It is an aorist tense, asserting a fact.) The believer now shares Christ's risen life, and is told (as we have repeatedly seen) that he is "alive from the dead," a new creation. In the ninth verse of the same chapter, we have the words, "Ye have put off the old man"; and in Colossians 3:10, "Ye have put on the new man"! Then, in Colossians 3:5 and Colossians 3:8, "put to death," "put away," your "members which are in the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion; anger, wrath, malice," and all such things. It is in and by the fact that we died with Christ that we have "put off the old man": as is said in Colossians 2:11, also, concerning our participation in "the circumcision of Christ" [258] (His cutting off in death), we put off "the body of the flesh."

[258] The circumcision with hands, of our Lord, when He was a babe eight days old (Luke 2:21), is here distinguished from His death, as cut off from natural life,--a "circumcision made without hands," and in which we have such part that we are now called "the circumcision" (Php 3:3). Jewish circumcision was a striking token of that death to the flesh which was executed at the cross.

Then, (and not until our realization by faith of this federal death with Christ), are we ready in confidence to "put away" all those things that belong to our former manner of life, the old things) and to "put on, as God's elect, holy and beloved (of Him.), a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness" (Colossians 3:12, ff).

"Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ" is, therefore, our path, not only prescribed, but gloriously attainable. For we are in Him! and that federal "new man which hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:24) belongs now to us. Even as "the old man" belonged by natural birth to us in the First Adam, so does the "new man" belong to us who are in

Christ, the Last Adam!

Make not provision for the flesh--The word "provision" here is literally "forethought." It denotes the attitude of mind we used to have toward the flesh, as secretly expecting to gratify it, if not immediately, yet at some time. It is the opposite of the spirit of Galatians 5:24; it is Saul sparing Agag. To fulfil its desires--The flesh has endless lusts and desires,--all clamoring for indulgence. Besides the lower lusts, and our natural self-sparing slothfulness, there are all the forms of self-pleasing: self-esteem, "sensitiveness," love of praise, man-fearing, fleshly amiability, flattery of others for selfish ends, pride, "dignity," impatience of non-recognition by others, sheer empty conceit, and a thousand other "desires of the flesh," for which no provision is to be made. Often we can, if we will, see beforehand and shun circumstances that would give the flesh an advantage to indulge itself. But it is only by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ as the positive attitude of the soul, that we shall find ourselves able and willing to refuse any provision for the flesh. [259]

[259] Bishop Moule beautifully says: "Put on, clothe, and arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, the living Sum and true Meaning of all that can arm the soul. It is by living our life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), that is, to say, in effect, by personally making use of the crucified and living Savior, Lord, Deliverer, our Peace and Power, amidst all the dark hosts of evil can do against us. Full in the face of the realities of sin--of Roman sin, in Nero's day--St. Paul has written down across them all, this spell, this Name: Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' Take first a steady look, he seems to say, at your sore need, in the light of God; but then at once look off, look here. Take your iniquities at the worst; this can subdue them. Take your surroundings at the worst,--this can emancipate you from their power. It is the Lord Jesus Christ' and the putting on' of Him. We can put Him on' as Lord, surrendering ourselves to His absolute, while most benignant, sovereignty and will,--deep secret of repose. We can put Him on as Jesus,' clasping the truth that He, our human Brother, yet Divine, saves His people from their sins. We can put Him on as Christ' our Head, anointed without measure by the eternal Spirit, and still sending of that same Spirit into His happy members,--so that we are indeed one with Him and receive into our whole being the resources of His life."

CONCERNING CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

1. God for His own reasons forbade any human hand to execute Cain, the first murderer. Iniquity increased, and God brought the Deluge.

2. After the Deluge, God announced a complete change of earth's governmental affairs. In the words of Genesis 9:5-6, "Surely your blood, the blood of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man." God here puts the sword of the magistrate into man's hand as not before. Furthermore, the "everlasting covenant" with Noah, of which the above quoted words were a part, God said would last "while the earth remaineth" (Genesis 8:20-9:7).

3. Under the Law of Moses, 1000 years later, God reaffirmed the governmental duty of punishing murderers with death: "Ye shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer that is guilty of death. For blood, it polluteth the land, and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numbers 35:31; Numbers 35:33).

4. Note that in the above quotation, the crime of murder is said by God so to pollute the land, that there can be "no expiation made for a land" for this crime, save by the execution of the murderer.

5. It is said that upwards of 200,000 known man-killers are alive in America. "To realize," said Judge Kavanagh of Chicago, "the prevalency of this invisible class (murderers at large in the United States), it is only necessary to consider that they are more than we have of clergymen of all denominations, or male teachers in our schools; or all lawyers, judges, and magistrates, put together; and three times the number of our editors, reporters, and writers; and 52,000 more unconfined killers than we have policemen." Only by the stern carrying out of the command of God regarding the murderer, can this crime be checked.

(In England, where more than 90% of murderers are executed after a fair but speedy trial, even the police do not carry revolvers except by special license!)

6. To claim that it is "not Christian" to execute murderers, is to deny directly Paul’s plain word here in Romans Thirteen, that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain," being "a minister of wrath to him that doeth evil," and one of whom evil-doers are commanded to be afraid.

7. It is therefore an appalling disservice to home, state, and nation, to call that murder which God has commanded to be done--the execution of shedders of human blood. It is a libel on Christianity to claim that the current anti-capital-punishment cry is Christian. It is not Christian, but rebellion against God. "We suffer," said the penitent thief to his impenitent companion on the cross, "the due reward of our deeds!" That penitent thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me"; and our Lord’s answer, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise," shows anew the great truth that government in this world, and salvation in the next, are two absolutely distinct things. Only the ignorant confound them.

02.26. Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14 Strong and Weak Believers Neither to Despise nor to Judge Each Other. Romans 14:1-12 Perfect Liberty in this Dispensation; but Each Must Walk According to Conscience. Romans 14:11-23.

1 But him that is weak in faith, receive ye, yet not for decision, of [his] scruples [for him]. 2 One man hath faith to eat all things: but he that is weak eateth herbs. 3 Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. 4 Who art thou that judgest the house-servant of another? to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand. 5 One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day [alike]. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7 For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He [and none else] might rule over both the dead and the living. 10 But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. 11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow. And every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

PAUL, IN Romans 14:1-23, and Romans 15:1-33, directs his instruction chiefly "to the strong,’ who can bear it, while indirectly showing the state of the weak’! Those weak in faith, like babes, are not able to take much nourishment at once; while those who are strong are often not willing to receive what seems to reflect upon their vigor. To have faith before God, secretly, hiding it from the weaker brother, for his sake, until he becomes stronger, is not easy: it requires walking in love, which is always costly to the one loving!

Romans 14:1 : But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decison of [his] scruples [for him]--As to receiving and welcoming into our fellowship believers less instructed or with weaker faith than ourselves, let us note what our attitude should be, (1) toward those less instructed or of weaker faith than ourselves; and (2) toward those with greater knowledge, and liberty of conscience, than ourselves.

There are those who are "weak" in faith. They have true faith, they have Christ; but, because of traditional or legal teaching; or perhaps through Satan’s accusations on account of former sins; or through not grasping the fact of their death with Christ and their present and eternal union with Him; or possibly because of habits of introspection and self-accusation, or even through unsubdued sin,--for some or all of these reasons, they are "weak."

Such weak ones are to be received. Of course, in these days, when that sweet powerful fellowship of the early Christian assemblies, that consciousness of the presence in the assembly of the Holy Spirit, and so of the Risen Christ, is rare, there is difficulty in making clear the meaning of the word "receive. Ecclesiastical procedure has so usurped the place and prerogatives of the saints' acting by the conscious will of the Holy Spirit, as largely to obliterate the meaning of these words, "receive ye." People say, Was not so and so received into the church by the pastor and officers? "Official action" has supplanted the saints' blessed ministry of receiving, as described here.

Nevertheless, we must go directly to Scripture in this serious, practical matter. By "receiving" the weak brother, is not meant allowing him to "join the church"; but acknowledging him, by the discernment of the Spirit, to be a man of faith (even though his name be Mr. Ready-to-halt). Thus he and we are members one of another, being in Christ. And there is the same welcome in the assembly to this feebler member as to the most gifted teacher of the Word among us. It is not that he has been "officially recognized," but that he has been discerned generally and welcomed, in the Spirit.

He is to be received,--but not to decide for him his conscientious scruples. No one's conscience but his own can direct him. He may be taught the Word, however, and God will bring him along. He must not be forced. If he have faith, though it be but weak faith, he is among us not by our action, but by Christ's.

What a terrible contrast to the teaching of this Scripture is presented by the "close communion" people, and the "exclusivists," of all sorts. Unless a man pronounces "shibboleth" their way, there is not the thought of receiving him. This is the Pharisaism of the last days. And sad to say it is most found among those most enlightened in the truth, for "knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up." We are profoundly convinced that if those who now "exclude" so readily those differing from them were filled with love, filled with the Holy Ghost, not only would there be deliverance from the awful wickedness of "exclusiveness," but there would be hundreds, even thousands, of hungry believers flocking into fellowship, where they would be lovingly greeted just as they are! Further teaching for them can wait: but receive them! Where faith in Christ in the least degree is found, we should be thankfully delighted, and should welcome such believers. All believers have not the same knowledge, nor the same freedom from tradition, nor the same strength of appropriating faith. We have no right to say to believers, "Sit back, until we are satisfied about you." This puts your will between believers and fellowship with God's saints.

Romans 14:2 : One man hath faith to eat all things: but he that is weak eateth herbs. In this verse Paul illustrates the strength and weakness of faith in a way that not only the Jewish believers of his day, but also people in our day, instantly understand. Faith to eat all things: "Faith" here means knowledge and heart- persuasion that Jewish distinctions of meats do not exist in this dispensation, which knowledge, one having, could eat any food with thankfulness, and with no scruples. Though certain flesh had been forbidden to an Israelite, and may be still regarded as an improper food by many, yet the strong believer remembers how our Lord Himself "made all meats clean" (Mark 7:19); and how Peter, insisting on regarding "all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and birds" as "common and unclean," heard God say thrice over, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common." [260]

[260] Our Lord taught with sunlight clearness, "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him" (Mark 7:15). The word "nothing" is decidedly emphatic and embraces what we drink as well as what we eat. And the weak in faith must remember this before they condemn the saints who use the liberty here given to them. On the other hand, Paul teaches that this liberty of the stronger believer will limit itself by love. There has not been a time since he wrote when it was more necessary to heed this than today. For now there is abundant teaching, in zeal without knowledge, that contradicts and nullifies the principle laid down by Christ. This false teaching binds, without enlightening, the conscience. To eat all things--At man's creation, God gave him the "green herb" and the fruits of "trees yielding seed." After the Flood, God gave man "every moving thing that liveth," to be food for him (Genesis 9:3). Today, all these foods are for us: herbs, fruits, flesh (and that of "all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven"-- Acts 10:12); and Paul also commands Timothy to "use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities."

Christian freedom, then, takes no account of former restrictions of either food or drink, except for the weak brother's sake. "All things are clean" must be allowed to cover all things, whether of food or drink. The only restricting thought is of the "weak" brother who does not see this. [261]

[261] There is, of course, to be temperance in the use of all things. "The bishop must be temperate," even as the deacon must not be "given to much wine" (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:8). Nor is the man who has intelligent faith deceived by the wily pretenses of these. last days, whether of the "vegetarians," or of the don't-eat-starch-and-protein-together people. He remembers that God sent the ravens with bread and. flesh twice a day to Elijah! But he that is weak eateth herbs--Mark this! The "vegetarian," if so by conscience, is a "weak" brother. There even, are those today who esteem themselves particularly "strong," in abstaining from eating flesh, although God says, meats were "created to be received with thanksgiving, by them that believe and [also] know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:3-5). To make distinctions of meats where God has set aside such distinctions, is sad weakness indeed,--and sometimes presumption. However, presumptuous people are not in view in Romans 14:2, but simply those whose faith is not strong enough to enable them to eat the food they have been accustomed to regard as "forbidden."

Romans 14:3 : Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not--Here is a solemn charge to the stronger brother. He that is strong in the liberty of faith is directed not to "set at nought" the weaker one. This applies not to eating only, but to the matter of regarding days, and to any other things people have "scruples" about. How a strong man loves to walk with a little child, holding his hand gently, and not ridiculing or scorning his weakness! Let us walk thus with weaker brethren! And let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth--The weaker brother is not to "judge" the stronger. And note, in the case of the stronger, are used the words, For God hath received him. Doubtless God has received the weaker brother also. But do you know it is much more difficult for us really to believe in our hearts that God approves a man of wide Christian liberty, than to believe that God approves a man of many conscientious scruples? Yet the man of wide, strong faith, is honoring the work of Christ, as the man of trembling conscience has not yet come to do!

Romans 14:4 : Paul writes this verse directly regarding this judging, whether secret or open, of Christ's stronger servants by weaker ones; and thus he encourages Christian freedom: Who art thou that judgest another's house-servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand-- despite the criticisms and judgings of those who have not his faith.

It is striking, and tenderly suggestive, that the word "servant" in this verse is "household servant," or, as we have shortened, "house-servant." How would we, as masters of houses, feel, if, having invited a number of guests to dinner, we should overhear one of these guests criticizing the servant who waited upon him! Now Christ is Head over God's house, and all believers are servants of Christ. Let no one undertake to judge, therefore, a servant of Another--before whom we shall all shortly stand! And meanwhile, no matter what are our failures, or the attitude of others toward us, the fact remains that our Lord "hath power to make us stand," before Him,--our only Judge. What a deep comfort these words are!

Romans 14:5 : One man regardeth one day to be above another: another regardeth every day [alike]. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. Here Paul takes up the "day question,"--a live one to this hour! You instantly say. Is not the Lord's Day above others? No, not in itself, as a "holy" day, in the sense that the Sabbath was and will be to Israel. Paul shows this plainly in his exhortation of Colossians 2:16 : "Let no man judge you . . . in respect of . . . a sabbath day." For, says he, you died with Christ unto earthly religious things; and must not now "observe" them. This passage shows that the first day of the week is not the "sabbath" at all. All those days of Judaism were "shadows." "But the body is Christ's." But you say, I am not a Jew; the day has been changed. To which I answer, you speak as might a Jew; for the day has not been "changed." There is but one weekly Sabbath known in Scripture and that is the seventh day. It will even be observed again weekly, in the land of Israel, after "the six working days," of every week in the coming age, the Millennium (Ezekiel 46:1; Ezekiel 46:3; Ezekiel 46:4). Because men have been wrongly taught or influenced, whether by Judaizing believers in the early Christian centuries, or alas, by Reformers and Puritans since the Reformation, most Christians regard the first day of the week as "the weekly Sabbath," a "holy day,"--which entirely defeats its proper Scripture use. It substitutes a stern legal must for grace's sweet word, privilege. "The so-called Puritan teaching here has been rightly called an adulterous theology'; because it sought to marry believers to both husbands, to the Law and to Christ" (Scofield).

Howbeit, let us remain in the spirit of this fifth verse, which is one of love: Another regardeth every day (alike). The weak brother, still influenced in his conscience by legal considerations, held the first day of the week [262] as peculiar and sacred in itself. He invested it with the restrictions of a Jewish sabbath, insead of hailing it with fresh joy each week as an opportunity for remembering, with other Christians, his Lord; and our place in the new creation with Him.

[262] Paul is evidently not speaking here of "various Jewish feasts and festivals," as some claim. Paul has nothing but the severest reprimands for those who turn to "observing days, and months, and seasons and years" (Galatians 4:10), and calls Judaism "weak and beggarly rudiments," now,--like the old idolatry (Romans 14:8-9); and in Colossians 2:14 : "The bond which was contrary to us" having been nailed to the cross, he classes feast days and new moons along with "a sabbath day"; and asks believers not to let themselves be "judged" about them. With such

observances, the Christian had nothing to do. But as to the first day of the week, marked out by the resurrection of our Lord, and His appearings to the disciples, as also by the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7; Acts 20:8), and the Christian's systematic giving (1 Corinthians 16:2), the matter was different. The Christians gathered on the first day, they remembered the Lord at His table on that evening, weekly. (I say, "evening," for it was so at the beginning-- John 20:19, Acts 20:7). God has indeed graciously so ordered things now, that we have the whole day. Yet look at Russia! And the same godlessness is spreading over the whole earth. Living faith in Christ,--not any kind of bondage, can sustain us.

Now, the strong believer regarded every day alike. Each day alike was an opportunity for him to be filled with the Spirit, and in everything by word or deed giving thanks unto God the Father through Him. No day, thus, was holy in itself, above another! Privilege there was on the Lord's Day, but no bondage. Paul's instruction is, Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. Moses never could have said a thing like that! There is a sense in which these words reveal our liberty in Christ as does no other single passage. The Law allowed no liberty of action in such things: its very spirit and essence was bondage to a letter. Conscience was judged beforehand by the letter of the Law; conduct was prescribed. When a man gathered sticks on the Sabbath, he was stoned! Not so, now! Not being under the Law, or the legal principle, but in the Risen Christ, under God's eternal favor, we have entered upon what the Spirit, in Chapter Twelve, calls our "intelligent service." Here is an amazing sphere of holy freedom in which each of us, learning the truth, is treated as a king in the realm of his own mind. Instead of being told what he must or must not do, he is freely exhorted to assure his own mind and heart fully, and walk as Christ's free man. Read Alford's trenchant note below. [263]

[263] "The Apostle decides nothing; leaving every man's own mind to guide him in the point. He classes the observance or non-observance of particular days, with the eating or abstaining from particular meats. In both cases, he is concerned with things which he evidently treats as of absolute indifference in themselves. Now the question is, supposing the Divine obligation of one day in seven to have been recognized by him in any form, could he have thus spoken? The obvious inference from his strain or arguing is, that he knew of no such obligation, but believed all times and days to be, to the Christian strong in faith, ALIKE. I do not see how the passage can be otherwise understood. If any one day ill the week were invested with the sacred character of the Sabbath, it would have been wholly impossible for the Apostle to commend or uphold the man who judged all days worthy of equal honour,--who, as in verse 6, paid no regard to the (any) day. He must have visited him with his strongest disapprobation, as violating a command of God. I therefore infer, that sabbatical obligation to keep any day, whether seventh or first, was not recognised in apostolic times. It must be carefully remembered, that this inference does not concern the question of the observance of the Lord's Day as an institution of the Christian Church, analogous to the ancient Sabbath, but not in any way inheriting the Divinely-appointed obligation of the other, or the strict prohibitions by which its sanctity was defended. The reply commonly furnished to these considerations, viz., that the Apostle was speaking here only of JEWISH festivals, and therefore cannot refer to Christian ones, is a quibble of the poorest kind: its assertors themselves distinctly maintaining the obligation of one such Jewish festival on Christians. What I maintain is, that had the Apostle believed as they do, he could not by any possibility have written thus. Besides, in the face of every day' the assertion is altogether unfounded." (Alford: New Test.,

in loc.)

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that doth not eat, unto the Lord he doth not eat, and giveth thanks to God. 7 For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. 8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord’s. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might rule over both the dead and the living.

Romans 14:6 : These verses, of course, contemplate true believers only, those who "give God thanks."

Here we have some regarding the day as holy in itself, Jewish believers especially, not fully delivered from the Law, would have tender consciences about days. But if they knew the Lord, it would be toward the Lord their consciences could be exercised, and they must be considered in love on that account; love would see through their eyes!

Again, there were those with greater knowledge and liberty who "regarded not the day," knowing that every day, for those risen in Christ, is alike: the first day of the week being not a sabbath, but rather the celebration of our Lord’s resurrection which delivered us from legal things. Ignatius (martyred about 115 A.D.) said, "Those who were concerned with old things have come to newness of confidence, no longer keeping Sabbaths, but living according to the Lord’s Day, on whom our life, as risen again, through Him, depends." And Justin Martyr, (martyred about 168 A.D.) when reproached by Trypho with "giving up the Sabbath," said, "How can we keep the Sabbath, who rest from sin all the days of the week?"

Let those of legal tendencies mark this: that a man may regard not what we regard, and do so "unto the Lord." Then the man who has liberty to eat all things, eats "unto the Lord," and gives God thanks. And again, (let the stronger brother consider) there are those that eat not as "unto the Lord," giving God thanks.

Romans 14:7-9 : The argument of Romans 14:7-9 is that each one of us is living or dying absolutely unto the Lord,--whose we are. We are not in any sense one another’s lords! but belong to Christ alone, who died and lived that He might rule over us all,--and not we be lords of each other! or of the faith of others! Therefore comes the searching question:

Romans 14:10-12 : But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou, again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written: As I live, saith the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow, [not to men]. And every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account concerning himself to God--[not to men]. The best manuscripts read "the judgment-seat of God" in Romans 14:10 : thus accommodating the words to the quotation from the Old Testament (Isaiah 14:23). This word "God" is also used in Romans 14:12, as we see; although we know from 2 Corinthians 5:10, it will actually be before the judgment-seat of Christ that believers will be called. (Always remembering that Christ is God the Son.) Also, that "the Father has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). Of course we know from our Lord’s words in John 3:18; John 5:24, that condemnatory judgment cannot be applied to believers here, for, "He that believeth on Him is not judged"; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into

judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." In Revelation 20:1-15, also, the saved, the "blessed and holy," partake of the first resurrection; and over them the second death, the penalty of the lost, 1000 years later, has "no authority." Nevertheless, we must not allow this blessed fact to dull the force of the solemn question propounded to us by our beloved apostle Paul, as to how we dare either judge or despise our brother? seeing that such action involves presumptuous forgetfulness both of the fact that we are not judges; and of the other fact that we shall all, though saved, stand before the judgment-seat of God and each "give an account of himself" to Him. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, of this judgment-seat (bema) for believers this is said: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." In 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, we see that "if any man's work shall abide . . . he shall receive a reward." It is a matter of reward for our service, and not salvation, that is here in question. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire"-- that is, losing, as one whose house is burned, all his goods, though himself delivered. The whole emphasis here in Romans 14:12, is that each gives an account concerning himself--not of others; and to God instead of to man! The reading "judgment-seat of Christ," Romans 14:10, would seem to agree both with 2 Corinthians 5:10, and the whole spirit of the preceding verses here, especially verse 9. We know also that the Father has committed to the Son all judgment, both of believers and unbelievers (John 5:22; John 5:27; Acts 17:31). But that it is before God (instead of a fellow-man) that all will bow, is being emphasized; and Christ is God, and will, we believe, as Man be the Judge, even at the Great White Throne of Revelation 20:11-15 No longer, therefore, let us [Christians] be judging one another. But do judge ye this, rather, that no man put an obstacle in his brother's way, or a snare.

14 I [personally] know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who reckoneth anything to be. unclean, to that one it is unclean. 15 For if because of thy food thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy food that one for whom Christ died!. 16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of. 17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For the one herein serving Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. 19 So then let us pursue things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one. another. 20 Overthrow not for food's sake the work of God? All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with stumbling. 21 It is noble not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor [to do] anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended or is made weak. 22 The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God. Blessed is he that doth not judge himself in that which he alloweth! 23 But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Romans 14:13 : No longer, therefore, let us [Christians] be judging one another. But do judge ye this, rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling.

Here now is indeed a field for judging! And it is ourselves, not our brother, which we are to judge! And it is ours to see to it that no one of us is, or is doing, aught that binders or stumbles any brother. If these comments persuade any Christian to stop judging others and begin to judge himself, it will indeed be a fruit unto God! A stumbling-block is something in us that grieves a weaker brother; an occasion of falling, signifies that which we may freely do, but which another,

undertaking, may in doing act against his own conscience, and therefore sin. Literally, the word means "snare," or "trap."

Romans 14:14 : I know [personally], and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself: save that to him that reckoneth anything to be unclean, to that one it is unclean.

Paul states in Romans 14:14 his own knowledge and liberty,-- which is our pattern. Note carefully that knowledge comes first: "I know." "Persuasion in the Lord Jesus," that is, full heart liberty, or freedom of conscience, is second. There must be both,--not only knowledge of the Christian's freedom, but heart and conscience persuasion, if we would walk in the liberty that belongs to the Christian. To such a one, nothing is unclean "of itself." Distinction of meats (as under Judaism) is entirely gone; distinction of days (as under Judaism) is entirely gone. It is only to those whose lack of knowledge or weakness of conscience "accounts" or holds a thing to be unclean,--or, as we say, "wrong," that it is so. What a glorious deliverance! No place is left for "religious fussing." Christ, and the freedom that is in Him, fills all heaven, our whole horizon, at every moment: "To me, to live is Christ." But to the conscience not yet delivered (and real freedom of conscience is more rare than we think!) many things seem to be "unclean" in themselves: that is, Christians feel it is "wrong" to do them. You and I may have full light to the contrary: yea, these also may see the written Word that "nothing is unclean in itself" in this dispensation. But the conscience cannot be commanded. It must be persuaded, by the blessed Spirit--in the Lord Jesus. When one is thus set free, his walk is not forced, but happy and natural.

Romans 14:15 : For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, [264] thou art no longer walking according to love. Do not with thy meat destroy that one for whom Christ died. "If Christ so loved as to die for him, how base in you or me not to submit to the smallest self-denial for his welfare!" This verse often occasions the question, How could a "brother" be in danger of destruction? Let me quote on this passage from Charles Hodge, one of the greatest Calvinistic writers: "Believers (the elect) are constantly spoken of (in Scripture) as in danger of perdition. They are saved only if they continue stedfast (in faith). If they apostatize, they perish. If the Scriptures tell the people of God what is the tendency of their sins as to themselves, they may tell them what is the tendency of such sins as to others. Saints are preserved not in spite of apostasy, but from apostasy." To this agree Paul's words: "Ye are saved if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you" (1 Corinthians 15:2). "If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23). Before us, in Romans 14:15, lies the awful fact that the destruction of one who is called a brother lies within the power of our use of our liberty--if it causes him to "stumble."

[264] Two stages are noted in the words grieved' and destroy.' When one man sees another do that which his own conscience condemns, it causes him pain (he is grieved); but when he is further led on from this to do himself what his conscience condemns, he is in danger of a worse fate; he is morally ruined and undone (destroyed). The work of redemption that Christ has wrought for him is cancelled, and all that great and beneficent scheme is hindered of its operation by an act of thoughtlessness or want of consideration on the part of a fellow Christian"--Sanday. This does not touch the security of those born of God and "sealed to the day of redemption." God says even of the carnal Corinthians, that "God was faithful, through whom they were called," "who would confirm them unto the end" (1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:9). But we are not saved as

automatons! God gives us a gospel to be believed, and a walk to be walked, corresponding to that gospel. That God can (and often does) rescue those whose walk is a failure is seen in the stern, but saving dealing with the brother of 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. But this same epistle records the solemn warning quoted above: "Ye are saved if ye hold fast the words." Modernists, like all infidels, make light of "holding fast the pattern of sound words" (2 Timothy 1:13). But God told earnest, praying Cornelius to send for Peter, who should "speak unto him words, by which he should be saved" (Acts 11:13; Acts 11:14). Faith begins and lives by God’s words only!

Romans 14:16 : Let not then your good be evil spoken of--(literally, blasphemed): "Good" here refers to the use of Christian liberty by those who are strong of faith, which is indeed good and delightful to God in itself; but in the use of which one must take heed that it be not judged and spoken evil of by the weaker brethren. We must always have the weaker in mind. You may have very blessed liberty in Christ; and that is good! But watch, in using your freedom, lest some one not having your freedom calls your path wickedness! Don’t lose your liberty, but use it carefully. (See Romans 14:22.) Romans 14:17 : Now Paul writes a great verse, giving such a reason for this careful walk as ought to win all of us: For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For the one thus serving Christ, is well pleasing to God, and approved of men. In saying the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, Paul at one word sweeps the whole Christian platform clear of the rubbish of all the traditions of men. Men bow, for example, to the Pope’s "no-meat-on-Fridays." But let these mark well that all such things have nothing whatever to do with the kingdom of God! The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Man cannot even see the kingdom of God except by a new, "down from above" (anothen) BIRTH (John 3:3)! And, since the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, believers are said to be in the Spirit--no longer in the flesh--to which the earthly distinctions of meats and days pertained. And note, that the words here are not, righteousness in Christ --referring to our standing; but righteousness in the Holy Spirit--referring to our walk! Also, joy in the Holy Spirit. We cannot too strongly emphasize this fact--that "the kingdom of God," now, is altogether in the Spirit! This leaves forms and ceremonies, days and seasons, unclean meats and clean meats, absolutely out! Such things are not Christian. They are Jewish or pagan, now! Such "religious" distinctions as these concerning eating and drinking are certainly not at all in the Holy Ghost--where all the saints now are (Romans 8:9), and in whose energy all the real operations of "the kingdom of God" now are!

Romans 14:18 : The one herein serving Christ--This word herein refers to the state of righteousness of life, peace of heart, and joy in God which those walking in the Spirit display. And the words serving Christ further prove that verse 17 has reference to practical walk, not to our standing in Christ. One thus walking, we see, is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. Our Lord said, "If any man serve Me, him will the Father honor" (John 12:26). Nothing really pleases God, (since Christ the Son has been manifested, and become obedient to the Father even unto death), but to have men know and serve Christ--whose yoke is easy! But such service is made possible only since the coming of the Holy Spirit: therefore, "righteousness, peace, joy, in the Holy Spirit" is that service of Christ which delights God. And approved of men--Men will not always admit it, but they approve a believer who walks righteously, in Divine peace, and joy. Mere religious professors, men despise: but, while they may and often do persecute the one who walks in the Spirit, they at heart approve such,--yes, and only such! Let us ask ourselves. Does my walk

please God? Is it approved in the hearts of men?

Romans 14:19 : So then let us pursue the things that belong to peace, and things whereby we shall build up one another. The word "pursue" is a strong word, generally used for persecute, follow hard after, as in hunting. Compare Romans 12:13 b, "given to (literally, pursuing) hospitality": Php 3:14 : "I press toward the mark." Peter says, "Let him seek peace and pursue it"--same word. See also 1 Timothy 6:10, and 2 Timothy 2:22. So let us pursue the things of peace and of helping others. There is no more direct and effectual path away from yourself!

"Pursuing peace" is the negative side--refusing to engage in selfish conflict. Pursuing "edifying things" is the positive side. You must study the state and need of others, and "build up their need." See Ephesians 4:29, margin.

Romans 14:20 : Overthrow not for food’s sake the work of God! Let us not be as unregardful of our brother as was Esau of God Himself! The "work of God" here refers to the operations of the Spirit of God within the soul--"the fabric which the grace of God has begun, and which the edification of Christians by each other may help to raise." Or, which the selfish refusal to walk in love may pull down! For we find more people stumbling at the inconsistencies, and lack of love, in professing Christians, than at all things else. Let us follow Paul: "Though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more . . . Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor’s good . . . even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 9:19; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 1 Corinthians 10:33).

All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for the man who eateth with stumbling--All meats, all food, is indeed (in itself) clean, but to him that eats with a bad conscience, everything is evil. God indeed plainly says, concerning those who "command to abstain from meats," that such are "giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons, because He Himself created meats to be "received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-5). But if one have not the assurance in his own conscience freely to obey this "command" of God, let him not violate his conscience; but wait humbly upon God, by His Word to strengthen him, and bring him into true Christian liberty. Otherwise his eating or drinking is not "with thanksgiving," but in mere self-indulgence.

Romans 14:21 : It is noble not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor [to do] anything whereby thy brother is made to stumble, or is ensnared, or is [made] weak--It has been remarked that in each of these three things, the effect is less than in the preceding one,--thus greatly strengthening and enlarging the exhortation. First, do not cause thy brother, by thy use of thy liberty, or in any conduct of thine, to have his fatal fall; second, do not even obstruct his Christian course by doing what might act as a snare to your brother, inducing him to act beyond his conscience; third, do not use your liberty, if your weaker brother, although he sees you are right, is not yet strong enough to follow you: and would therefore become disappointed and discouraged if he see you do so. "Wait for me!" did not your childhood’s brother often call out to you? So let us "wait for one another" in the spiritual life! Be conformed to his weakness for the present, and accommodate your walk to his, lest he remain weak. [265]

[265] Brown (in Jamleson, Fausset & Brown) well says, "This injunction to abstain from flesh and wine and whatsoever may hurt the conscience of a brother, must be properly understood. Manifestly the apostle is treating of the regulation of the Christian's conduct with reference simply to the prejudices of the weak in faith; and his directions are not to be considered as principles for one's entire lifetime, but simply as caution against too free use of Christian liberty in matters where other Christians, through weakness, are not persuaded that such liberty is Divinely allowed."

Romans 14:22 : Hast thou faith? Have [it] to thyself before God. Blessed is he that doth not judge himself in the acts which he alloweth [in his own life].

"It is much more blessed to have a liberty before God which we do not use on account of our brother's weakness, than to insist on our liberty, though it be distinctly given. The man whom Paul declares happy' is he who can eat what he pleases and drink what he pleases, without any qualms of conscience to condemn him while he does so." These words (from Sanday) are true. The word translated "allows," or "permits," or "approves," is literally, "puts to the test." The picture is of a man having before him a question of conscience (of days, meats, or whatever), whose decisions in the use of his liberty are such that he does not go beyond his knowledge, and persuasion in the Lord Jesus (Romans 14:14). For, though he have in his mind that he is free in such or such a matter, if his conscience check him, he "judges" himself if he rushes ahead in an action. To the strong believer the apostle speaks this word: "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God." You have probably known people whom in this sense you did not know! They had learned, yet were content not publicly to use, that great liberty of faith into which God had led them. It is blessed to have faith. It is yet more blessed to have that faith "before God"--when using the freedom it gives might perplex another!

Romans 14:23 : But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Of course the word "damned" (for "condemned") of the King James Version, is not the meaning here. But what is meant is the state of conscious condemnation into which one falls who goes beyond his faith in the exercise of his liberty. For he who acts thus enters the realm of self-will, the lawlessness (anomia) which God declares is sin (1 John 3:4). The apostle's definition of sin here as "what is not of faith" is most searching. It will drive us to our knees. It reaches everything in our lives concerning which our conscience is not at rest, in which we do not have faith to proceed, in which we cannot walk with God.

02.27. Chapter 15A

CHAPTER 15A

Believers to Receive One Another, as Christ (after His Jewish ministry). Received the Gentiles,---TO GOD'S GLORY. Romans 15:1-13.

Paul's Great "Priestly-Ministry" of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Romans 15:14-21. His Purpose (long-hindered) to Come to the Roman Christians,--after the Great Jerusalem Contribution. Romans 15:22-33.

1 Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. 3 For Christ also pleased not Himself; but, as it is written. The reproaches of them that reproacheth Thee fell upon Me. 4 For whatsover things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be tof the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: 6 that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God.

Romans 15:1-7 should have closed the preceding chapter, as they continue and close up the subject there considered.

Romans 15:1 : Now we that are strong ought to bear [literally, are in debt to bear] the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. In Romans 13:8 the word here translated "ought" (Greek, to owe), is used in forbidding a Christian to be in debt to others except in the way of love. Paul here addresses the "strong," being himself of that number; in which company may we also be found! It is those who are "spiritual" who can show love to others (Galatians 6:1). Note most carefully that it is not bearing with the infirmities of others that Paul is speaking of. The old lady said in the testimony meeting, "I have always got a lot of help out of that Bible verse that says, Grin and bear it!' " And the little California girl was heard singing, "When all my neighbors and trials are o'er!" We are apt to think of others' weaknesses and infirmities as a burden we must put up with, for the Lord's sake,--as "our particular cross," for the present! Instead, God's Word here teaches us gladly to bear, to take over as our own, these infirmities! "Bear ye one another's burdens," is the "law of Christ"! (Galatians 6:2). How our blessed Lord bore the infirmities of His disciples!--infirmities of ignorance, of unbelief, of self-confidence, of jealousy among themselves,--until the disciples came into a state of loving trust in their Lord which made even Thomas say, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him"; and Peter: "Lord, I will lay down my life for Thee." Our Risen Lord again set the example of such "bearing." For even after they had forsaken Him in Gethsemane, in the upper room the Risen Lord appeared to them with, "Peace be unto you,"--and never a mention of their utter failure! It is this ability, manifested by Divine grace in us, constantly and without end to bear the infirmities of others, to take thought for, and excuse their weaknesses; and to endure for them anything and everything, that manifests Christ; and wins

the trustful devotion of our fellow-saints. [266]

[266] It is this heart-hunger for sympathy,--for some one to take over our burdens, that has always made Romanism such a refuge (albeit a false one!); and is now making Buchmanism, commonly known as the "Oxford Movement," such a deadly danger. The Romanist unloads the story of his sins and failures in the ready ear of his "father confessor": while the Buckmanites gather in so-called "house parties," and "share" their inner secrets with their deluded comrades. Both the Romanist and the Buchmanite feel a great sense of "relief," after the confessions. Indeed, the Buchmanites make a great parade of testimonies of those whose lives have been "changed" through this process of "sharing." Certainly! But John Bunyan, in the seventeenth century gave the right name to Buchmanism: "Changing Sins";--that is, exchanging one sin for another. It is not by unburdening my conscience to my fellow man, whether "priest" or friend, that peace with God, and eternal safety come; but by deep conviction of both my guilt and my helplessness--of my lost state; and revelation to me, by the Spirit, of the shed blood of Christ as my only refuge and hope,--a Christ who bore God’s wrath against sin, and provided the only ground on which a holy God can deal with guilty man. Resting in God’s Word about His Son whom He raised from the dead, I have salvation. Salvation is not at all by "confession,"--either to God or man; but by faith in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. Even the thief on the cross made no "confession" of his sins, either to God or to Christ:--for lo, Christ was just then bearing his guilt! and it was not by means of his confessing it that sin was put away, but by God’s placing it on Christ. Although this thief, in speaking to the impenitent one, recognizes his crimes in the words, "We suffer the due reward of our deeds"; yet he simply hands himself over to Christ as he is,--"Lord, remember me": and our Lord’s words are, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." (By the way, friend, that thief not only did not "confess" his sins; but he never was baptized; he never "joined the church"; he never went to mass"; and he did not go to any "purgatory"; but he went straight to Paradise,-- that day! And, further, Mary the mother of Jesus was standing right there: but our Lord never mentions her to this thief! But says, "Today thou shalt be with Me." What do you say to that! That thief is a perfect picture of you and me, as regards salvation!)

Meyer well says, "In themselves strong and free, the strong become the servants of the weak, as Paul, the servant of all." "Pleasing ourselves" is the exact thing each of us will do unless we set ourselves to pursue, to follow after, love, until our Lord comes back!

Romans 15:2 : Let each one of us please his neighbor, in what is good, for [his] edification. Of course Paul does not mean here to exhort us to man-pleasing in the way of selfishly seeking man’s favor. He himself says, "Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). There is a man-pleasing spirit that is very obnoxious to God. We may be "nice" to people for our own selfish benefit. But remember that this exhortation to please our neighbor "for his benefit unto edifying," indicates a studied care for others; laying aside our own preferences, and pleasing them in every way that will in the end benefit them spiritually. This, of course, does not mean that we are to compromise with any evil our neighbor may be doing, by having fellowship with him in a worldly path in order to "win" him. The expression "unto that which is good," shuts out that. Paul puts it beautifully in 1 Corinthians 10:32-33, 1 Corinthians 11:1 : "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the Church of God: even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. Be ye imitators of me,

even as I also am of Christ."

Romans 15:3 : For Christ also pleased not Himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell upon Me--Christ never "looked after" Himself: the whole world knows this! "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Yet His whole life, from early morning till late at night, and often into the night, was occupied in ministry to others! The multitudes found out with joy that here was One whose whole business was "going about doing good." The constant drawing upon Him by the multitudes,--upon His time, His love, His teaching, His healing, was a marvelous proof that they could count on the absolute absence of self-pleasing, in Him! The Psalms, which give the inner heart-history of our Lord, reveal, (as, for instance, does the Sixty-ninth Psalm, from which Paul here quotes,--the great "Reproach" [267] Psalm), how difficult was our Lord's path in a sinful, selfish. God-hating world. Yet it is written of Him: "He pleased not Himself."

[267] Let us follow this word, "reproach," in Psalms 69:1-36 and others: Psalms 69:7 : "For Thy sake I have borne reproach." Psalms 69:9 : "The reproaches of them that reproach Thee are fallen upon Me." Psalms 69:10 : "When I wept, and chastened My soul with fasting, that was to My reproach." Psalms 69:19 : "Thou knowest My reproach, and My shame, and My dishonor." Psalms 69:20 : "Reproach hath broken My heart." Our Lord upon the cross cries that He is a "reproach of men" (Psalms 22:6). In Psalms 31:11, as we find so carried out in the gospels:-- "I am become a reproach, Yea, unto My neighbors exceedingly, And a fear to Mine acquaintance"; while in Psalms 109:22-25, He says He is "poor and needy." heart-wounded, gone like a shadow, tossed up and down, weak through fasting. His flesh failing, "a reproach unto them." But it was always, "For Thy sake I have borne reproach,"--the reproaches that fell upon God--upon the Father, whose will and works Christ was doing, and whom man was learning the more to hate as "the beauty of Jehovah" was manifest more and more in Him. Now, if it were so with Christ, whose goodness was constantly reproached, shall we complain or stumble if even our good be evil spoken of? Let Christ dwell within us, as the Father dwelt in Christ, and let us cease from self-pleasing!

Romans 15:4 : For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures [268] we might have hope.

[268] Those who neglect the Old Testament Scriptures may well remember that this expresses the Christian experience of an inspired apostle!"--(Schaff and Riddle). For it was the Old Testament Scriptures of which Paul spoke here.

Note these four words that God has joined together: "learning . . . patience . . . comfort of the Scriptures . . . hope": "learning" is heart knowledge, as our Lord said: "Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto Me" (John 6:45). "Patience" follows, for, knowing God, we can wait for Him to work. Next is "comfort of the Scriptures." It is astonishing--something beyond human conception, this "comfort of the Scriptures"! We have all seen saints poor in purse, accounted nothing at all by men, and perhaps suffering constant physical pain, sad bereavement of loved ones, and complete lack of understanding by other professing Christians: yet comforted by poring over the Scriptures! Hearts happy and hopeful, despite it all! You can step from any state of earthly misery into the glorious halls of heavenly peace and comfort! Praise God for this! "Be ye comforted," writes Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:11.

It is ever good to be going over God’s dealings, not only with Christ, but with His Old Testament saints; marking how He is continually bringing them into hard places, where they learn to trust Him more! Joseph, in prison for righteousness; David, anointed of God, but hunted for years "like a partridge in the mountains"; Jeremiah in the miry dungeon; the three in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, and Daniel in the den of lions: not to speak of the New Testament story--James and Stephen killed, the apostles in prison. You may ask, How does "hope" spring out of such trials? We do not ask such a question if we have learned the lesson of Romans Five: "Knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope,"--witnessed to by the shedding abroad of God’s love for us in our hearts! Therefore let us seek that comfort and hope which this verse tells us the Scriptures work in us if we patiently learn them. When we get thus learningly to Romans 15:13, we shall find ourselves abounding in hope!

Romans 15:5-6 : Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind together according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul asks here that the same God who gave to the Old Testament saints and to the apostles "endurance" and "comfort of the Scriptures," may grant that we may be "like-minded, loving as brethren" (1 Peter 3:8). "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" was the amazed but constant testimony of paganism, yea, of Judaism, also, regarding believers in the early days of the Church. And this Spirit-wrought unity and tender affection is by far the greatest need amongst believers today. New "movements," new "educational programs," great contributions of funds--what are these worth while Christians are divided in mind, more in discord than accord? Such a state cannot "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." "By this," our Lord said, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). And this accord, this unity, is not brought about by outward organization. There is, incited by the devil, a great cry that all professing Christians today "get together," form themselves into a great "charitable" unity, inclusive of Romanists, Protestants, and well-intended Jews. Meanwhile, in answer to the earnest, persistent cry of God’s people that He would revive His Church, the real saints are being drawn more and more by His Word into the true fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Bible conferences, unsectarian Bible schools, gatherings and even leagues for prayer, and increasing intelligent fellowship with truly godly missionary effort, are the real sign that God is granting Paul’s desire that believers may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

People generally make one of two mistakes concerning Christian unity. First, that there must be absolute unanimity of opinion on all points of doctrine; and second, that there must be external unity of all so-called "Christian bodies."

We have alluded to the second of these ideas as of Satanic origin, and deluded human consent. But now, as to the first, the desire of the apostle in Romans 15:5, that the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus, does not have reference to opinions or views of doctrines, but does have reference to gracious dispositions of spirit; for God is not spoken of here as the God of wisdom and knowledge, but as the God of patience and of comfort. It is God’s acting in these blessed graces toward the saints that will enable them to be "of one mind together according to Christ Jesus." When the Spirit of God is freely operating among a company of believers, the eyes of all of them, first, are toward Christ

Jesus. They are thinking of Him, of His love, of His service, and of what will please Him. They are conscious of their blessed place in Him. Then follow, naturally, patient dealing with one another, comforting one another. Some of the company may know much more truth than others; many may hold varying judgments or opinions concerning particular matters. But this does not at all touch their unity--their conscious unity, in Christ; and it does not in the slightest degree hinder their being of one mind, and working together with one accord, and, in the vivid words of Scripture, be with one mind together according to Christ Jesus.

Rome has undertaken to compel unity in both these evil senses (for she knows not the blessed unity of the Spirit): and rivers of martyrs' blood have flowed because they dared to express an opinion contrary to the edicts of "the Church." The doctrine, too, is constantly promulgated, that to be outside "Mother Church," outside the fold of Rome, is to be without the pale of salvation!

Both these things are fearful perversions of the truth.

Romans 15:7 : Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ received you, to the glory of God.

Strong and weak believers alike are here exhorted to receive one another,--for God's glory. This not only includes formal welcoming of other believers into the fellowship of the church, the Assembly of the Saints; but, what is far more and deeper, exercising constant careful love to one another;--and all this done with a view to the glory of God! For Christ received us to that end! As He says, "All that which the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me; and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. For I am come down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:37; John 6:38). It is Christ's delight to welcome sinners, for that glorifies God; and there is joy in Heaven over it! Let there be like joy over our Christian love,--our "receiving" one another; for it glorifies God!

Romans 15:8-9 : For I say that Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that He might confirm the promises unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy--

Here Paul defines in a single phrase our Lord's character as a "minister," in His earthly life: He was a "minister of the circumcision." That is, He came "unto His own." He said, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matthew 15:24). Tell this to the ordinary professing Christian, and he regards you with amazement, if not with anger. When our Lord sent out the Twelve, in Matthew Ten, He said, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now people resent that, because of their sad ignorance--both of the Divine sovereignty, and revealed plan. So, the first thing to clear away in our minds is the uncertain or false teaching, about the mission of Christ on earth. He was made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God; that He might confirm the promises unto the fathers.

Now we know that Christ came to declare the Father--to reveal God as He is. Also He came to give His life a ransom for many, to become "the propitiation for the whole world." Thus He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

But, if we are to understand the story of His ministry, in the Gospels, we must remember that He was first a "minister of the circumcision,' as the Jewish Messiah, fulfilling, "confirming" the Divine promises of the Old Testament to that nation. [269] And what was this "ministry of the circumcision?

[269] It is essential to understand and submit fully to this remarkable expression concerning our Lord's ministry to Israel, taking great care, however, that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn into the high folly of the Bullingerites, and others, who, because Christ was made a "minister of the circumcision," therefore regard as "transitional," and as not concerning the Church, the Body of Christ, the Gospels, the Acts, the present Epistle (to the Romans), the Corinthian Epistles,--in fact, all but the "prison epistles"! Some of these mistaken teachers, indeed, do not go to this length, but many are even more extravagant than this, claiming that Christ did not begin to build His Body on the day of Pentecost, but that there was a "transitional" time and state, after Pentecost, with a "Jewish Body"; and that the Body revealed by Paul in Ephesians and Colossians begins with Paul's revelation of it in "the prison epistles"! Now everyone knows that there was a gradual entering upon the full truth of what Gentile grace was, upon the part of the twelve apostles,--as witness Peter in Acts 10:1-48; and the Council of Acts 15:1-41. But to say that because they did not know fully the calling and hopes of the Church until Paul had revealed them (as indeed was true, by Christ's appointment) therefore the Body of Christ did not exist from Pentecost on, is idle, shallow folly! The object of the devil in causing these delusions, is practically the same as in his inspiring "higher criticism" and "modernism." It is to break the moral effect upon the conscience of certain books and certain passages of the Bible, by teaching believers to say, "That Scripture is not for us--it is not for the Church." Now the account of the creation is not "Church Truth," yet Paul takes great comfort from it, saying, "It is God that said. Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Paul also takes great delight in pointing out, in quoting Genesis 2:24, that a man's leaving father and mother to cleave to his wife, was a type and picture of, and really concerned the union of, Christ and the Church! (Ephesians 5:29-32.) The book of Job was not written "for the Church," yet we learn in that great book filings of our God and of His ways not fully revealed elsewhere. I deem it not only folly, but presumptuous wickedness to speak as do these self-appointed wise men of our Lord's earthly ministry as "not concerning the Church," saying we must therefore leave the gospels and go to the epistles alone for instruction. Paul, on the contrary, continually quoted even the Old Testament Scriptures; even adducing the Law for our "instruction" (although telling us we are not under it; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Corinthians 14:34; Ephesians 6:1; Ephesians 6:2). Likewise the Psalms: Of course they were written with Israel's Messiah in direct view,--His sufferings, (and the Remnant's) with His ultimate earthly Kingdom-triumph in the 1000 years. Yet, recalling always the facts of our heavenly calling and place, the Psalms become full of blessing to the spiritual mind! The Holy Spirit makes them the quickened vehicle of guiding us into unexpected truth. And the four Gospels;-- "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" have a use and beauty of blessing for us, "all the greater because we know we are enlifed in, and risen with, Christ, new creatures in Him, and seated with Him in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus! Indeed, we find our Lord, in John 17:1-26, praying for that marvelous oneness which was realized in the Church as revealed in all Paul's Epistles: "that they may be one--even as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." There is no higher truth about the Church than this! "The Mystery," the Church as such, was not yet revealed,--as it begins to be in Romans and onward: but we have the great

petitions that made the Church possible, here in John. When we step into The Acts, only those who leave the simplicity of Christian consciousness (as does Bullinger) dare affirm that in those earliest Christians there was not the very life and unity belonging to the one and only Body of Cnrist which it was later given Paul to "minister," as to its character, calling, destiny, and walk. Of course Romans is as much "church truth" as Ephesians! Avoid Bullingerism as you would the plague! The Church did begin at Pentecost; there is but one Body of Christ known in Scripture,--and no special "Jewish" Body; the Lord's words to the Seven Churches of Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22 are solemn warnings to present assemblies, and not imaginary "Jewish" assemblies, after the Body of Christ is raptured to heaven, as Bullinger teaches! How anyone can be captured by such fantastic nonsense, is only explainable by the appalling ignorance of Pauline truth, and the hunger for it, (an ignorance and hunger of which Bullinger takes advantage!) Bullinger called the great Welsh Revival of 1904-5 "Spiritism,"--attributing to the devil what the whole Church of God knows was God's work. (See Bullinger's Foundations of Dispensational Truth, p. 259.) And he taught "Soul-sleeping," calling Sheol and Hades "only gravedom." (See on Revelation 1:1-20.) To follow such a presumptuous and blind leader, is to fall into the ditch. Only, Bullingerites think everyone but themselves in the ditch: and that they are mountain-top dwellers! Have you heard of a Bullingerite Bible conference for the deepening of the spiritual life? No; and you will not: for they are "sick about questionings, and disputes of words" (1 Timothy 6:4). The reason we warn of Bullingerism so repeatedly is, that it endangers the earnest souls who, desiring to escape the intolerable bondage of Protestant denominational ecclesiasticism (now daily becoming more Romish in fact and papal in process), hail Bullinger's system as freedom. But it is a much worse danger than what they have escaped! You may call it dispensational modernism, or modernistic dispensationalism; for it is both. It is difficult to deal in patience with presumption that takes an attitude much like that of Theosophy, of a "higher wisdom." It is a striking thing, (though from history it might be expected) that these errorists like others, are consumed by their error! They must harp on it at all times!

What was it meant to accomplish? Paul here says, It was for the sake of God's truth, God's faithfulness. His veracity, "to confirm the promises that had been given to the fathers"-- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was on God's behalf, to show that when God makes commitments and promises, He forgets them not, but fulfils them. He had promised a Messiah to Israel, and He sent the Messiah. But God had made no promises, no commitments, to the Gentiles. Consequently, upon Israel's rejection of their Messiah, mercy, sovereign mercy, flows out to us Gentiles: and for this we glorify God, for that is the purpose of this mercy--that God may be glorified. The prophet Micah, in the last verse of his prophecy (Micah 7:19, Micah 7:20), illustrates exactly this distinction between "the truth" of God toward Israel, and "the mercy" of God toward the Gentiles: "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the loving kindness [or, mercy] to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." To Jacob the blessings were announced by God (above that ladder of Genesis 28:1-22) with the words: "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac" (Genesis 28:13). The birthright which Esau despised and forfeited, Jacob had; and the promises were to be fulfilled in faithfulness. But to Abraham it was sheer mercy. His father was a Chaldean idolater, and probably he had been so (Joshua 24:2; Joshua 24:3; Joshua 24:14; Joshua 24:15). But "the God of glory" appeared to him out of hand, without cause, right in the midst of Chaldean iniquity there at Ur. This was mercy (Acts 7:1). Jehovah "redeemed" Abraham (Isaiah 29:22).

Now for the present a "hardening in part" has befallen Israel, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," as we saw in Chapter Eleven.

It is striking that in the present passage, Romans 15:9-29, Gentiles are named ten times, the Gentile number! Five of these instances are from the Old Testament prophecies themselves. Let us study these quotations with especial attention:

9 Therefore will I give praise unto Thee among the Gentiles, And sing unto Thy Name (Psalms 18:49). 10 And again He saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people (Deuteronomy 32:43). 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; And let all the peoples praise Him (Psalms 117:1). 12 And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be the root of Jesse, And He that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles; On Him shall the Gentiles hope (Isaiah 11:10).

There are three remarkable points about these passages:

I They are selected from the three great divisions of the Scripture: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44).

II There is a progress in the selections.

1. Christ Himself gives praise unto God from among the Gentiles. The quotation is from Psalms 18:49, where David becomes a distinct type of Christ, David’s coming Seed, as see next verse. See also Psalms 22:22, where, after the awful description of the cross in the first part of that Psalm (Psalms 22:1-21)--the Divine forsaking, pierced hands and feet, parted garments--the Lord begins thus the resurrection praise:

"I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: In the midst of the assembly will I praise Thee." This "assembly" began, of course, with those Jewish believers in that upper room, to whom He first appeared; but that "assembly" shortly included Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48 and on). But we note here in Romans 15:9 that Christ Himself is celebrating Jehovah’s work,--giving praise "among the Gentiles."

2. Romans 15:10 : The next step is, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. Now, in Scripture, "His people" are always Israel; and, for awhile, as we find in the Acts, the Gentiles were "rejoicing with His people": it was with Jerusalem as the center, and the apostles and elders there recognized even by Paul, even after preaching to the Gentiles had begun (Acts 15:1-41). [270]

[270] Of course, the Church, the Body of Christ, was begun at Pentecost, But, though God would by and by send Paul to show the heavenly calling and character of the Church, yet God, in great patience and grace, called upon Israel first to repent and believe (Acts 3:26). So that, for a while,--even to Paul’s officially closing Israel’s national door, in Acts 28:25-28,--the Gentiles rejoiced "with" God’s people Israel: it was "to the Jew first." But it is not so now! "There is no difference between Jew and Greek" must be preached, if God’s Word is to be followed. Movements that put the Jew, now, in a place of preference, as "first," do the poor Jew,--a common sinner, undistinguished from the Gentile,-- the greatest disservice possible! They protect him from judgment as guilty before God (Romans 3:19). Instead, Paul went about to "provoke to jealousy" the Jews, by boasting in Christ, as himself the very "chief of sinners," saved by grace, not by the Law!

3. Romans 15:11 : The next passage calls for direct praise from the Gentiles, with no distinct notice taken of Israel as a people; for the Greek reads: Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and let all the peoples [plural] praise Him (as the R.V. correctly translates).

III

Romans 15:12 : There is a looking forward to the Millennial reign in the quotation from Isaiah 11:10 : the Root of Jesse, He that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles. On Him [who shall thus reign] shall the Gentiles hope. Gentiles, thank God, may now freely "hope," and look to Him who will rule all the earth, during the Millennium. All nations then will be directly dependent upon the Lord, enthroned in the Millennial temple at Jerusalem. How blessed is the Gentile who now learns to "hope in Christ" (Ephesians 1:12) before He "arises to reign"! Verily there will be a reward! As Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:8 : "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the Seed of David, according to my gospel." How few Christians connect their Savior with David! They remember Romans 1:4, but not Romans 1:3. So they forget His royal earthly claims! In this passage we saw (in Romans 15:8) a setting forth of Christ as a "minister of the circumcision"; but this ministry was duly accomplished. It did not extend to the Gentiles, for no promises had been made to the Gentiles. Consequently, Gentiles are brought under Divine "mercy," and "hope" in Christ, wholly apart from Jewish connections; though recognizing our Lord’s past and future ministry to the circumcision. [271]

[271] God had made arrangements with Israel at Sinai, had given them promises conditioned on their obedience. This limited God’s action to the fulfilment of these commitments to Israel. "Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." But, at the cross, all was ended. Sin rose to its height, and transgression of the Law to its climax. When the Jews "killed the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:16), that Law which distinguished the "circumcision in the flesh" was "abolished" (Ephesians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14). God having thus wound up matters with Israel, and being, of course, entirely tree from any covenant with or commitment unto the Gentiles, could act according to the movements of absolute Love, which He is. The highest action of Love, consequently, succeeded the highest action of human sin: man crucified God’s Son; God sends the Holy Ghost, baptizing believers into vital union with that Son raised from the dead and glorified. The Church, the Body of Christ, stands in the nearest possible relation to God of any creature!

Romans 15:13 : Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Look at this great thirteenth verse: how it blossoms out before us! Here is a verse packed full!

1. The name here given to God thrills our hearts: The God of Hope. Hope looks forward with exultation for ever and ever! We remember Romans 5:2 : "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; and Romans 12:12 : "rejoicing in hope"; and also that hope, along with faith and love, abides forever, for God will be opening up new treasures of grace to us through all the ages to come! See Ephesians 2:7.

God is called the "God of peace" in Romans 15:33; Romans 16:20; and in Php 4:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, Hebrews 13:20; and, of course, peace is fundamental: Christ made peace by the blood of His cross. But we are not to be content with peace alone. Many

would stop at Romans 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." But in this present verse God speaks as the God of hope; and He wants us filled with all joy as well as peace, so as to be abounding in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, if God is the God of hope, looking forward with expectancy and delight to the certain, glorious things of the future, then a dejected, depressed, discouraged saint of His is yielding to a spirit directly contrary to His will, which is, for each of us, that we abound in hope.

2. It is God Himself alone who can fill us with all joy and peace, making us to abound in hope. We cannot transform ourselves!

3. It is by the power of the indwelling Spirit that we are to "abound in hope." Some human beings are naturally introspective and gloomy. Others are naturally jovial and buoyant: but the joy in which we as believers are to abound does not in any wise flow from nature, but from the direct, inworking energy of the Holy Ghost. Some of the most naturally "happy" people of the world, "have been thrown into desperate trouble of soul either by the Spirit's convicting them of their sin, or, perhaps, by the withdrawal of natural supports on a death-bed without hope; while some of those whose tendency was discouragement and despondency almost to hopelessness have, "by the power of the Holy Ghost," been filled with all joy and peace, and have abounded in hope day by day and hour by hour!

4. It is in a believing heart that these blessed results are brought about. When asked by the Jews in the Sixth of John, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" our Lord replied, "This is the WORK of God [the one thing He asks of you], that ye BELIEVE on Him whom He hath sent." The "believing" of Romans 15:13 is, of course, that "living by faith in the Son of God" of which Paul speaks in Galatians 2:20. It is stepping out on the facts God reveals about us; and learning to live the life of trust. The verse we are considering is the highest development of Christian experience revealed in this great, fundamental Epistle of Romans. Deeper things will be elsewhere unfolded,--as, for instance, the Indwelling Christ of Ephesians 3:14-21. But, as Jude 1:20 tells us, we must "build up ourselves on our most holy faith." Paul declares that the "law" that prevails in this dispensation is a "law of faith" (Romans 3:27); and that the obedience into which we are called is the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; Romans 16:26).

5. It is the will of God that you and I--all believers--be "filled with all joy and peace in believing,"--blessed spiritual state! that we may "abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost." Some are content if they merely find the way of salvation through faith in the blood of Christ. They are much given to talk about being "saved by grace," but they are not much exercised about holy living. A second class of believers become deeply exercised as to a life of "victory over sin." These, of course, if instructed aright, accept the wondrous fact that they died with Christ, and are now on resurrection ground, freed from sin, and from that which gave sin its power,--the Law. A third class go further, to the Twelfth of Romans, and enter on true Christian service, by presenting their bodies a living sacrifice to God; and discovering thereby His good, acceptable, and perfect will for them--whatever measure of faith He may give them, and to whatever gift or peculiar service He may call them. But here, in this great fountain of water in Romans 15:13, we find that a daily, hourly life "filled with all joy and peace in believing, abounding in hope," is the normal state for every one who is in Christ!

It will not do for us to make excuses for ourselves: God is the God of hope! His yearning is to fill you and me with all joy and peace, if we will just launch out and believe. Others just as unworthy as we have believed; we will never become "more worthy" of believing. "This poor earth is a wrecked vessel," as Moody used to say. Man is drifting on into the night, and judgment is coming. All the more, then, may the God of hope fill YOU with all joy and peace in believing, that YOU may abound in hope!

Many cherish their doubts, even adducing them as a proof of their humility, which is sad indeed. As Charles F. Deems used to say, "Believe your beliefs, and doubt your doubts; most people believe their doubts, and doubt their beliefs." You can believe. What a wonderful thing to be among those (sadly few!) believers who are filled with all joy and peace, and abound in hope!

We can enter into the benefit of our great apostle Paul’s benedictory prayer in this matter: "Now the God of hope fill you"--for Paul yearned over, prayed over, and had effectual prayer, even, for "those that had not seen his face in the flesh" (Colossians 2:1); and we may assume that God will answer this mighty believing prayer of his on our behalf. And our Great High Priest, who moved Paul to pray, is at God’s right hand, making constant intercession for us!

02.28. Chapter 15B

CHAPTER 15B

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye, yourselves, are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another. 15 But I wrote the more boldly unto you in a measure, as putting you again in remembrance on account of the [especial] grace that was given me of God, 16 that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, administering as priest the gospel of God; that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit

Romans 15:14 : Although Paul had never been in Rome, he kept track of believers throughout the whole Roman world! Now he had said in our first Chapter (Romans 1:8) that he "thanked God through Jesus Christ for them all, that their faith was proclaimed throughout the whole world." This was a remarkable condition,--it was early freshness and vigor of faith! Our present verse has especially to do with those inner engiftments of the Spirit which enabled them with loving hearts and discerning knowledge to look after one another's spiritual needs without any apostle's help. For neither Paul, nor Peter, nor any apostle, had as yet preached the gospel at Rome! Of the Corinthian church also, Paul testifies: "In everything ye were enriched in Christ, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift." Now he says of these believers at Rome that he is persuaded that they are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and therefore really able to admonish one another! But Paul takes the very occasion of their remarkable pristine vigor in the Spirit, to bring before them that special and wonderful commission given him of God to the nations. The ministry of the chosen apostle to the Gentiles was just as needful to establish the Romans (Romans 1:11, Romans 1:12; Romans 16:25) as it was for the Corinthian church, of which Paul himself was directly the "father." So Paul says to the believers at Rome, as he retraces in his mind the contents and manner of the great Epistle God has enabled him to send to them,--and which he is preparing to close:

Romans 15:15-16 : All the more boldly, therefore, in a measure, I wrote unto you [in this epistle] on account of the [peculiar] grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, officially administering the gospel of God; that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. And now Paul is reminding these Roman Christians--"putting them again in remembrance," of this great special grace that had been given him of God, that he should act toward the Gentiles as God's official administrator, ministering as such the gospel of God. This "grace" was God's mighty outfitting of His servant Paul for this ministry among the Gentiles, or nations, to whom he was sent.

Paul always carried about the consciousness that he was Christ's chosen vessel to the Gentiles. Most people are ignorant that he was so, and regard Paul simply as "an apostle," "one of the twelve," and so forth. But observe that the words of Romans 15:15-16 go far beyond mere apostleship. The word which characterizes Paul's ministry here is, in Greek, leitourgos. It is difficult to convey the meaning of it by any one English word. Alford renders it "ministering priest" (of Christ

Jesus for the Gentiles); Darby, "an administrator officially employed"; Thayer, in his Lexicon, shows its original meaning to be, "a public minister, a servant of the state." The simple translation "minister of Christ Jesus" will scarcely do, because every preacher (and in a sense rightly) would deem himself to be thus described. [272]

[272] We cannot press the liturgical meaning In the sense of a literal priestly function here; for the same Greek word is used in Chapter Romans 13:6 concerning public officials they are said to be God's ministers (leitourgoi). Again, in Romans 15:27, we find that the Gentiles owed it to the Jerusalem saints "to minister unto them in carnal things." Here the verb form of the same word is used. See its use further in 2 Corinthians 9:12, and Php 2:17; Php 2:25; Php 2:30. But that its use here makes Paul a special official of God no one should doubt.

1. It is evident from Peter's preaching, in Acts 10:35; Acts 11:18, that Gentile salvation had begun,--apart from Jewish things altogether. "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable unto Him": though not, of course, accepted, saved, except through the preached name and work of Christ (Acts 11:14). "To the Gentiles also God hath granted repentance unto life."

2. It is also evident from Paul's words in Romans 15:16, that he had a special ministry toward the Gentiles: that I should be a minister (leitourgos) of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles. Just as when Israel, already God's people while in Egypt, had sent to them Moses, who brought them out, and with whose ministry they were Divinely connected by God; so Paul was sent to the Gentiles, to whom the door of salvation had already been opened. And as God laid Israel on Moses, so laid He the Gentiles on Paul. Paul it is whose gospel, without mixture of even those Jewish things permitted in measure back at Jerusalem (Acts 21:20), was administered in priestly fashion among the nations, telling of the One Great Offering for sin for the whole world (and not for Jews only); that the offering up (prosphora) of the Gentiles might [thus] be made acceptable (euprosdektos). This last is the same word as in 2 Corinthians 6:2 : "Now is the acceptable time": the time when God freely accepts, without Law, convenant-conditions, or religious forms, any and all!

3. It is also evident from Romans 15:16 that apart from this full-grace gospel of Paul, the offering up of the Gentiles could not be "gladly acceptable" by God. For Israel had had a Law, with forms and ordinances. The Gentiles had had nothing: and to them as having nothing, Paul's grace-gospel came,--asking nothing, but bestowing everything!

4. Finally, it is evident that this acceptance of the Gentiles involved the presence and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. This began at Cornelius' house in Acts Ten: "The Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the Word." It was continued in Samaria, in Acts Eight. Paul's question to those at Ephesus in Acts Nineteen was: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Even of the Galatians, mixed up in mind as they were, it was said: "He that supplieth to you the Spirit"!

Ah, we do not realize our privileges! Such an apostle as Paul-- is not only ours, but God laid us Gentiles upon this man as He laid Israel upon Moses. Alas, Moses complained of the burden (Numbers 11:11-15). But Paul complained not, even of "that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 11:29). Paul it was who "most gladly would spend and be spent out for our souls" (2 Corinthians 12:15). Paul it was who longed "for fruit in us also, as in the rest of the Gentiles"; who also "prayed with agonizing for as many as

had not seen his face in the flesh" (Colossians 1:2, .Gr.).

So, as God hearkened to Moses regarding wretched Israel at Sinai (Exodus 32:7-14),--for he had made Moses responsible for them, may we not believe that God yet remembers the prayers for the Gentiles of this devoted servant Paul?

We know, from Romans Eleven, that the day will come when Gentiledom will be "cut off" as the sphere of God's direct blessing (through their unbelief and refusal of Divine "goodness"), and Israel, the natural branches, will be grafted in again. But we cannot but feel that some (and that in prominent places) are forgetting Paul with his "offering up of the Gentiles," and turning slavishly back, with flattering words, to Jews,--if not to Judaism! The glorious grace of the Pauline gospel to the Gentiles may be corrupted, despised, rejected, by fawning upon the Jew as being a special being,--different from common sinners. When God said, "There is no distinction" between Jew and Greek, that matter was settled! The wall of partition is down,--broken down by God! Woe to those who, under any claim, build it up! When God's time comes, after "His whole work"--of indignation toward Israel, He will Himself build up Zion. Meanwhile hearken to Paul! [273]

[273] A certain Jewish mission worker declared that when God caused the birth of Isaac from barren Sarah, He "infused into the blood-stream of his descendants new life," which differentiated them from the rest of the human race! Now this is not merely twaddle, but an accursed lie, which denies the whole gospel of God in this book of Romans! For if God iterates and re-iterates one thing, it is universal equal human sinnerhood! Nay, it there are special sinners in Romans they are Jews: "For the name ot God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Jews).

Romans 15:16 has been passed lightly over at this Gentile end of the dispensation. Gentiles have taken over "religious" things, such as the Jews and heathen had, and have not regarded that peculiar "offering up" of them, through Paul's priestly ministering of the Gospel of God to them. But this is a great verse. It must not be "spiritualized" away into mere figurative speech. The necessity of bowing to this Scripture's teaching that the unclean Gentiles are "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" through their being offered up by Paul, by means of the Gospel, is brought out in Romans 11:17. Today, the Gentiles feel as proud and self-sufficient before God as the Jews of old came to be. And just as the Israelitish branches were "broken off," so will the Gentiles be, by and by, according to the passage just referred to. When the Gentiles are broken off, and the natural branches (Israelites), grafted in again to the root of promise and blessing in Abraham, then, as formerly, the Gentiles, not being "sanctified by the Holy Spirit," can no more worship God as they do now, freely; but they will have to go up from all over the earth, to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, and be subordinated to the priestly nation of Israel. This is brought out in Zechariah 14:16-19.

Ministering the good news of God, and thus making the offering up of the Gentiles acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit,--must cease when the Church is raptured and the gospel which Paul preached has ended its ministry. The Gentiles then are immediately, as before, far away, unclean; Israel. forgiven, cleansed, restored, becomes the priestly nation, unto which the nations must resort as of old for the knowledge of the true God. Not today do the nations have to come "as crawling things licking the dust before Jehovah's glory," as they will do in the Millennium. Words fail us to express the glory of the privilege that today prevails in the humblest gospel meeting as a means of access to God, with an amazing free gospel-welcome to God direct, through the shed blood of Christ, that will cease instantly upon the rapture of the Church, when the Gentiles will no

longer be under the astonishing blessing which has been theirs during the present gospel dispensation through the apostle Paul. In priestly ministration of the gospel he offered up [274] the Gentiles, by which God made them "acceptable"; and upon believing, "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (not as Israel had been, by circumcision and outward religious ordinances).

[274] Meyer thus comments here: "In priestly fashion administering the gospel of God. The gospel is not indeed the offering, but the Divine institute, which is administered (is in priestly fashion served) by the presenting of the offering. The Gentiles, converted, and through the Spirit consecrated as God's property, are the offering which Paul, as the priest of Jesus Christ, has brought to God." In view of this astonishing ministry of Paul, it is no wonder that he writes "boldly,"--very boldly, to the Christians in Rome, although he had not been there. Being "full of goodness and knowledge," they would be ready to be "put in remembrance" that there was one, although absent, who had, as their apostle, acted on their behalf in a general offering of them to God, as Gentiles; and now was lovingly and particularly concerned about their condition as saints,--such an one as made continual prayer concerning them and longed after them (Romans 1:9-11).

17 I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ did not work through me, in order to the [believing] obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached [lit. fulfilled] the gospel of Christ; 20 yea, making it my ambition so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; 21 but, as it is written, They shall see, to whom no tidings of Him came, And they who have not heard shall understand.

Romans 15:17 : The word therefore refers us to that peculiar ministry of Romans 15:16 just described: I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. How different from that of Moses was Paul's ministry! Moses operated under God, beneath the eye of all the nations, humbling the proudest of them, and leading Israel in the wilderness, by a marvelous, continuous, physical miracle, for forty years; with God defending him publicly even to opening the earth to swallow his opposers! There is something overwhelmingly magnificent, outwardly, about Moses' whole life and ministry. Not so with Paul! He shared (and gloried in it) the place of earthly rejection and despising His Lord had; his great desire being to be "conformed unto His death" (Php 3:10). Therefore it requires spiritual discernment to see Paul's place and ministry. Over and over Paul makes statements like that of the present verse, insisting that he and his glorying were before (the unseen) God, and not before men. "God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son"; "We persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Here then, is this "least of all the apostles,"--nay, "less than at least of all saints," to whom God has given this greatest place of all (as Christ promised to the "least"); not only a ministry of being "an apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), "a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Timothy 2:7); but also the official presentation of the Gentiles to God, "offering them up." No wonder that Paul has a "glorying in Christ Jesus" in these things,--things "pertaining to God" indeed! There was no outward pillar of cloud and fire, no visible temple or formal worship; but just as really as God

committed Israel to Moses' hands, so did God give this liturgical ministry toward the Gentiles to Paul, a priest-like office exercised by this "unknown" though "well-known" apostle. This explains the verses which follow:

Romans 15:18 : For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ did not work through me, in order to the [believing] obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed--Paul means to indicate here the absolute distinctiveness of his calling and work. He does not confuse it with or take glory for, the wonderful work of God at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and thereafter (Acts 2:1-47, Acts 3:1-26, Acts 4:1-37, Acts 5:1-42, Acts 6:1-15, Acts 7:1-60, Acts 8:1-40, Acts 9:1-43, Acts 10:1-48, Acts 11:1-30, Acts 12:1-25) by the twelve apostles, whose ministry was to the circumcision: of which twelve Paul was not! (1 Corinthians 15:5). He will speak only of what Christ has done through him, through preaching, and attesting miracle, and the attending presence and power of the Holy Spirit. An example of the "signs" of Romans 15:19, was the "special miracles" at Ephesus: Acts 19:11; Acts 19:12; and an instance of a "wonder" was Paul's shaking off the viper which had bitten him: Acts 28:3-6. All these things set seal to the gospel which Paul preached, as of God. The whole passage needs to be compared with its parallel in 2 Corinthians 10:13-17.

Romans 15:19 : In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached [lit., fulfilled] the gospel of Christ.

What a marvelous, absolutely tireless love-laborer was this man Paul. Illyricum was the next province to Italy. Between Jerusalem and Illyricum lay the province of Syria, with its capital at Damascus, but its spiritual capital Antioch; and next to it Cilicia, with its great center Tarsus, Paul's own home, whither he had been sent by the brethren away from Jerusalem persecution (Acts 9:30) ; and whence Barnabas brought him to the work at Antioch (Acts 11:25; Acts 11:26) ; next province Pamphylia with Perga and Attalia; and above that Pisidia, centered at another Antioch; then Lycaonia, and above that the great and difficult Galatia with the churches Paul founded there; next proconsular Asia, centered at Ephesus, of course, and the mighty work there and the "fighting with beasts"; then at Troas across the Agean came the call from Macedonia, and its cities Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica, the saints of which lay so close to the apostle's heart; then Achaia, centered at Corinth, whence he wrote this present letter to the Romans--vast city, vast wickedness, but much people for the Lord. And so we arrive at Illyricum. And through all these regions just traced, Paul has fulfilled the gospel of Christ; insomuch that Romans 15:23 informs us that he had no more any place in these regions.

Romans 15:20-23 : Yea, making it my ambition so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written, They shall see, to whom no tidings of Him came, And they who have not heard shall understand.

Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you: but now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you--

Hindered--These many labors from Jerusalem to Illyricum had "hindered" Paul from seeing Christians at Rome as he longed to do. In 1 Thessalonians 2:18 he said, "We would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us,"--by some direct, desperate stand.

But here, multitudinous labors have hindered. Compare Romans 1:13.

These many times shows how continually Roman Christians were on his mind and in his desire. And now let us enter into the astonishing statement of Romans 15:23, having no more any place in these regions. Everybody converted? No. All the saints established and perfected? No. Yet there was the urge to go on where no tidings of Him had come. This is the highest, deepest, widest, most Christ-like emotion that ever filled a human breast. How we should weep over our far departure from the whole spirit of Christ and His great apostle in this matter of preaching on and on and on? Instead of the passion to pay our debt to every creature by carrying the good tidings to them, we are rather churlish if they do not come to the buildings we have set up. We say, Why do they not come to church? and we talk of the "unchurched masses." But God did not tell them to "come to church." He told us to carry the glad tidings to them! Let us cease chiding men for failing to come to hear the gospel, instead of our obeying the Lord and going with it to them where they are! The church at Jerusalem "settled down," until God drove the saints out after Stephen's martyrdom, so that they "went about preaching the Word." It is, indeed, the unusual Christian who has written in his soul, as had Paul, the ambition to carry the gospel where the name of Christ had never been on the tongue, and thus, not merely to build on an already laid foundation! To such missionaries Romans 15:23 is fulfilled? When they return to England, or America, or Sweden, it is ever in their hearts, "I have no more any place in these regions." [275]

[275] A letter from a missionary just returned "on furlough" from China, reads: I asked the Board as a special favor to allow me to take a short furlough, and I am hoping to return to China in September. My heart is longing more every day to get back to China. The things I miss here in others, the ways in which I see time, energy, and money wasted for the things that do not satisfy,--all these things and others make me realize more than ever how subtly Satan works to seal away our hearts and keep us from God's best, and makes me desire more than I ever did in my life that I shall not fail of His grace, and that as He works in me and deals with me, these days I may respond fully, so that as I go back to China, if He wills it so,--I may go in the fulness of the grace of Christ, to fulfil all His will in and through me. How the world needs Christ!"--L. S.

And, by the way, a longing to come unto any field (prayed over persistently), will probably land one in that field! So it was with Paul.

Romans 15:24 : Whensoever I proceed [on my course) unto Spain for I hope [proceeding thus] to see you, and by you be brought on my way thither, after I have in some measure satisfied my long-cherished desire for your company.

Proceed unto--The same Greek word is used of Christ's pursuing His path: "He set His face to proceed [on His course] to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51); "I must proceed [on my course] today and tomorrow" (Luke 13:33) : "The Son of Man proceedeth [on His course] as it is written of Him" (Luke 22:22).

We see here Paul's consciousness of his "course," appointed by the Lord, which he had not finished even at his first imprisonment (Php 3:12-14); but which he had finished at his second imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:8).

Unto Spain--Paul's purpose to go to Spain, where Christ had not been named, is re-affirmed as a fact in his Divinely-purposed course, in Romans 15:28 : "I will go on by you unto Spain."

Meanwhile his longing to have fellowship with, and be a blessing to, those who were already believers at Rome, is very strong. He cannot bear to go on to Spain without being, for a while, at least, comforted with their fellowship. In some measure [276] --Paul's meaning is evidently not brought out in either the A.V. or R.V. Conybeare's rendering is, "After I have in some measure satisfied my desire for your company," or, "I must to some extent at least have my fill of your company." It is a wholly loving expectancy!

[276] "In some measure' (apo merous) is an affectionate limitation of emplestho, implying that he would wish to remain much longer than he anticipated being able to do," says Dean Alford.

Paul also hopes, not only to see these Christians at Rome, but, to be brought on my way [to Spain] by you. Thus was the Gospel "furthered" in those days,--yea, and even yet! For we find today companies of saints who by prayer and gifts, send the preacher on to other fields! [277]

[277] "This phase, brought on the way,' or sent forward,' refers to a semi-official custom of the apostolic churches in furnishing an escort to go some or all the way with a departing minister or missionary. Paul is here most likely asking that one or more of the Roman brethren be sent with him to Spain. See Acts 15:3; Acts 20:38; Acts 21:5; 1 Corinthians 16:6-11; 2 Corinthians 1:16; Titus 3:13; 3 John 1:6"--Stifler. Paul is not asking for a "collection" from the Roman believers, but asking that blessed fellowship in all things of the Spirit which pertained then and now pertains to every servant of Christ and to all believers; to set forward in every way those who are going forth with the blessed gospel.

25 But now, (I say), I am proceeding unto Jerusalem, to minister unto the saints. 26 For [the saints in] Macedonia and Greece have gladly undertaken to make a certain Contribution for the poor among the saints that are in Jerusalem. 27 Yea, they have gladly done it; and they are indeed their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their [Jewish] spiritual things, they owe it also to minister unto them in earthly matters. 28 When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. 29 And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

Romans 15:25-26 : Paul now announces the purpose of his visit to Jerusalem (to carry a love-gift to the saints there), which was brought out only in a general way in Acts 24:17. This was no hasty journey. In 2 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 9:2 he had written to the Corinthians in Greece:

"As touching the ministering to the saints, I know your readiness, . . . that Greece hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them" (Christians north of them, in Macedonia,--Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea).

It was a deliberate act of love on the part of the Gentile saints. It is called a special "grace" from God at least six times by Paul in II Corinthians Eight and Nine. It led the Gentile Christians into special consecration. Paul himself, together with other brethren, took this great offering back to Jerusalem, to seal in person unto them this fruit of the blessed gospel! This was probably in God's sight the highest act of Paul's whole ministry, fulfilling our Lord's words: "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them"; "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Not only was this offering for the poor in Jerusalem the "good pleasure" of the Gentile Christians, and gladly given, but Paul recounts that in Macedonia this grace of grateful giving to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, whence the gospel first came, led to their

"beseeching Paul with much entreaty" to take what they gave--"of their own accord and even beyond their power"; "in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality!"--they first, "having given their own selves to the Lord"--evidently in special meetings for prayer and consecration to this ministry of giving!

Here, then, we have the original order of "foreign" missions: The grace of God so abounds in the hearts of those in the unreached lands when they hear the gospel, that they joyfully insist, amidst persecution and poverty, on sending back, to those whence the gospel first went forth, a ministry of money, in grateful love! Instead of asking to be "supported" from the "home field," they entreat to be permitted to send back a love gift for any poor saints there! [278]

[278] One wonders what the re-action would be in some comfortable church in America or England, Holland or Scandinavia, if some morning it were publicly announced, "Gifts for the poor among us have just arrived from the persecuted, poor, but happy saints in China, and India, to whom we have sent out the gospel!" Would we really have humility enough to receive such gifts? On the other hand, as regards the poor among the saints at Jerusalem, Olshausen trenchantly remarks that the community of goods of Pentecostal days "evidently had not lasted long!" However, in answer to this, let us remember that even in those days absolute right of possessing private property was recognised: "While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?" (Acts 5:4); and that the community of goods was evidently Divinely set forth at the time as a sign to the Jews of the power of the love of Christ which completely set aside private claims; and, finally, that the epistles of Paul, which are the charter of the Church of God, indicate the path for "them that are rich in this present age, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Timothy 6:17; 1 Timothy 6:19). They may continue, in comparison to others, rich, having thus the responsibility of stewards, as some must have. Finally, we must remember our Lord’s words: "The poor ye have always with you." But would even poor saints here be willing to be known as having received contribution from "the foreign mission field"?

Romans 15:27 : Yea, they have gladly done it; and they are indeed their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their [Jewish] spiritual things, they owe it also to minister unto them in earthly matters.

Here then is the reason for our special ministry toward Jewish Christians, and, as Gentiles, to help the Jews in any way possible: we have been made partakers of their "spiritual things." It is not that they are at present recognized, nationally, by God: they are not. But we are "their debtors." So we should be ready to "minister" to them, as we are able.

"Their Spiritual things" does not mean that our calling is Jewish or earthly, in any sense. See Chapter Eleven.

Here is announced also the principle which Paul states concerning himself to the Corinthians: "If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?" . . . And although he "did not use this right," he declares that "the Lord ordained, that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:11; 1 Corinthians 9:12). To the Levites only, among the tribes, was given no inheritance, Jehovah saying, "I am their inheritance." But others were to minister unto them of their substance, so that, when the Israelites were faithful, the Levites

had plenty; and when Israel forgot Jehovah, they forgot the Levites.

Romans 15:28 : When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.

Note Paul’s confidence of the success of his ministry; also that giving is regarded as the proper "fruit" which "seals" to other believers the reality of our confession. See 2 Corinthians 9:13 about this same matter: "Seeing that through the proving of you [Grecian Christians] by this ministration they [the Jerusalem poor] glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ." Confession of Christ that does not result in ministering to others, is not an obedient confession.

Romans 15:29 : And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ. This verse should put to silence those who claim that Paul was "below" his apostolic calling in this journey to Jerusalem. First, Paul had a holy, inspired knowledge that he would get to Rome; second, he had the same knowledge that when he should come, it would be not on a lower plane than his full apostolic message, but "in the fulness of the blessing of Christ."

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive [lit., agonise] together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31 that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; 32 that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and may refresh myself in your fellowship. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Here Paul makes the most solemn appeal for the supplications of the saints to be found in all his epistles. "Prayer changes things!" And many things needed to be wrought by God, if Paul’s Divinely-guided journey to Jerusalem was to be successful.

First, there was the inveterate hatred of the Jews toward Paul as the minister of grace to the Gentiles; the Jews were indeed "disobedient." Paul describes them in 1 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:16. [279]

[279] "The Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always; but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

Second, there was the natural disinclination even on the part of Jewish Christians, through prejudice and pride, to accept for their poor an offering at the hands of Gentiles.

Third, there was the constant willingness on the part of the Roman governors of Judea to "gain favor" with the Jews by yielding as far as possible to their demands in matters of their religion. All these difficulties had to be overcome,--and by what means? By God’s appointed way--through prayer.

Paul therefore in Romans 15:30-33, beseeches and that by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and by the love wrought in believers by the Holy Spirit, that they agonize (Greek, agonidzo, the word used of contestants wrestling in Greek games), together with Paul in their prayers to God for these things: for, the Jews being entrenched in Satanic opposition to Christ and His gospel, Paul asks the Christians at Rome to pray that he may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea;

again, he asks them to pray that his ministration for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; and that, that he may come to the Roman Christians in joy through the will of God, and together with them be refreshed.

Now God answered these prayers, though bearing long; for Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea two years: and came a prisoner to Rome, suffering shipwreck by the way! Yet in due time all three things were brought about by prayer! [280]

[280] It is astonishing (and the more so the more we study it) how God makes His work in this world depend on the prayers of His saints! Even His processes of judgment wait for "the prayers of the saints" (see author's Revelation, p. 121). And we know, from 1 Timothy 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:2, that the saints' living "a tranquil and quiet life, in all godliness and gravity" is brought about through their faithful prayers "for all men, for kings, and all (hat are in high place." Alas, how sadly this duty has been neglected,--and with consequences of what dire national unrest and trouble and disturbance of that outward tranquility and quietness wherein the gospel best is proclaimed, and the church built up! (Acts 9:31.) Paul begs the Prayers of all the churches to whom he writes (except the Galatians!) "Doors for the word" were to be opened through their prayers; "boldness," "utterance," that the gospel might be "made manifest,"--all waited on their prayers! Epaphras, the Colossian, was a good example of what kind of praying we should do! See Colossians 4:12; Colossians 4:13 : "A bondservant of Christ Jesus, always agonizing for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." The beautiful benediction of Romans 15:33, The God of peace be with you all, shows how fully at peace was the apostle's heart, and how fully in God's will! Also, His overflowing love for the saints. For the "God of peace" to be with us, is more than salvation: it is to be conscious of him--in peace! Amen!

02.29. Chapter 16

CHAPTER 16 Phoebe the Deaconess, Carrying the Epistle, Earnestly Commended to Roman Christians. Romans 16:1-2.

Loving Salutations to Particular Saints and Assemblies in Rome. Romans 16:3-16.

Warnings against Those Causing Divisions and Stumbling. Romans 16:17-20.

Salutations from Paul’s Fellow-workers. Romans 16:21-23.

Ascription of Praise through Jesus Christ to God only Wise: Who is Revealing through Paul’s Establishing Gospel the Mystery Heretofore Concealed. Romans 16:25-27.

1 I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church that is at Cenchreae: 2 that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self.

Romans 16:1-27 is neglected by many to their own loss. It is by far the most extensive, intimate and particular of all the words of loving greeting in Paul’s marvelous letters. No one can afford to miss this wonderful out pouring of the heart of our apostle toward the saints whom he so loved--which means all the real Church of God!

Romans 16:1-2 : Phoebe, a deaconess of the assembly, in the town of Cenchreae, the eastern seaport of Corinth, (about nine miles distant from that important city) is to carry to Rome this great Epistle! She had business in Rome,--probably legal or official business. (See Conybeare’s note here.) She was evidently a devoted and prominent Christian,--a deaconess of the Cenchrean assembly. This, together with her evident business ability (for she is traveling to the world metropolis in connection with her affairs), made this entrustment to her of this great Epistle to the Romans humanly safe;--and through the Apostle’s prayers and those of the saints at Corinth (where Paul is writing the Roman Epistle) absolutely safe. She is commended to the saints at Rome,--with all which that beautiful word "commended" contains (cf. Romans 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 10:18); and the saints are not only to receive her in the Lord, worthily of saints (for the saints should be devoted to receiving one another!) but they are asked to assist her in her affairs in any way that they may find her needing help; for, says Paul, she herself hath been a helper of many and of mine own self. Let us also mark those who, like Phoebe, are "helpers," and give ourselves to assisting them, both by prayer and by personal service; for the Lord will approve this, in His Day! As to Phoebe’s being called a deaconess (diakonon) of the Cenchrean assembly, [281] note that she was recognized by that church as designated of the Lord to her ministry, and was called by the name "deaconess." Let us not shun Scripture terms. Dorcas, in Acts 9:36, was "full of good works which she did," yet she is not called a deaconess. It is plain that both deacons and deaconesses were known in the early Church. (Elders, who would "rule,"-- 1 Timothy 5:17 --were, always, of course, men.)

[281] Why both the King James and the Revised Versions should translate the same word deacon when it applies it to men (1 Timothy 3:8; 1 Timothy 3:10), and servant or minister when applied to women, let others explain. 1 Timothy 3:11 describes women-deacons evidently. As William Kelly (Romans: p. 274) says, "We know from elsewhere that elderly females held a position in which they rendered official or quasi-official service in the assembly where they lived. Phoebe was one of these of the port of Corinth, Cenchreae." In our indignant rejection of papal pretenses and ecclesiastical man-made officialdom, we are apt to swing the pendulum too far, and refuse to recognize those whom God raises up as elders, deacons, and deaconesses. To claim that Timothy and Titus "have no successors" as direct apostolic delegates with authority "to appoint elders in every city," and that therefore eldership is no longer possible, is to ignore two great facts: first, that it is the Holy Spirit Himself Who makes men elders (Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28), and second, that the Lord gave to Paul to write public letters describing the qualifications of both bishops (that is, elders), and also deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-16; Titus 1:1-16). If the ministry of Timothy and Titus as "apostolic delegates" was purely personal and ended with them, then the instructions would have been in private, and not have been left to the Church at large! For what profit would instructions about the selection of elders, deacons, and deaconesses be, if there were to be none such, after Timothy and Titus? We accept fully all those directions concerning women given by Paul. Women are not to be arbiters of doctrine, nor to usurp authority over men. This, however, does not hinder their praying publicly, and testifying (prophesying), if they have their heads obediently covered; nor does it hinder their being recognized,--as was Phoebe, as deaconesses. And it should humble the pride of some of us to find Phoebe, a woman, carrying this mighty fundamental Epistle of the gospel of God--more important than the Law of Moses!--to the center of the Gentile world!

3 Salute Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom i not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 and [salute] the church that is in their house. Salute Epaenetus my beloved, who is the first fruits of Asia unto Christ. 6 Salute Mary, who bestowed much labor on you. 7 Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me. 8 Salute Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord. 9 Salute Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10 Salute Apelles, the approved in Christ. Salute them that are of the [household] of Aristobulus. 11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Salute them of the [household] of Narcissus, that are in the Lord. 12 Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute Persis the beloved, who labored much in the Lord. 13 Salute Rufus the chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren that are with them. 15 Salute Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them. 16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you!

Romans 16:3-4 : Prisca (Latin name of which Priscilla is the diminutive), who, with her husband Aquila (Acts 18:1-3) had toiled with Paul, had, at some time untold, laid down their own necks, risking their lives in such fashion as to call forth the thanks, not only of Paul, but of all the assemblies of the Gentiles.

Romans 16:5 : There was also an assembly of saints [which gathered] in their house. We see here, in God’s naming Priscilla first, that she was probably superior in spiritual intelligence and

activity to her husband. Of course Aquila is recognized as the head of his house, as we see from Acts 18:2 : "A certain Jew, named Aquila, with his wife Priscilla." But in Acts 18:26, when they are inviting eloquent, poorly-instructed Apollos to their home, it is Priscilla whose humble discernment and gospel earnestness seem to be foremost: "When Priscilla [282] and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the Way of God more accurately." Compare 2 Timothy 4:19 : "Salute Prisca and Aquila,"--personal salutations. But where the assembly is concerned, as in 1 Corinthians 16:19 (for this devoted pair had their house open in Ephesus, also, for an assembly of the saints), Aquila, as head of the house, is named first. The position and ministry of sisters in Christ is not at all unrecognized or suppressed in Paul's Epistles! [283] [282] For this order, see Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, and R. V.

[283] The ministry of women in the early Church is strikingly brought out in Romans 16:1-27. The list includes Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, and Julia. We read that they labored "in the Lord"-- "labored much in the Lord," facing dangers generously, and were intrusted (as Phoebe) with the deaconess' office. Now in what did their "labor" consist? Certainly not merely in getting chicken dinners for preachers! It is a spiritual activity here spoken of! As Paul says of Euodia and Syntyche, in Php 4:2; Php 4:3, "Help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life." Just so Philip the evangelist had four virgin daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8; Acts 21:9). They did so, of course, with covered heads, according to 1 Corinthians 11:4; 1 Corinthians 11:5, where the distinct direction to women is, not to refrain from the exercise of the gift of prophesying, or praying, but to prophesy with covered head. To claim that these women took public part only in meetings of women, is a pitiful recourse to which many have resorted. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost. In these matters three evils have sprung up, (1) The suppression of woman's voice entirely in the assembly of the saints. (2) The expression of women's earnest desire to serve the Lord, in the forming of independent women's organizations not controlled by the assembly. (3) Where men were fearful in faith, or ungifted, the bold pushing of individual women out to the front into leadership and government, even as "pastors" of assemblies,--leaders of "movements" which have swept into their ranks many untaught souls, to their great harm. Now concerning the first, let any unbiased man study 1 Corinthians 11:4; 1 Corinthians 11:5, and he must see that the gift of "prophecy,"--speaking unto others unto "edification, and comfort, and consolation," was shared alike by men and women. And to claim that it was exercised by women only before other women, is a twisting of Scripture worthy of a modernist! For when Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34 says, "Let the women keep silence in the assemblies: for it is not permitted unto them to speak," the word for "speak" is not didasko, which means to teach authoritatively, involving dominion over men (1 Timothy 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:12); but the word is to "talk," to "talk out,"--Greek, laleo, which would indicate a woman's requesting publicly an answer to some personal inquiry: "If she would learn anything," etc. It does not have to do with that participation in the operation of the Spirit which prophesying and praying do. In 1 Timothy 2:8-10, also, it is evident, as in 1 Corinthians 11:4; 1 Corinthians 11:5, that women engaged in prayer in the assemblies. The words "in like manner," of 1 Timothy 2:9, are connected with the words, "that the men pray"; while the women, as instructed in I Corinthians, are to adorn themselves modestly in their praying. I have often wondered how an "exclusive brother" would have felt when the woman of Luke 8:43 to 48, after touching the Lord and being healed, and shrinking back, was called out by the Lord Himself to "declare in the

presence of all the people for what cause she touched Him, and how she was healed immediately." I once asked certain of them about this. The reply was,--"The Church had not yet begun!" Aye, but these very "exclusives" are very ready to bring in the Law ("as also saith the Law") when they are seeking to suppress woman's laboring in the gospel, by a passage which refers to keeping order in the assemblies. And what temerity to say that our Lord would have called out that woman of Luke 8 to testify in public--if her testifying had been contrary to that order in creation which the Church was to set forth! No one has, I think, greater horror than we, of woman's breaking loose from the place of quietness to the place of publicity and even, alas, to the rulership of men. Isaiah cried concerning the apostate state of Israel, "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them!" That is the state in the world today, and the devil ever seeks to bring it about in the assembly of God. But because some, even many, cast to the winds Paul's distinct direction that a woman take not the place of authoritative teaching or dominion over a man, but remain in quietness,--far be it from us because of these excesses, to shut our eyes to the operation of the Holy Spirit in women, whether it be in testimony or in prayer, and that in the assembly of the saints. There was a wonderful old saint in St. Louis, Mother Gray, humble, teachable, earnest, and mightily filled with the Holy Spirit. When she rose, with her back bowed with many, many years of physical and spiritual labor, and her reverent head covered with her little black bonnet, and began to testify, to exhort, or to pray, every one was moved, and even the Plymouth Brethren (my best helpers not only in St. Louis, but generally, -- wherever it has been my privilege to preach), said to me, "Mother Gray seems an exception!" No, she was not an exception, any more than was dear old "Auntie" Cook, in Chicago, who with another sister prayed unceasingly for D. L. Moody till he was mightily anointed with the Spirit of God. And there was "Holy Ann," in Toronto, her little, feeble frame bent with years, but filled with the Spirit of God. Standing up to testify in the great Cooke's Church one afternoon, being very short, she gave her hand to be lifted, and stood on the pew! And we shall never forget her exhortation, for God was in it! "The letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life." Ministry in the Spirit by a woman is different altogether from her taking over authority, or infringing upon the order of the assembly of God: "The Lord giveth the Word: The women that publish the tidings are a great Host" (Psalms 68:11 R. V.). The general secretary of a well-known faithful missionary society told us recently that they had 20 women volunteers for missionary work, to one man! These are indeed days of terrible declension, or the proportion would not be such!

Salute Epaenetus my beloved . . . the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ--probably converted in Paul's great three years' mission in Ephesus, the capital of proconsular Asia, which is here referred to. We always specially treasure first converts!

Romans 16:6 : Salute Mary,--for she bestowed much labor on you. Mary is a Jewish name, from Miriam. "Much labor" means great spiritual toil on behalf of all the saints and assemblies.

Romans 16:7 : Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, . . . such ones as (hoitines) are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. From Romans 16:21, we learn that three others of Paul's kinsmen were with him at Corinth when he wrote Romans. It is precious to note how, like our Lord Himself, he won his relatives! (See Acts 23:16-22.) But here we have two kinsmen converted before Paul! but who had, however, shared his hardships. Having the apostolic gift (though not among the twelve,) they were "of note" in it. Bishop Moule remarks, "Not improbably these two early converts helped to goad' (Acts 26:14) the

conscience of their still persecuting kinsman, and to prepare the way of Christ in his heart."

Romans 16:8 : Salute Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord: Probably a convert of Paul’s own, dear to him.

Romans 16:9 : Salute Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. How wonderfully does the heart of this apostle retain personal names and maintain special love!

Romans 16:10 : Salute Apelles the approved in Christ. Here is a tried and true saint--well known of all men: "the Lord knows, not we, the tests he stood." Salute them that are of the household of Aristobulus. Bishop Lightfoot holds that this Aristobulus was the grandson of Herod the Great, brother of Herod Agrippa of Judea; "his household," therefore, would be his retainers and servants, who would still, after his death, hold their master’s name. This may be true also of the household of Narcissus, in Romans 16:11. The word "household" does not appear in the Greek, but only "those from" or "of" Aristobulus and Narcissus. It should be noted, also, that in Php 4:22, where "the household of Caesar" is mentioned, the word for household (oikia) is expressed in the Greek. So that Aristobulus and Narcissus may have been prominent Christians, with numerous families connected with them,--children, relatives, retainers, servants. God loves to save whole households!

Romans 16:11 : From his name some think Herodion, Paul’s kinsman, would be connected with the Herodian retainers (see above).

Romans 16:12 : Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute Persis the beloved, who labored much in the Lord. Not all of God’s saints are real laborers in His vineyard. Persis was one whom the saints especially loved, and who gave them much service in her Lord. Note that Paul speaks of the men to whom he is especially attached, (like Stachys in verse 9), as "my beloved," and of a woman as "the beloved." He is careful in these matters.

Tryphaena and Tryphosa were, perhaps, sisters; and "almost certainly, by the type of their names, female slaves"; but Paul would send them a special greeting. For in the Church of God, as James says, "the brother of low degree glories in his high estate; and the rich that he is made low": both which things are impossible for the world!

Romans 16:13 : Salute Rufus the chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine--Perhaps the Rufus of Mark 15:21, the son of Simon of Cyrene, who bore our Lord’s cross! "And his mother--and mine." How great the privilege this unnamed woman had that she should be regarded by this great apostle as a mother to him! And Paul, having left all for Christ, has a "mother" in this saint! See Mark 10:30. Let Christian mothers find here a great field for that wonderful heart of instinctive loving care given by God to mothers,--that they extend their maternal care beyond their own family circle, to all Christians, and especially to all laborers for Christ. The Lord will remember it at His coming!

Romans 16:14 : Here we have five brethren greeted by name, and also the brethren who are with them: Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas. This is the second of the three gatherings of saints in Rome here mentioned. For we must remember that in the early days of the Church believers gathered in great simplicity, according to our Lord’s word: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). It is fast coming

to this, in these last days, also, where the Laodicean spirit claims the property and ecclesiastical importance in this world, of that which is known as "the Christian religion"; while humble saints, finding themselves unfed and very often unwanted in the great "establishments," are gathering more and more as the early Christians did,--in homes, in Bible Conferences--wherever Christ and His Word and real fellowship in the Spirit are the only drawing powers (and how sufficient!).

Romans 16:15 : Next comes another such assembly: all the saints that are with Philologus and Julia--a precious couple!--and Nereus and his sister. It is a growing wonder that Paul in his multitude of burdens, his "care for all the churches," remembers, each and all, these beloved individuals!

Romans 16:16 : Salute one another with a holy kiss. It is remarkable that this direction should be repeated five times: here; in 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14. In the first four, the word "holy" is used, and in the passage in I Peter, "a kiss of love." Sanday declares, "The earliest references to the kiss of peace as a regular part of the Liturgy is in Justin Martyr; then mentioned by Tertullian and others." The simplicity and warmth of early Christian devotion cannot be brushed aside as an "Orientalism" by the colder hearts and more formal and "reserved" manners of our day. "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" was the constant remark in the early days. The word beloved is used four times by Paul in these few verses.

All the churches in Christ salute you. Paul knew these assemblies; the burden of all of them he says pressed upon him daily (2 Corinthians 11:28). He was familiar with their feelings toward the saints in the great world center, and in their name he sends the Christians in Rome their greetings of love. How beautiful, how good and pleasant, were those early days of first love! The mustard seed was yet little--"least of all seeds"; later it was to grow in outward form into the "great tree," where "the fowls of the air" (Satan’s very own) were to find lodging (Matthew 13:31; Matthew 13:32; Matthew 13:4; Matthew 13:19). Would it not be wonderful in our eyes to come upon some community today where the saints were all one! loving one another and thus fulfilling our Lord’s great prayer in John 17? Surely the world has much to stumble at in our divisions and lack of tenderness one toward another. And now, as Bishop Moule beautifully writes in his tender remarks on this Chapter; "The roll of names is over, with its music, that subtle characteristic of such recitations of human personalities, and with its moving charm for the heart due almost equally to our glimpses of information about one here and one there, and to our total ignorance about others; an ignorance of everything about them, but that they were at Rome, and that they were in Christ. We seem, by an effort of imagination, to see as through a bright cloud, the faces of the company, and to catch the far-off voices; but the dream dissolves in wrecks’; we do not know them, we do not know their distant world. But we do know Him in whom they were, and are; and that they have been with Him, which is far better,’ for now so long a time of rest and glory. So we watch this unknown but well-beloved company with a sense of fellowship and expectation impossible out of Christ. This page is no mere relic of the past; it is a list of friendships to be made hereafter, and to be possessed forever in the endless life where personality indeed shall be eternal, but where also the union of personalities in Christ shall be beyond our utmost present thought."

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them. 18 For they that

are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent. 19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoice therefore over you: but I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Romans 16:17-18 : Already, at Rome, we find men willing to bring about divisions among the saints and to become occasions of stumbling. Alas that such an unearthly wonder of beauty as the love and unity of the saints in Christ should be hated and attacked by deadly foes! But so it is, and Paul must write, I beseech you, brethren, mark such ones! And there is the ever present danger of our very Christian charity making us unwilling to deal with righteous sternness toward others who are doing deadly work. If any one was known to be causing selfish divisions, or had become an occasion for others' falling, contrary to the doctrine which they had learned of Paul, their only path was to turn away from them. Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Titus 3:10, 2 John 1:10. Such evil workers were not serving our Lord Christ, but their own belly. What an unutterably fearful spiritual state!--to be amongst those filled with holy love toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and toward one another as fellow members of His Body, and yet be bent on altogether selfish business! Concerning many professors of Christianity John Bunyan said, "A man will go far for his own belly's sake." Compare Php 3:18; Php 3:19; Php 3:20 :

"Many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things: for our citizenship is in Heaven."

Just as in Eden God did not prevent the serpent from tempting Eve,--"beguiling her in his craftiness"; so God does not forcibly prevent false teachers, division-makers, evil workers, stumbling producers, from coming among His saints. But He warns His saints, and expects them to exercise both their discernment and their holy hatred of evil in turning away from such. Also, they "have an Anointing from the Holy One,"-- these saints of God; and this Anointing "teacheth them concerning all things." The saints do not have to depend on their own understanding, but to consult constantly God's Word, and trust the indwelling Spirit. God warns concerning these evil workers that by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent. Beautiful testimony of an all-seeing God to the blessed "innocence" of His own children toward the subtle wickedness of evil doers!

Romans 16:19 : Indeed, Paul declares of these Roman Christians, whose obedience was come abroad unto all men: I rejoice, therefore, over you! Everywhere throughout the Roman world, the simple wholehearted faith and love of the Christians at Rome was talked of (See Romans 1:8). But Paul expresses his concern in the remarkable words, I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. Here is a Divinely safe path for the believer! "Wise unto that which is good," will include: the constant study of God's Word of truth, and careful observation and valuing what is good in the lives about us, and of those whose lives and works we read. Paul sums it up to the Philippians (Php 4:8):

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are reverend, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report (concerning anything or any person); if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, take

account of these things."

Oh, for such a habit of mind--to be constantly "wise unto that which is good!" But the other side, "simple unto that which is evil," must accompany wisdom toward the good. "Simple" here literally means unmixed,--used of wine or metals: pure; and so, "free from guile," "like a little child." We are in the midst of a world of evil, but the Spirit of God will bring us into an attitude of a babe's simplicity toward it all,--as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:20 : "in malice, be ye babes." That whole verse reads, "Brethren, be not children in mind: yet in malice, be ye babes; but in mind be of full age." You see it is wholly possible to grow up from spiritual infancy (in which were the Corinthians, for instance: 1 Corinthians 3:1), into spiritual adulthood, without becoming mixed up at all with the "deep things of Satan, as they say" (Revelation 2:24). Indeed, Paul distinctly warns us against a "knowing" spirit as to worldly things: "If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise, for the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God." "Sophisticated" is what many young people today so desire to be considered: but it is a horrible term, implying experimental knowledge of the unclean things of this world, with all its evil ways. Malice, along with pride, are valued by the world, as exhibiting what they call "spirit"! Let us remember, therefore, that Paul would have us "simple" unto that which is evil. He says in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, "Love thinketh no evil,"--literally, "taketh not account of evil." Evil is all about one, but the believer, abiding in Christ, is kept in sweet simplicity toward it. [284]

[284] "Satan has deceived some good preachers into "personally investigating evil people and conditions," in order to "preach against them"; but God says "The things that are done of them in secret, it is a shame even to speak of." Preach the Word; therein will be found abundant discoveries of evil and denunciations thereof; but, being the Word of God, it is holy, and may safely be used in exposing evil. It is like the sunshine that lights up the foulest alley without being itself defiled! Don't go down the alley "personally," lifting the lids of their garbage-cans; or you will smell of it!

There has been much conjecture as to the character of these early evil workers (of Romans 16:17-18) at Rome: some regarding them as evil teachers, probably of a Jewish character (Sanday); others as early Gnostics, which insidious Satanic philosophy developed itself fully later (Moule). It is not, however, as necessary to know their historic setting, as to take the moral lesson here, and to discern such characters, whatever they be, in our own day among the saints; and turn away from them. The inability to turn resolutely and holily away from false teachers and evil workers, is a mark of spiritual ill-health, decadence, and possibly of the state of spiritual death itself!

Mad dogs are shot; infectious diseases are quarantined; but evil teachers who would divide to their destruction and draw away the saints with teaching contrary to the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles are everywhere tolerated! How ghastly and ruinous is this false toleration! Let us take heed lest we "partake in the evil deeds" of such evil workers! Remember 2 John 1:9; 2 John 1:10; 2 John 1:11.

"Whosoever goeth onward [lit., taketh the lead'--into such progressiveness' as Modernism, Theosophy, New Thought], and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that

giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works."

Romans 16:20 : The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The same word here translated "bruise" is used of Christ's breaking the nations at His second coming (Revelation 2:27). Note that it is the God of peace who will do this blessed delivering! And it is Satan, the great dragon of Revelation Twelve, against whom Michael and his angels go forth to war, that shall be bruised. Note further that it will be under the feet of His saints that God will do this bruising; and note finally that it is to be done shortly. This corresponds to the "quickly" of "Behold, I come,"-- in Revelation 22:7; Revelation 22:12; Revelation 22:20; and is the very phrase used in Revelation 1:1! This is to be held fast by our faith, despite all seeming delays and apparent Satanic victories. Meanwhile, let it astonish us and fill us with exultant joy that the great foe of God, who will have the hardihood to war against Michael and his angels, flees before the saints on earth today who, in heart-subjection to God, "resist" him "steadfast in their faith"! (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9.)

How glorious the prospect of the complete overthrow of Satan, whose unlimited, pride will be abased, and that under the very feet of those he now despises, hates, and seeks to overthrow!

Satan's ruin began (as traced in Ezekiel 28:1-26) in heaven, where he was the "anointed cherub," walking up and down in the midst of "the stones of fire,"--perhaps leading all others in worship. But his heart became lifted up by very reason of his beauty; he corrupted his wisdom by the very reason of his brightness, and he was "cast as profane out of the Mountain of God"--that is from the heavenly council-place of Divine Majesty. Now, though he still has ability to accuse the saints before God (Revelation 12:10), and with his host is in "the heavenlies" (Ephesians 6:12)--that is, not confined to earth, but still permitted the freedom of certain heavenly regions as a heavenly being--yet he will be cast down (after the Church's Rapture, or taking up,) to this earth. And in his rage, therefore, he will inaugurate the Great Tribulation to obliterate God's nation Israel from the earth.

Upon Christ's coming down to earth with His saints and angels, Satan will be cast into the abyss at the center of the earth for a thousand years--The Millennium, (Revelation 20:1-15). At the end of that he will be released for a little season and lead the last great warfare against God and His people. Thence he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented forever (Revelation 20:10). Every believer should be familiar with these facts concerning his great enemy. Shortly, he will be "bruised" by Christ; according to the first prophecy and promise in the Bible: Genesis 3:15 : "He" [the seed of the Woman] "shall bruise thy head" (the Serpent's, Satan's). This is a heartening promise, indeed! Further, there will be no peace, no truce, until it is done. The word "shortly" should fall on our hearts with constant hope, as it did on Paul's.

Then comes the "benediction," as we call it, pronouncing, promising, to the Saints: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. In the last verse of II Corinthians (2 Corinthians 13:14)) Paul says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all"; but seven times "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is pronounced on the saints in the Epistles! Even in the verse from Corinthians quoted above, when the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned, it is still "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ"! Now the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" is defined in 2 Corinthians 8:9 :

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich."

It is as the Head, from whom all the Body is supported and nourished, that Christ thus constantly supplies grace to all believers: For "God gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church"--the Assembly of God. It may be said that grace has God the Father as its Source; with Christ as its Bestower; and the Holy Spirit as its Communicator.

21 Timothy my fellow-worker saluteth you; and Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. 22 I Tertius, who write the epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23 Gaius my host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the treasurer of the city saluteth you, and Quartus the brother.

Romans 16:21 : Now come the salutations to the Christians at Rome from Paul's fellow-workers, from his gracious host, and others. Bishop Moule with his fervid imagination pictures the Epistle to the Romans as written in Gaius' house in one day! "They began at morning on the themes of sin, righteousness, and glory of the present and the future of Israel, of the duties of the Christian life, of the special problems of the Roman Mission; carried their hours along to noon, to afternoon . . . But before he bids his willing and wonderful secretary, Tertius, rest from his labor, he has to discharge his own heart and affections which have already lain in it all the while! And now Paul and Tertius are no longer alone--other brethren have found their way to the chamber--Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Gaius himself, Quartus, and no less a magistrate than Erastus, Treasurer of Corinth. A page of personal messages yet to be dictated from St. Paul and his friends."

Now while we cannot agree that the Epistle was written in one day, the words above bring vividly to our mind the closing scene.

Timothy, my fellow-worker, saluteth you. "I have no man likeminded," wrote Paul to the Phippians (Php 2:19-22), "who will truly care for your state. Ye know that as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in the furtherance of the Gospel." I can think of no higher honor than to be counted by Paul a "fellow-worker." Although Paul's name alone must stand at the beginning of this Epistle to the Romans, as it sets forth the foundation of Christian doctrines as the Lord committed them to him, yet here at the end is Timothy, his "true yokefellow," faithful from the beginning on. Then we have Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, kinsmen of Paul's. Lucius was perhaps, even probably, the "Lucius of Cyrene" of Acts 13:1; and Jason that Jason who had received Paul in Acts 17:5-9; while Sosipater is in all likelihood Sosipater, the son of Pyrrhus, of Berea. These last three, being relatives of Paul's, were, doubtless, Jewish Christians.

Romans 16:22 : Then we have a direct word from Tertius, who transcribed the Epistle for Paul: I, Tertius, who am writing the Epistle, salute you in the Lord!

Next that gracious and generous hearted believer, who kept open house for the whole Church of God, and was at present entertaining Paul, gives his greeting: Gaius, my host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. This doubtless is the Gaius of the very next chapter of the New Testament 1 Corinthians 1 (1 Corinthians 1:14)), whom Paul himself had baptized,--as a man prominent and well known. God gave Solomon "largeness of heart as the sand upon the sea shore," and here is a brother whose hospitality welcomes all the saints. Brother, if you have a longing to be helpful to God's saints, be a Gaius! Count not the things you have as your own, but as belonging to Christ; and, therefore, to be used freely by Christ's own. Our Lord, "while on earth, found one home,--that

at Bethany, thus open fully to Him, and He said to His disciples, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me."

Romans 16:23 : Erastus, the City Treasurer, saluteth you. Sanday thinks that Paul mentions Erastus because of his being "the most influential member of the community." But that would not be like Paul! And the salutation of Erastus is just as genuine as that of Gaius, or of the saint next mentioned here as simply Quartus the brother. Quartus was not a city official, nor prominent, but along go his warm greetings to the Christians at Rome, with Paul's and all the rest!

These tender salutations, both to the Christians at Rome, and from the Christians gathered about Paul in Corinth where he writes, arouse both joy and grief in our hearts today,--joy that in that early day there existed such unity of consciousness in Christ) such brotherly solicitude, such friendly, loving greetings, between those who knew themselves one company, one Body, one band of pilgrims through the dark and dreary desert of this world! and grief that our own day sees such sad divisions, jealousies, contentions, such earthly-mindedness; such loss of the mighty truths of this great Epistle to the Romans,--that our sin has been put away forever by the one sacrifice of Christ, that we died with Him and have been raised into newness of life with Him, and are no longer of this world! Not only grief at the awful Babylonish ecclesiastical structure, worse than paganism, which Satan has built, beginning at this very city of Rome; but deeper grief at the indifference and unconcern at increasing Romish abominations of those calling themselves "Protestants"; at their willingness to be divided--their even glorying in it; at the lack of that burning love so evident in Paul and those with him, and at the loss of separation from this world that crucified our Lord!

25 Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the heralding of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, 26 but now is manifested, and [now] by prophetic Scriptures, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith; 27 to God alone wise, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory unto the ages. Amen!

Romans 16:25-27 : All agree that the Epistle to the Romans is the foundational Epistle. Consequently the great doctrines of Christianity appear there. But it is not generally recognized that in Romans 16:25-27 preparation is made by the Apostle Paul for the unfolding in his further epistles of that great secret of God called "The Mystery,--kept in silence through the times of ages"; the Special revelator of which Paul is. It is necessary to see clearly that in the words to establish you of Romans 16:25, Paul refers to truth beyond that which the Romans already knew. He says in Chapter One he "longs to see them . . . that they might through his teaching, ministry, and fellowship, be established." Those to whom Paul writes in this Epistle had believed; they had become "obedient from the heart to that pattern of doctrine whereunto they were delivered" (Romans 6:17). Therefore when Paul speaks to them of my gospel and of the heralding of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, he cannot be referring to that revelation of God's righteousness which had been "witnessed by the Law and the prophets" (Romans 3:21). Furthermore, these two expressions, my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, seem to be two cooerdinate terms, or possibly we should say, the second characterized the first: for we know that to some (like the Corinthians), who were babes, not full grown, Paul preached only "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Whereas he himself tells us, as we have before observed, of higher, heavenly truth, connected with Christ Jesus and Him

glorified, which he preached to "fullgrown" believers. The Greek word translated establish is used about ten times in the New Testament concerning a settled, stable spiritual condition. We find this first in our Lord's words to Peter: "When once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). It includes not only a knowledge of the truth, and a settled persuasion in Christ of that truth; but also obedience in the power of the Spirit, to the truth: "to the end He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13); and it also involves our testimony: "establish your hearts in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:17).

We shall find the Greek construction of the great doxology of Romans 16:25-27, involved and difficult, unless we place ourselves in the position of Paul himself. He has been writing with the hand of the Spirit upon him, those stupendous truths which we find in this great, fundamental Epistle: the glory, holiness, and righteousness, of the infinite, eternal God; the awful guilt and helplessness of man; the story of the astonishing intervention of a Grace that not only pardoned and justified, but made believing sinners partakers in Christ of the very glory of God Himself; the absolute consistency of all this with God's promises to His earthly nation, Israel; the openness of all Heaven now to all nations, and that on the simplest possible condition--Faith alone! And the Apostle has God in view as the Giver, Christ in view as the means, and the saints in view as the receivers of this mighty bounty!

Therefore this great passage becomes both a doxology, and a commendation with a doxology, of praise to this great God, and a commendation of the saints unto Him. Paul thus commended the saints in Ephesus (Acts 20:32) : "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace." Therefore, if we must seek for grammatical regularity (which we do not need to do in such an overwhelming passage as this!) We may read: Now I commend you to Him that is able to establish you . . . To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ: to whom be the glory unto the ages! The last words, to whom be the glory unto the ages must, it seems, be taken, in view of all other Scriptures, to refer to God. It is to Him the glory comes, through Jesus Christ. This is the constant voice of Scripture. Furthermore, Paul at the beginning declares this gospel to be the Gospel of God concerning His Son, and as we have noted throughout the Epistle, God is the Actor--setting forth Christ as a propitiation. He is the God, "not of Jews only, but of Gentiles also,-- seeing that God is One." "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "It is God that justifieth," and "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" and "We present our bodies living sacrifices to God." Right through the Epistle goes the message of the gospel of God concerning His Son.

Also the double mention of God, first (Romans 16:25), to Him that is able to establish you; and second (Romans 16:27): to the only wise God, draws our minds irresistibly to God the Father as the Source of all this grace and blessing--to whom the ascription of praise goes up.

We notice also that it is God who establishes us according to the preaching of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25); that the message concerning the mystery is brought forth according to the commandment of the eternal God (Romans 16:26); and that the glory goes up to God through Jesus Christ (Romans 16:27), much as the King James Versions reads: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Our blessed Lord Himself insisted beyond all others that the Father be glorified in and through the Son! and thus we find it in Romans [285]

[285] Yet while we feel sure that we should read in verse 27: "Glory to God, through Jesus Christ"; let us never forget that Christ is God the Son: as we read in Romans 9:5 : "Christ--who is over all, God blessed forever!" The question in the last verse of Romans is not at all concerning the deity of Christ, but of the Divine order--both of blessing to us, and of thanksgiving by us.

"THE MYSTERY WHICH HAD BEEN KEPT IN SILENCE"

God had a sovereign purpose to take certain creatures into His own glory, to share in that Glory. And He desired also that these should know Him in His nature as Love, and be with Him, before Him, in that blissful atmosphere of pure love, forever.

These happy creatures were not to be taken from among the "elect angels,"--holy, blessed beings that these are.

It was God's purpose to manifest Himself, all that He is,-- not in holiness and righteousness and truth only; but in His infinite Love, Grace, Mercy, Tenderness, Gentleness, and Patience.

God therefore sent His Son, and lo! God was manifest in the flesh! Christ declared God--all God was: which had not ever been done before, to any of His creatures!

But, after revealing God's love, mercy, and gracious tenderness toward sinners, the Son of God goes to the cross. And there is revealed the eternal unchangeable holiness of God in hatred of sin, together with that love capable of giving the Son of His delight to bear sin for a world that rejected, despised His Son! But the mystery of which Paul speaks was not yet revealed. Was it not prophesied in the Psalms and prophets, and witnessed in the types of all the offerings, that the Son of God, the Messiah, would suffer, and that for human sin? "Thus it is written in the law, the prophets and the psalms, that Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day," our Risen Lord said to His disciples in Luke 24:44-46. And "the mystery" had been "hid in God who created all things,"--hid "from the ages and from the generations."

What then, is the mystery?

It is wrapped up, (though not revealed) in our Lord's words in His great heavenly prayer of John 17:1-26 : For here we find Him praying for a company given Him by the Father out of the world. [286]

[286] Our Lord asks five things for them in John 17:1-26 : (1) That they may be kept--in the Father's name, and from the evil one (John 17:11-15); (2) That they might be sanctified--as not of the world, first in the truth, and second by our Lord's identification with them--"For their sake I sanctify Myself" (set Myself apart to the cross) (John 17:16-19); (3) That they may be "one," "perfected into one," and that in a wondrous union only to be defined "as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they may be in Us" (John 17:21-23); (4) That these may be with Him--and that forever, where He is, to behold His glory into which He would enter upon His ascension (John 17:5, John 17:24).

Now in Romans 16:22, our Lord Jesus says plainly: "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them." So that this glory into which Christ was to enter was to be shared with these whom the Father had given Him.

This, then, is the foundation for the revelation of "the Mystery." Certain were to be brought, in Christ, into the Divine glory! They were to be "manifested with Him in glory," at His appearing. But that would be because they had entered into a glory never before given creatures! It was not given to angels, seraphim, or cherubim, but to blood-bought sinners as members of Christ! Nor was such a union proposed to earthly Israel. Saved Israel will, indeed "see the glory of God"; "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty," is promised to that beloved, restored nation (Isaiah 33:17): and also that over restored Jerusalem "the glory shall be spread a covering" (Isaiah 4:2-6). But there was never a hint in the Old Testament that there would be a heavenly calling,--a company who would enter into that glory--be glorified with this glorious One!

This, is the secret, the mystery, "kept in silence through times of ages," the unfolding of which Paul declares will establish the saints! For it must involve the revelation to us that we were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world"! That we were foreknown, and foreordained to be "conformed to the image of God's Son, that He might be "The First-born among many brethren"! That we, having a sinful history in Adam the first, would not only have our sins put away, in God's grace, by the blood of Christ; but would be so identified with Him, by God's astonishing act, as to be cut off from all connection with the first Adam and be created in His Son, now risen from the dead! That we would not only be enlifed with Him, but be raised up with Him, and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus! Thus passing out of earthly connections, and becoming citizens of heaven!

That, in "the riches of the glory of this mystery, Christ would be in us, dwelling in our hearts by faith, in the energy of the Holy Spirit!" (Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 3:14-21). That thus, our hearts being as a "mirror," we would behold the glory of the Lord, and be transformed into His image, "from glory to glory," here below (2 Corinthians 3:18).

That, at our Lord's second coming, our bodies would be in an instant redeemed, (1 Corinthians 15:51-53); so that "these bodies of our humiliation," would be, by Christ's "fashioning them anew," be at once "conformed to the body of His glory"; so that "we should be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is"!--which not even Paul has yet done! (Php 3:20; Php 3:21; 1 John 3:3).

That, in "the ages to come," God will "show the exceeding riches of His grace, in kindness to us, in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). And that, as Eve shared with the first Adam the dominion given him, being one with him (she having been taken out of his side and "builded into" a woman) and even sharing with him his name Adam (Genesis 1:28; Genesis 2:21-23; Genesis 5:1; Genesis 5:2): just so the Church, the wife of the Lamb, as one with Christ, having been created in Him and sharing with Him His name! (1 Corinthians 12:12) will share His dominion! See, reverently, Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13. That thus Christ and His Bride, the Church, shall be forever: "That they may be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; and the glory which Thou Hast given Me I have given unto them."

Creatures--only creatures we, and forever will be, but given the highest place which the Word of God gives to creatures: "For we are members of Christ's Body"! and, "We rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God."

Now although on the Day of Pentecost, God baptized into Christ in glory those in the upper room and all true believers thereafter; and although it is true that God thus in their experience made known to "His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit," "this mystery of Christ which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men"; yet He chose Paul to open out before God's saints the doctrine of this heavenly mystery or secret; and to write in "all his Epistles" these things for us. All the apostles knew, for example, on that Day of Pentecost that Christ had been glorified in heaven and that they were in the boundless joy of the revelation of this glorious Christ to their souls. They had all entered into the enjoyment of the blessedness belonging to this great thing concealed by God from all creatures before that moment. But it was Paul to whom the Lord revealed the whole doctrine of the mystery; and we firmly believe he thus became the revelator to all men of these glorious things connected with this mystery. Not that God subjected James, Cephas and John, the apostles of the circumcision, to Paul in their ministry. In their spheres of ministry, Paul went to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision. But as to the unfolding of the great facts of the mystery, the Lord chose Paul,--who writes himself down (and that by an inspired pen), as "less than the least of all saints"; so that "by the grace of God" Paul himself said, "I am what I am." And we give all glory, therefore, to God.

Now no one is able to read, understand, believe and meditate, upon this, God's great secret, of our heavenly calling, our connection with Christ Himself and with the glory that shall be revealed, without becoming himself heavenly minded! So that the heralding of Jesus Christ according to the unfolding of the mystery is the preaching by which God establishes His heavenly saints. For if indeed we are heavenly; if our "citizenship" is in heaven; if our worship is by the Spirit; if through Christ by that Spirit we have "our access to the Father"--unto God in heaven; how utterly unable is any "religious" earthly system to establish us! Nay, says Paul; "We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh!" (Php 3:3).

We recognize fully that the "mystery" is not developed in Romans, though set forth and implied in Romans 12:5 : "We who are many are one Body in Christ." Paul is here speaking as if the Roman Christians were expected to understand the expression, or were at least to expect Paul to reveal and fully explain it to them when he should get to Rome. Inasmuch, therefore, as some of our readers may not have access to those writings Scripturally setting forth what the mystery is and our participation in it, or may even neglect to read the other remarkable Scriptures which open it out, we have thought it best to speak briefly upon the mystery, even in a work on Romans. And we would remind the reader that unless this "revelation of the mystery" becomes indeed revelation to his own soul, he must fall short entirely of understanding what the present dispensation is; and what is the Church's (or Assembly's) real character, calling, destiny, and present walk. As the prayer of Paul for us is realized in us: "That you may know what is the hope of His calling" (Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 1:19,ff), these things will be brought to pass in you and me:

1. We shall see and realize that our history in the first Adam was ended at the cross.

2. We shall see that the Christ with Whom God has now connected us is wholly a heavenly Christ, and that neither Christ nor those in Him have anything to do with Israel after the flesh, to whom the Law was given, and to whom the Messiah came.

3. We shall see ourselves vitally connected with, joined to, this heavenly Christ, so that we have been received in Christ as belonging to heaven, "even as He"; that we are "the righteousness of God in Him"; that we are loved even as He; and that our citizenship is in heaven. Our hearts must be convinced that these things are facts, not figures of speech, or things to be realized in some far future. We wait, indeed, for the redemption of our bodies, but we ourselves are already in the new creation, and for us old things (all earthly things, "religious" or worldly), have passed away.

4. We shall see that blindness has befallen Israel; that the mystery of lawlessness is working; that the earthly testimony of the Church has failed; that iniquity will abound and "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse" in professing Christendom-- of all these things we shall be certain: but knowing" them beforehand, and understanding that the course of things on earth has nothing to do with our heavenly calling, we shall continue steadfast in faith.

5. An ever-deepening humility will be wrought in us by the knowledge that we have been called into this Divine union, so that there is fulfilled in us what our Lord prayed for: "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us": as Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "The assembly of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

6. Not only humility, but hope--the true hope of the instructed Christian, will rise and well up in our hearts: "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

7. Thus the believer walks consciously justified from all things, and in newness of life (Romans); as a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians); as made alive together with Christ, raised up in Him, and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies (Ephesians); thus with Paul as the example, he runs His course toward Christ Himself (Philippians); as walking through many dangers on this earth, yet "holding fast the Head," in Whom is all fulness, and in Whom, in constant appropriation of His fulness, the believer is being made full (Colossians); and thus with ever-absorbing hope he expects the day when Christ shall appear, and he become "in a moment" "like Him,"--seeing Him as He is (Thessalonians).

02.30. Spiritual Order of Pauls Epistles

SPIRITUAL ORDER OF PAUL'S EPISTLES

We believe that the order of arrangement of Paul's Epistles to the Churches was Divinely established; and that there is a progress of spiritual experience from Romans to II Thessalonians.

(1) In Romans man is shown with righteousness: "There is none righteous, no not one." This involves man's fundamental relation to God. Christ is set forth a propitiation, meeting all Divine claims, and by His death releasing man from the necessity of a righteousness and holiness of his own: Christ becomes his righteousness, and a believer has the witness of the Spirit that he is God's child.

(2) I Corinthians. Here the subject is not righteousness but wisdom. The words "wisdom" and "wise" occur in the first four chapters twenty-five times, and the words "foolish" and "foolishness" some eight times! In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we are seen as of God--we that are in Christ Jesus who was "made unto us wisdom from God"; which indeed includes "Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption" but Christ is looked at as our Wisdom. Indeed in 1 Corinthians 2:16, "We have the mind of Christ." Those declared righteous in Romans, and become children of God, are now brought to school,--as children should be. But lo! the wisdom of the world is "foolishness,"--therefore God's "wisdom" is revealed to these children of God by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit indwelling them (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

(3) II Corinthians. Here we find Christ our sufficiency. Declared righteous in Romans, instructed by the Spirit in I Corinthians, the believer has yet to learn his utter weakness. The key-verses are here are 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 : "When I am weak then am I strong," and, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Many believers never find that God alone is their strength along every line. Paul found it! Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-10. Again: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness o the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4:7-11). Again:

"Our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). Again: "Our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless he that comforteth the lowly, God, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Corinthians 7:5-6). Again: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

(4) Galatians. The Epistles are linked together, each leading on to the following. So, in 2 Corinthians 13:11, Paul exhorts, "Be perfected" (Compare 6:14 to 7:1). Now the Galatians are seeking to be perfected, but it is by turning back to "religion," by observing "days, seasons, months, years" (Galatians 4:10-11). "Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" But Paul goes clear back to Romans Six, and testifies to these Galatians, "I have crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). He goes back 2 Corinthians 5:17 : "If any man be in Christ he

is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new"; and he sets before us the proper "rule of life" of the believer in words which completely set aside "religious" life, whether Jewish, Romish, or Protestant. "Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy and [when the future time comes for blessing the real Israel] upon the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:5, Galatians 6:16). Thus far we have seen righteousness without works, in Romans; wisdom without education, in I Corinthians; power without strength, in II Corinthians; perfecting without "religion," in Galatians.

(5) Ephesians. Men on earth seated in the heavenlies. For although named as "the saints that are at Ephesus," and "all true [faithful’] believers in Christ Jesus" yet that marvelous secret is opened out by which we are made alive with the raised and glorified Christ--raised up with Him and made to sit in the heavenlies [no longer in the earthlies as were Israel] and made indeed to become the fulness of Christ our Head, who filleth all in all. We are not yet in Heaven but are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God’s own possession unto the praise of His glory." [An "earnest" is a foretoken of our inheritance.]

(6) Philippians. Here we see Paul as a sample believer of all these glorious truths, running the wonderful "course" toward that coming "day of Christ"! (Php 1:6, Php 1:10). Saying, as he runs, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Php 1:21); exhorting, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:5-8); crying, as he runs, "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death. I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded. For our citizenship is in heaven. I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me: And my God shall supply every need of yours, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Php 3:1-21, entire; Php 4:13, Php 4:19). Paul’s word in Galatians 3:17 : "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk as ye have us for an ensample," is the key of Philippians. By the grace of God certainly, but none the less truly, Paul was enabled to run the Christian race in all its fulness!

(7) Colossians. Heavenly men on earth--yet holding fast the Head in heaven, and becoming filled with His fulness, is what we see here. All the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ, with whom believers’ lives are hid in God, Christ becomes the object of all the believer’s thoughts and affections. Since you are raised together with Christ, "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The believer awaits Christ’s coming--content not to be known or manifested till the glory comes. Four desperate foes oppose this mystery of faith of holding fast the Head in Heaven while walking on earth. See them in Colossians 2:4, Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:16, Colossians 2:18.

(8) I Thessalonians. The Thessalonian Epistles set forth the Personal Return of our Lord Jesus Christ--the end of the earthly path of God’s dear saints!

I Thessalonians gives The Church’s hope, the Rapture: "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord! Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). The believer who knows himself righteous (Romans), having the mind of Christ (I Corinthians), who has learned to glory in his weakness (II Corinthians), and to walk by the "rule of the new creation" knowing that he was crucified with Christ, who is now living in Him (Galatians), and who sees with Spirit-enlightened eyes the heavenly character and calling of the Church (Ephesians), and is really becoming an imitator of Paul in the race--running the course unto Christ--"the day of Christ" (Philippians), who is really holding fast the Head, paying no attention to those who would delude him with persuasiveness of speech and make a spoil of him through "philosophy" and would judge us in "religious" things or rob us of our prize by turning us to a self-humility that fails to hold fast the Head (Colossians): such a believer is ready indeed for I Thessalonians! And he is sincerely eager in daily, hourly watching for His coming--for the Rapture of the Church!

(9) II Thessalonians gives the second phase of our Lord’s Return, the "revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven in flaming fire rendering vengeance to them that know not God and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the great Day of Wrath of Revelation 19:11-21. In II Thessalonians Paul guards the saints from confusing the Rapture with that Day of Wrath,--called "the Day of the Lord" (R.V. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). The church at Thessalonica was being tempted by its troubles to confuse the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him [the Rapture] with the Day of the Lord--which sees the manifestation of the Antichrist. Which terrible days, thank God, the Church is not appointed to see! 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Revelation 3:10.

"For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

"Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

Chapter 63

S. Paul's Gospel

Paul’s Gospel William R. Newell

There are two great revelators, or unfolders of Divine Truth in the Bible—Moses in the Old Testament, and Paul in the New.

Someone may say, "Is not Christ the Great Teacher?" In a sense this is true; but in a real sense Christ is the Person taught about, rather than teaching, in the Gospels. The law and the prophets pointed forward to Christ; the Epistles point back to Him; and the Book of Revelation points to His second coming, and those things connected with it. The Four Gospels tell the story how He was revealed to men, and rejected by them. Christ, Himself, therefore is the theme of the Bible. Moses in the Law reveals God’s holiness, and thus by means of the Law reveals human sin, and the utter hopelessness and helplessness of man. Paul in his great Epistles reveals Christ as our Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption, and All in All. The twelve Apostles (Matthias by Divine appointment taking the place of Judas) were to be the "witnesses" (Acts 1:22) of Christ’s resurrection—that is, of the fact of it. They were not to unfold fully the doctrine of it, as Paul was. The twelve were with Jesus personally, and knew Him as a man; and when He died they saw it. When He was buried, they knew it personally, as eye-witnesses. And when He was raised, they found it out experimentally, visiting His actual tomb, and seeing that it was empty. They were also to see and handle the physical, risen body of our Lord. And it was with them that our Lord abode on earth forty days after His resurrection, "shewing Himself alive (physically, in a body) by many "infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). This great fact—that is, that the Person that the Jews themselves well knew they had crucified and buried, was risen from the dead and ascended to heaven—this tremendous fact the twelve Apostles witnessed to Israel at Jerusalem, and everywhere else. Thus we find the opening chapters of the Book of Acts filled with the single testimony that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead; and that remission of sins was through Him. But unto none of these twelve Apostles did God reveal the great body of doctrine for this age. Just as God chose Moses to be the revelator of Israel for the Ten Commandments, and all connected with the Law dispensation; so God chose Saul of Tarsus to be the revelator and unfolder of those mighty truths connected with our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, and His ascended Person. And all the "mysteries" or "secrets" revealed to God’s people in this dispensation by the Holy Ghost are revealed by Paul. Finally, Paul is the unfolder of the great company of God’s elect, called the Church, the Body of Christ, the individuals of which body are called members of the Body of Christ—members of Christ Himself. No other Apostle speaks of these things. Peter himself had to learn them from Paul (2 Peter 3:15-16). When Paul finishes his thirteen great Epistles (Romans to Philemon) those which belong to the Church, God indeed permits him to give a message then to the Hebrews. This is not part of the Church’s doctrine, but is simply explaining to Hebrew Christians the character, the real application, the typical meaning, of their Levitical system—that is, how it pointed forward to Christ.

James addresses his Epistle to "the twelve tribes"—that is, his Epistle has special reference to the Jewish Christians in the early days, and to such throughout the dispensation, for that matter. Peter writes to "the strangers who are sojourners of the Dispersion," that is, to the dispersed Jews who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. In the second of Galatians we are distinctly told by Paul, that James, Cephas and John were to go to the circumcision, while Paul tells us that his message was to the Gentiles. Since then the testimony by the Jewish Apostles to the Jews was duly given, there is now no distinction between Jews and Gentiles; and Paul's message holds good for the world, both Jews and Gentiles. So that we find Paul finally sets the Jewish nation aside in the last chapter of the Book of Acts, and opens his great Epistle to the Galatians at the center of the world with the statement that "there is no difference" between men; for "all have sinned;" and that there is again "no difference," for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" since the same Lord is "Lord of all" (Romans 3:22-23 and Romans 10:12).

God does as He pleases, and it pleased Him to choose—first to save people in this dispensation through "the foolishness of preaching," or the "preached thing"—that is, through the message about the Cross, and what was done there (See 1 Corinthians 1:21). And second, it pleased Him to choose Paul to be the great proclaimer and revealer of just what the Gospel is for this dispensation.

You can judge any man's preaching or teaching by this rule—Is he Pauline? Does his doctrine start and finish according to those statements of Christian doctrine uttered by the Apostle Paul? No matter how wonderful a man may seem in his gifts and apparent consecration— if his Gospel is not Pauline, it is not the Gospel; and we might as well get our minds settled at once as to that. Paul calls down the anathema—that is the curse of God Himself—upon anyone who preaches any other Gospel than that which he declared (Galatians 1:1-24). Not for one moment are we to believe that James, Peter and John were at variance with Paul—not in the least. They were given certain things by the Spirit, to say to certain classes of people. They do not conflict with Paul. And their words are included in the statement that "All Scripture is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16).

But, nevertheless, Paul is the declarer and revealer of the Gospel to us. Take Romans to Philemon out of the Bible and you are bereft of Christian doctrine. For instance, if you were to take Paul's Epistles out of the Bible, you cannot find anything about the Church, the Body of Christ, for no other Apostle mentions the Body of Christ. You cannot find one of the great mysteries, such as the Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58) or the mystery of the present hardening of Israel (Romans 11:1-36). No other Apostle speaks of any of those mysteries. Paul alone reveals them—the great doctrines such as Justification, Redemption, Sanctification. And what is perhaps the most tremendous fact of every real Christian's life, that of his personal union to the Lord in glory. Paul is the great divinely-chosen opener to us of truth for this age. The great doctrines that Paul reveals may be outlined as follows—

1. The unrighteousness before God of all men.

2. The impossibility of justification by works before God—that is, of any man's attaining a standing of righteousness before God, by anything done by him. Do what a man may, he is a condemned sinner still.

3. The fact and the scripturalness of righteousness on the free gift principle—that is, of a Divine righteousness, separate from all man's doings, conferred upon man as a free gift from God.

4. Propitiation. That satisfaction of God's Holy nature and law for man's sins rendered by Christ's blood.

5. Reconciliation. The removal, by Christ's death for man, of that obstacle to righteousness which man's sin had set up between God and man.

6. The plan of the actual conferring of the gift of righteousness upon all who believe, without any distinction. This change of a sinner's standing before God, from one of condemnation to one of righteousness, is called Justification. Negatively, it is deliverance from guilt on account of Christ's shed blood, and deliverance out of the old creation, by identification in death with Christ on the Cross. Positively, it is a new standing in the risen Christ before God.

7. Redemption. The buying back of the soul through the blood of Christ from sin; from the curse of the law—even death, involving exclusion from God, under penalty; from the "power of death," which involves the hand of the enemy; and from all iniquity.

8. Forgiveness. The going forth of Divine tenderness in remitting penalty for sin, in view of the blood of Christ trusted in; and in complacency and fellowship, to creatures who before were necessarily under Divine judgment.

9. Remission of sins. That is, the actual removing of transgressions or trespasses from the sinner, so that for all time and eternity his sins shall not again be upon him.

10. Identification (see above, Justification). The great fact that those who are in Christ were united with Him at the Cross, by God's sovereign inscrutable act; were crucified with Christ and buried with Him; so that their history is now ended before God; and when Christ was raised up as the First-born of the new creation, they also were raised up with Him, and their history began as new creatures in God's sight, in Christ, the Last Adam. Of course, in the experience of the Christian, there comes a time when he is actually made partaker of this new life—that point of time when he is, as we say, saved, or converted, or born again, etc. Nevertheless, the life that is in every Christian came up out of the tomb, and it is in Christ Jesus that a man is created anew.

11. Incorporation. This tremendous doctrine Paul alone mentions, and he makes it practically the foundation of all his exhortations to the saints with regard to their conduct and life. By "incorporation" we mean the fact that all those who are really saved and are new creatures in Christ Jesus become members of one organism, which is more real than the very earth we tread upon, called "the Body of Christ"—Christ Himself in heaven being the Head of this Body, and every real Christian a member of it. So that believers are thus members of Christ in heaven, and also members one of another here on earth. No wonder Paul is able to exhort the saints to love one another when they are members one of another! (Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 and Ephesians 4:1-32).

12. Inhabitation. The wonderful fact that the Body of Christ and each member of it individually is inhabited, indwelt, by the Holy Ghost Himself, and not only so, but that the Church is being "built together" as a great temple of God so that in the future God's actual eternal dwelling place will be this wonderful, mysterious company built into a building called "a holy habitation of God in the

Spirit." This mystery is a great and marvelous one, the fact that we are saved, are partakers now of the life of the Lord in glory, that the Holy Spirit indwells us.

13. Divine Exhibition. That is, that through the Church, in the ages to come, is to be made known that which God counts His "riches," even His Grace (Ephesians 2:7; Ephesians 3:10). The failure or refusal to discern the Pauline Gospel as a separate and new revelation and not a "development from Judaism," accounts for two-thirds of the confusion in many people's minds today as regards just what the Gospel is. Paul's Gospel will suffer no admixture with works on the one hand or religious pretensions and performances on the other. It is as simple and clear as the sunlight from heaven. The end of man is where God begins in Romans 3:1-31, at what might be called the opening of the Pauline Revelation. Most unsaved people today believe in their hearts that the reason they are not saved is because of something they have not yet done, some step that remains for them to take before God will accept them. But this is absolutely untrue.*** When Christ said, "It is finished," He meant that He had, then and there, paid the debt for the whole human race. "He gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6).

Now Paul in his wonderful revelation declares that God has reconciled the world to Himself; that God was in Christ (at the Cross) reconciling the world to Himself;

(2 Corinthians 5:19). Men do not know this, but they conceive that something stands between them and God, before God will accept or forgive them. If you tell a man that God is demanding no good works of him whatsoever, no religious observances or church ordinances, that God is not asking him to undertake any duties at all, but that God invites him to believe a glad message that his sins have already been dealt with at the Cross, and that God expects him to believe this good news and be exceedingly happy about it—if you tell an unsaved man such a story as this, he is astonished and overwhelmed—yet this is the Gospel! Would that we had grace just as vigorously to defend his great message today, whether from its enemies or its real friends who do not see it clearly as yet; or who, like Peter (Galatians 2:1-21), through fear of others, are ready to compromise and tone down the Gospel of God.

Notes

* "This is a great tract," wrote Lewis Sperry Chafer, "a clear treatise on the truth of God for this age. The author was one of America's greatest Bible expositors. It glorifies the Savior as the author desired it to do. It should be distributed by hundreds of thousands." Ed.

1 William Reed Newell (1868-1956), once the assistant superintendent of Moody Bible Institute, was an author, Bible teacher, and evangelist. D. L. Moody appointed him as teacher of weekly Bible classes in Chicago, Detroit, Toronto, and St. Louis, where he had a tremendous impact grounding believers in the Pauline Gospel of grace. His Romans Verse By Verse, a 590-page commentary (1938), and Hebrews Verse By Verse (195?) are very valuable works. The present sample illustrates Dr. James M. Gray's commendation: "Two things can be said of Mr. Newell without qualification. One is his soundness in the faith, and the other the plainness and the force with which he expresses the truth as it has been revealed to him" (dust jacket of Romans Verse By Verse).

Newell's writing also includes the much loved Gospel song "At Calvary" (see "A Gospel Song of Grace" in this issue.)

2 Christ, when on earth, did not "start anything." He said, in Matthew 16:18 : "I will build My Church;" but He had not yet built it. He was a "minister of the circumcision," (Romans 15:8; Matthew 15:24); and though He taught, it was to discover to men their helplessness, and lead them to rely on Him. Finally, all failed in Gethsemane. Then came the Cross and the end of all things human. Then the resurrection, and a new beginning.

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